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Vol 1, No. 3

JIU JITSU

THE EFFECTIVE JAPANESE
MODE OF SELF DEFENSE

ILLUSTRATED BY SNAPSHOTS OF

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AND

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WELL KNOWN NATIVE EXPERTS



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PUBLISHED BY
BRITISH SPORTS PUBLISHING COMPANY
2, HIND COURT, FLEET STREET LIMITED
LONDON, E. C.

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KATSUGUMA HIGASHI,
A Famous Jiu Jitsu Expert.

39-2258

JIU JITSU

ITS ANCIENT ORIGIN—THE JAPANESE SYSTEM OF SELF-DEFENSE DESCRIBED



Jiu jitsu, the much-talked-of Japanese system of self-defense, has attracted so much attention throughout the English-speaking world that its acceptance in this country as a meritorious branch of combative athletics causes not the slightest surprise among broad-minded people.

Like all innovations, especially foreign ones, jiu jitsu was at first disparaged by scores of people. Some of them still hold to their original opinions, but many have delved deep into the subject, with the result that they now admit the science contains much of striking value.

Jiu jitsu is one of the oldest known branches of self-defense. Authentic records of its existence before the Christian era are now in possession of the Mikado of Japan. History relates that so far back as 200 years before Christ the supporters of the Japanese emperor of that time fought unarmed against hostile tribes and, aided by jiu jitsu, completely defeated them. The tribes in question carried the arms of the day, but this advantage availed them nothing against the disconcerting and often deadly tricks of the jiu jitsu experts.

Since that early period the art has advanced considerably, although the principal tricks have been kept secret. There are some jiu jitsu manœuvres that have never been explained to Europeans or Americans—and probably they never will be. Especially reticent are the "Japs" regarding the dozen or so of death-producing grips and blows. Several of them have been described in detail by them at various times, but others are only hinted at.

These death blows are remarkable. Some are delivered on the spine, others on the neck and head, and two on the face. There are almost numberless manœuvres that temporarily paralyze nerves and nerve-centers, and others that stop the circulation of the blood in various part of the body. A large proportion of the tricks and holds introduces the twisting of hands, arms, legs, ankles, and the neck, and many more depend for success on the obtaining of powerful leverage on arms and legs, and on various joints.

Thus it will readily be seen that jiu jitsu is different from boxing and wrestling, although many wrestling manœuvres are used in it, either entirely or in part, or in combination. For instance, all jiu jitsu experts use forms of the arm lock, the full Nelson, half Nelson, chancery holds, cross buttocks, arm and leg grapevines, waist holds, leg holds, and strangles. There is absolutely nothing in common, however, between boxing and jiu jitsu. Boxing is not indulged in to any noticeable extent by "Japs." They prefer fencing and wrestling.

Still, jiu jitsu experts execute a trick that might well be termed a first cousin to the boxer's solar plexus punch. It consists of a blow in the solar plexus delivered with the fingers straightened and stiffened, the forefinger (or pointer) and the middle finger. These fingers are projected violently into the solar plexus and twisted in a peculiar manner, completely paralyzing this nerve center. (The solar plexus is a center of various nerves of the so-called sympathetic system, which has largely to do with the organs of nutrition). The blow also produces breathlessness, and, in cases of poorly trained men, nausea.

Jiu jitsu comprises three different systems or branches and upward of 250 manœuvres. One branch, the most familiar, calls for the use of the hands, another needs a piece of rope, and the other a club. However, only the first-named is considered in this book, for it is the one most frequently used. "Jap" experts are, of course, proficient in all three branches.

The knowledge of jiu jitsu has only recently been made general in Japan. Every soldier, sailor and policeman was taught it as a matter of course, but the upper classes, jealous lest their influence

over the populace should wane, tried to keep it to themselves. Of this tendency we have an interesting example in "The Darling of the Gods," when a small band of sumurai refuses to obey the imperial edict and disarm. So well recognized was it by the "Jap" that he could not learn jiu jitsu, and likely children were trained to be wrestlers instead. The wrestler is usually ten or twelve inches taller than his brother "Jap," and he is splendidly developed for wrestling, but when some years ago a tall wrestler was publicly defeated at Tokio by an exponent of jiu jitsu within a few seconds of the start the thousands of spectators were astonished. Japanese fashion, they said little, but since then, though wrestling is still popular, it no longer holds the first place. Mr. Hancock, author of a book on jiu jitsu, is of the opinion that a skilled exponent of jiu jitsu would defeat a champion boxer, using his own methods.

Every jiu jitsu system is based on diet and the healthy state of the body. Every muscle is brought into development and hardened by the system, which means "muscle breaking"—a term that does not express the fact. Four years are needed for the full development of the system, years of regular, patient practice, and gradually the pupil begins to feel its influence.

Twice a day he will bathe if he would imitate his Japanese teacher. A gallon of pure water will be consumed during the twenty-four hours, and he will eat no meat. Rice comes first in importance as an element of diet. Next come vegetables, fish and fruit, meat being scarcely ever used. Fresh air, naturally, is absolutely essential not only to jiu jitsu, but to good health and vigor in Japan, as elsewhere, and a special study is made of the influence of deep breathing upon the students.

But what will surprise most people is that something most needed beyond all these—equanimity of temper—is essential. The reason of this is that there are too many tricks, which are dangerous to life and limb, to be entrusted to a person whose passions might overpower his judgment. Several of the feats would break bones if carried to extremes.

The secret of jiu jitsu consists of a knowledge of how to grasp