



合気陰陽法

NYC AIKI-JUJUTSU: HISTORY & ANTHROPOLOGY

MODERN MARTIAL ARTS

Before the late 1990's the Aiki-jujutsu practiced in the NYC metro area can all be traced back to seminars Yonezawa Katsumi of Daito-ryu Kodokai held, developing great interest in the Aikido and Jujutsu community in the area.

Yonezawa split from Kodokai, founding the Byokukai, and his students continued to offer some exposure to NYC area martial artists in traditional aiki-jujutsu. Some early students of his continued training under Kiyama Hayawo in California and maintained small study groups in places like Connecticut.

In NYC, much of the area Jujutsu can be traced back to the self-defense efforts in Queens by Dennis Fink, who studied Isshin-ryu Karate, Judo, Tomiki Aikido, and the Sosuishi-ryu koryū jujutsu. He developed a simplified teaching methods of body movements (tai-sabaki) onto which Isshin-ryu striking and Aikido waza were grafted. Later innovators like Antonio Perreria of Tremont area in the Bronx took their own Aikido and Jodo background and expanded this approach with a heavy emphasis on urban self-defense. From these roots, groups like the Hoteikan Dojo in Brooklyn of Robert Hasman, Sanuces-ryu Jujutsu of Moses Powell, and many dojo flourished in the late 1970's and 1980's.

One such dojo was the Kaze Arashi Ryu (KAR) school of Jackson Heights. While it also was focused on urban self-defense, this school maintained it practiced an older form of aiki-jujutsu that somehow predated Daito-ryu.

This was simply not true but took a very long time to run to ground. What follows is information I have as of 2012 on the origins and synthesis of KAR. Today, there continue to be different Japanese budo groups in NYC, including traditional aikido and aiki-jujutsu (such as Daito-ryu Takumakai). I recommend those interested in aiki-jujutsu train with a widely recognized group.

KAR, in contrast, was represented to its students as a classical Japanese martial art (koryu) practiced by mountain ascetics (yamabushi) in the Dewa area of Japan. More spectacularly, KAR was said to contain a form of "aiki-jujutsu" in its syllabus that was one of the parent arts of Daito-ryu. Instead, and in short, KAR is a modern cognate jujutsu art: a combination of Isshin-ryū Karatedō, Shorinji Kempō, Kodokan Judō, Aikidō, and waza adapted from older Jujutsu styles including Sosuishi-ryū, Daitō-ryū, and Danzan-

ryū. Additionally, and unfortunately, it contained a large weapons curriculum of sword and stick movements that were largely invented from whole cloth.

After I had resigned from KAR, Ellis Amdur helped me analyze the KAR sword and stick curriculum and concluded that it was a pastiche of movements glued together from different traditions, largely by someone who held little understanding of the parent arts. While some elements of the syllabus had value, there were a great number of teachings which would put the practitioners in danger were they to be used outside a dojo. Confirming these observations is what caused me to abandon my KAR weapons practice instead of attempting to still teach the art independently, as other ex-students had previously done when leaving or being kicked out of its organization. I have instead fulfilled my curiosity about medieval Japanese swordsmanship by seeking out classical arts (koryū).

Later, I met with an Aikidō shihan who had trained under Tohei Koichi in Hawaii and asked him about various KAR jujutsu locks and throws, to puzzle out where the empty hand portion of its curriculum came from. All the "aiki-jujutsu" throws I demonstrated, the shihan remembered practicing under Tohei in the 1950's. So, a great part of what is preserved in Kaze Arashi Ryu "aiki-jujutsu" seemed to be in fact adaptations of 1950's era Aikidō. This began to lend credence to the idea that KAR's unarmed curriculum was also recent in vintage, although possibly of higher quality than its weapons arts. This led me to focus on only preserving a subset of the self-defense and Aikidō and Judo/Jujutsu techniques I learned as part of KAR and focusing not on preserving the forms (two man kata called "tai-sabaki" in KAR) of that practice, but instead integrating those techniques as finishing movements to complement my neijia practice.

Third, in November 2007 I reconnected with an old training buddy, Louis Bravo. Louis is a Hakko-ryu black belt who trained in karate and Aikidō before visiting our Kaze Arashi Ryu dojo on the recommendation of his father. His father is a Hakko-ryu practitioner who had heard of Kaze Arashi Ryu as an art that was taught as a variation on Miyama-ryu and effective for street fighting and self-defense. I asked Louis to check what his father exactly knew about KAR's history. Louis himself felt KAR was similar in some ways to the techniques he saw in Hakko-ryū and old Aikidō that were both derived from Daitō-ryū, but mixed with Karatedō and Judō:

"I got a call from my old man and he gave me the missing link. Here is the breakdown for KAR. Sensei Claudio was the founder Hoteikan Ryu. He worked with Sensei Perreira before he created Miyama Ryu. He was a Karate and Judo guy. Sensei Claudio worked out of several dojos including the basement in the Bronx [which had split off from Miyama Ryu] I told you about during this period. Sensei Claudio met Sensei Robert Hasman and ran study groups around NYC in the 70's and 80's. Sensei Claudio was also a contemporary of Sensei William C. Morris, a sensei of Sosuishi-Ryū Jujutsu and Danzan Ryū Jujitsu. They had a Black belt named David Samuel [the man Vilare initially claimed was his instructor]; he was a former Marine. Kaze is Sosuishi-Ryu Jujutsu mixed with Sensei Claudio's Karate and Judo and Sensei William C. Morris' old Danzan Ryu of Jujitsu. The Basement dojo and the first Hoteikan Ryu school was in a bank in the Bronx that is how HRV came into the picture.

"The reason HRV is not a Miyama Ryu guy is because he was part of the study group Sensei Claudio had in the Bronx. I hope this helps in closing the gap you have with Kaze. HRV had a

good background but no hombu [association to Japan] like many guys from the 70's. So he came up with Kaze and that was okay back then in NYC. I told my old man this was like finding Jimmy Hoffa.”

Lou's current focus is Brazilian jujutsu, but still values some of his KAR training. I, in contrast, have since discarded the kempo I learned in KAR in favor of nēijiā. I heard from Lou again in 2011. Lou, while in Chile, ran into a source who had trained with the founder of KAR in the 1970's during the period of invention of KAR. He had the following to add:

“I had a chance to meet with someone who was with HRV in the early pre KAR days in New York. He told me the base for KAR is Shorinji Kempo before the Aikidō was added. He told me that the Aikidō that KAR has is not modern Aikidō but pre-war Aikidō giving it more variations of throws, locks, etc. The weapons he was not sure on but said that the original goal of KAR was of a Goshin-Jitsu.

“He told me that even the story of Nishiyama passing away and his only daughter taking over the system was the true story of Shorinji Kempo who head master is the daughter of the founder who died sometime in 1981 and the founder was in his own words a Warrior Monk. So both the Kempo and Aiki of KAR can be traced back to older systems of Japan and China. This is why the Atemi / Aiki work well for a Goshin-Jitsu.

“The guy told me that also at this time HRV used the records of the Asahi Newspaper office in Osaka where many Daitō-ryū techniques were preserved on film as originally taught by both Ueshiba and Takeda Sokaku to make his art more solid and traditional. He told me that at this time the adding of arts or creating of a system was a big thing in NYC since it was the only way to stand apart from the big names schools in NYC like Oyama, Yamada, Oishi.

“I think the Aikidō and Sosuishi ryu came first when HRV wanted a Goshin art then the Shorini Kempo completed the system we know today as KAR. The Hoteikan dojo from what I see looks like the lab / testing place for KAR and a few other NYC arts.

“I wanted you to know that what you spent so many years on was not a waste of time since KAR has variations of techniques that many of today's Aikidō black belt have never seen before. In closing on KAR I now understand that it does have a real base it's just that HRV for some reason had to create a story for it and that is when I think the weapons part came into KAR.”

Lastly, a former colleague began training under a long time teacher of Sosuishi-ryu in NYC whose self-defense teachings helped inspire some of KAR's practices. Doing so, he discovered that many of the original stories or descriptions associated within the KAR organization to its teacher's instructors (fictitiously named Lee Samuel and Aikihiro Nishiyama) were actually taken from the lives of teachers of Sosuishi-ryu. So, Shorinji-kempo was not the only art KAR stole back story from.

This kind of history, except for the assertion that an art is classical in nature, is quite normal for the type of martial arts being practiced in New York City in the 1970's and 1980's. A talented martial artist takes his own practice, which may come from a number of sources, and begins to refine what he is doing. He

attracts some students, and then begins to elaborate. It is not something to hide or be embarrassed about.

MODERN AIKI-JUJUTSU IS NOT SHUGENDŌ

The Inner Dharma website started largely not because of my practice of Kaze Arashi Ryu but because of my interest in Shugendō, a blend of Buddhism, Taoism, and mountain asceticism practiced in Japan. KAR supposedly (alas, falsely) was held to be derived from the fighting practices of Japanese yamabushi. This is false, and likely taken from the fact that Takeda Sokaku's grandfather had (according to main-line Daitō-ryu writings) been trained in Shugendō. Shugendō did have an influence on many classical Japanese martial arts. Having had contact with budō practitioners in Japan who actively practice Hagurō Shugendō, it is important to stress that KAR has no relationship or connection to Japanese Shugendō.

CONCLUSIONS

The above is important to relate because I continue to receive email inquiries from people who have read this website, looked at forums like E-Budo, and ask (to paraphrase):

"I looked around on the Internet and see you have quit Kaze Arashi Ryu -- I don't care whether KAR is old or new, just whether it is effective or not. There is a KAR school in my area, do you think I should practice KAR?"

Many of the people whom I've met while training in KAR were fine individuals and good martial artists. However, until KAR as an organization can be open about the nature of what it teaches and come to grips with the fact that it is not preserving a medieval Japanese battlefield martial art, but instead teaching a modern creation which is constantly evolving for better or worse, I cannot recommend people seek out its members for instruction. Until then, it will remain marginalized, no better in some ways than invented "Ninjutsu" styles that cloak themselves in false mystery.

From some cursory web searches, it does seem that word has gotten out that KAR is not a classical style (koryu). Hopefully people looking for an eclectic approach to martial arts can train in Kaze Arashi Ryu if they wish to, albeit in an a healthily informed manner, and those seeking classical approaches will look elsewhere.

Or, as what I found one of my old instructor's colleagues during the Daitō-ryū Kodokai seminars taught by Yonezawa in the 1970's [who went on to learn Daitō-ryū instead of simply mixing some of its waza into his eclectic approach] once told a perspective student who was contemplating KAR:

"It's okay stuff. Good strong jujutsu. Go do that first and get your black belt. Once you've learned the basics, then come to me if you want to learn real aiki. But, if I were you, I would not waste your time with their weapons practice. It is all made up."

I think the summary is a valid one if the core of the art is taught in an open and honest manner. If it is not, I cannot recommend anyone actively train in Kaze Arashi Ryu as an organization.