

A Jujutsu Stylist Looks at Aikido

by: Ben Haryo

In my country Indonesia, Aikidō is far more popular than Jūjutsu. It is also the fastest growing martial art organization, spearheaded by the Y.I.A (Indonesian Aikikai Foundation), which received its mandate directly from the Honbu Dojo. While Karate stylists, Taekwondo fighters and Jūdō athletes looked in confusion when witnessing this martial art, a non-combative art which taught mostly “unrealistic” defenses against overhead palm strikes, wrist grabs and have no kicks nor chokes, Jūjutsu stylists often got startled due to many similarities contained within their respective arts.

Aikidō could be considered as a cousin of modern Jūjutsu. It is important to notice that the Aikidō of the east and the modern forms of Jūjutsu of the West developed roughly at the same time after the end of World War II. Both forms of martial arts descended from the earlier Jūjutsu forms, the pre-Meiji (pre-1868) era Jūjutsu. This explains why both arts used similar techniques. Before World War II, Uyeshiba taught Daito Ryu AikiJūjutsu, and he even handed Daito Ryu certificates to his students (such as Mochizuki Minoru who later founded Yoseikan Aikibūdō). The Aikidō as we know today is a much later creation, borne out of Uyeshiba’s mind after he has become a wise and peaceful old man with nothing more to prove.

To me, the value of Aikidō is not due to its techniques. About 90% of Aikidō techniques is contained within older Jūjutsu systems, as well as the modern ones. The value of Aikidō is

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the fact that Aikidō is a martial art of Love and Harmony. In Aikidō, all of the techniques is a manifestation of the Universal Law, and ultimately The Universal Love. That’s why the Uke is not resisting, in fact, the Uke is “jumping” for the Tori, so their technique looked flawless and graceful*. At this respect, Steven Seagal totally embodies this concept of Uke’s non-resisting to Tori’s wishes. His movie opponents is getting thrown left and right and basically are beaten senseless without any apparent effort because they are not resisting at all.

Also, the non-combativeness and non-competitiveness of Aikidō makes it an ideal martial art for the future. A person does not need brute strength to learn Aikidō, nor does he or she need to have the cunning and killer instinct required by the more combative arts such as Karate or even Jūjutsu. No competition ensures that people will flock under the guidance of Aikidō Senseis to learn the Way of Peace and Harmony, not to win some trophies or some kind of competition. One lone exception is the Tomiki school of Aikidō who held a kind of Randori (sparring) competition, but to me Tomiki is more Jūdō than Aikidō, and it is not endorsed by the Aikidō Honbu Dojo.

This, however, does not means that Aikidō is completely lacking as a form of self-defense. With years upon years of patient practice, an Aikidōka may master the amazing “ki” power, on which he or she could do amazing things, such as the ability of throwing down people without touching. I have seen photographs of Uyeshiba and Shioda throwing people with such manner. Perhaps this is the “secret teachings” of Daito Ryu that only the masters of the masters could attain.

My conclusion is, Aikidō and modern Jūjutsu are cousins from a similar stream. Both descended from ancient Jūjutsu. While modern Jūjutsu exponents stressed effective tech-

niques for real-life self-defense, the Aikidō stressed the spiritual harmony and the spirit of cooperation. They are two flip sides of a same coins, and therefore, they are bound to co-exist in the sphere of martial arts. For those of you who likes to cross-train, then cross-training in Aikidō may give you plenty of ideas about harmonization with your opponent.

I also invite Aikidō stylists to try Jūjutsu, to improve their abilities to defend themselves against more realistic attacks. This way, the “cousins from a similar streams” could become a “big and happy family”. Until next time!

—Ben

*Off course, modern Jūjutsu will look just as graceful as Aikidō if the Uke cooperates fully. But in several Jūjutsu schools, Uke sometimes are encouraged to resist Tori’s attempt to throw or lock him. This is to add realism to Tori’s techniques and to teach the concept of “Kaeshi Waza” or countermoves, based on the movements of Uke’s resistance. This will also develop sensitivity to Uke’s intention.

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