

WORLD'S LEADING MAGAZINE OF SELF-DEFENSE



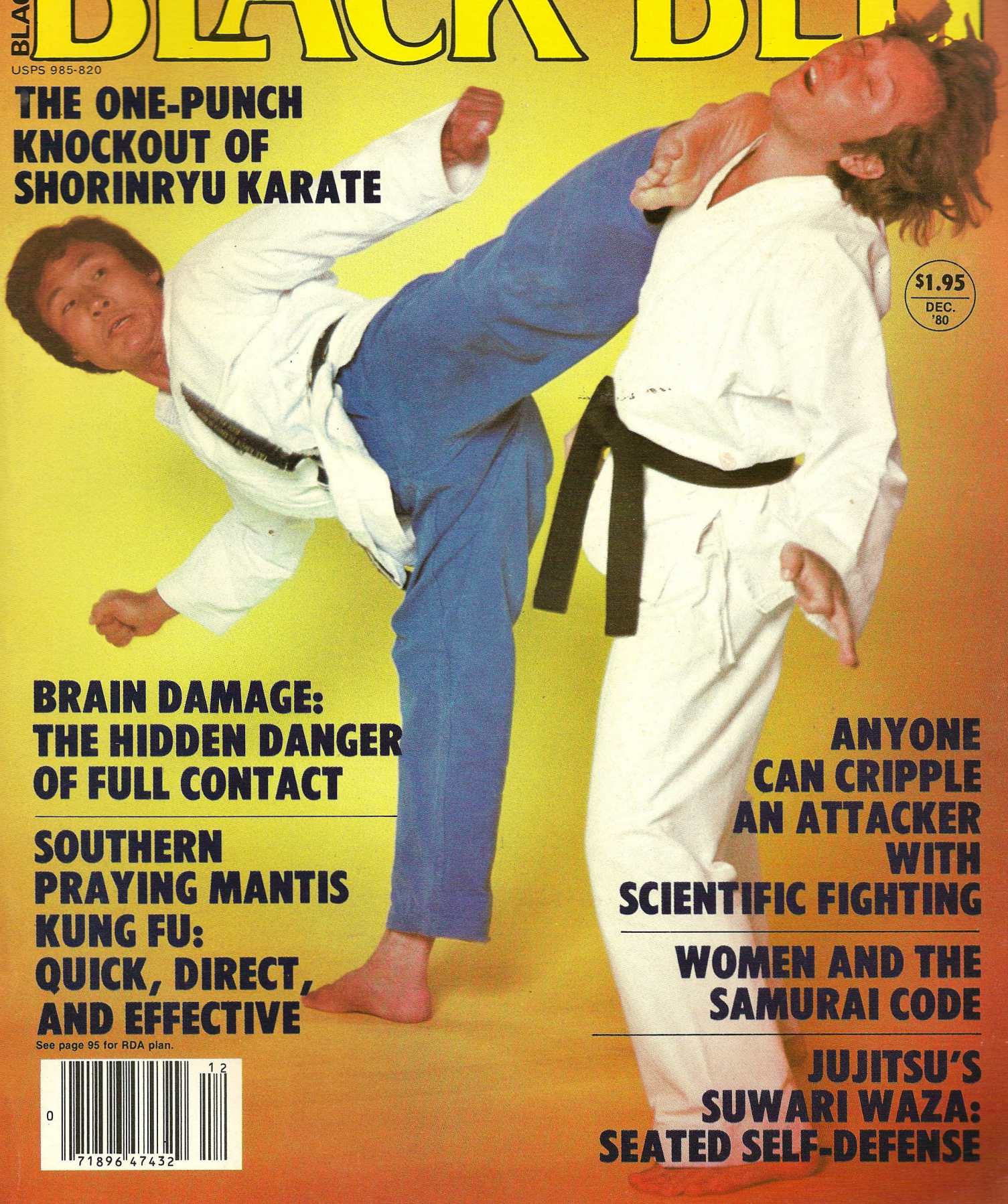
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**JUJITSU'S  
SUWARI WAZA:  
SEATED SELF-DEFENSE**



Jujitsu, the "gentle art," is one of the most ancient martial arts as well as one of the most effective forms of self-defense. But it is also a contemporary art. While jujitsu can be traced back over 2,500 years, at the same time it served as the basis for two more contemporary martial arts (judo and aikido) while continuing to survive on its own. Jujitsu has characteristics that have allowed it to endure through the ages.

One of its characteristics is the almost infinite variety of techniques. Also, of equal importance, is the different positions from which jujitsu techniques can be executed. Jujitsu techniques can be executed while standing, lying on the ground or from a sitting position. In jujitsu, executing techniques from a formal sitting position is known as *suwari waza*, and it's almost an art in itself.

#### **Suwari Waza: Seated Self-defense**

Suwari waza is just one way of practicing techniques learned in jujitsu as well as aikido. It is a manner of executing techniques that involves the use of joint-locking and nerve techniques to bring your opponent down. What makes it useful to both jujitsu and aikido is that proper execution requires patience and calmness. Both attributes are essential towards learning either art.

The theory behind suwari waza is to make exclusive use of your attacker's

*ki*, as in all soft arts. In this sense, *ki* is defined as your opponent's inner strength or momentum. Although all martial arts use the attacker's *ki* to some extent, the use of *ki* is very obvious in *suwari waza*.

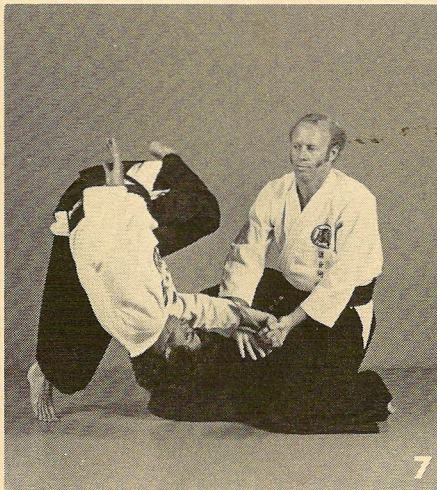
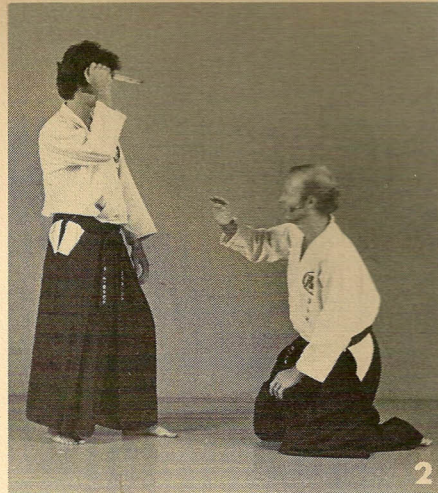
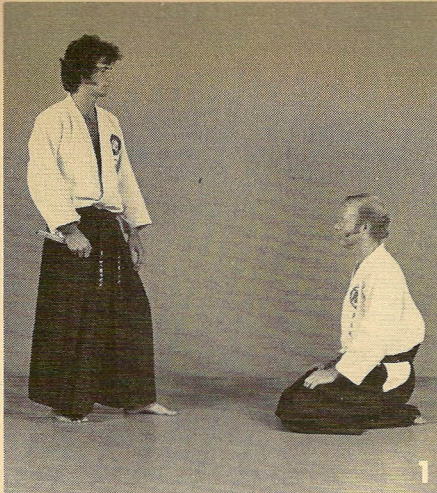
In addition to using your attacker's *ki*, you must try not to disturb your own *ki* if at all possible. The entire intent of *suwari waza* is to execute the technique with minimum effort on your part, combined with minimal movement. As you are in a formal sitting position anyway, you are not free to make large sweeping movements. Therefore, your motions must be confined; you *must* control your opponent's movement.

In *suwari waza* you defend yourself from a formal sitting position—never getting up onto your feet. Depending on the situation, you may either throw your opponent or use a takedown technique to bring him into submission. All *suwari waza* techniques include mat submissions in which nerves, pressure points, joint-locks, or a combination of the three are used. All through the technique (the throw or takedown as well as the submission), the jujitsu practitioner has definite and absolute control of the attacker. If he is relaxed, doing the technique correctly, and retaining his balance, he will find that his attacker will come to him and move as he wishes, even when the attacker is on the ground and the jujitsu man is sitting in a for-

# IN SUWARI WAZA- IT'S ALL KI

by George Kirby





Although this throw from the seated *suwari waza* position is relatively simple, it is a narrow base of support that tests the practitioner's balance. An overhead knife attack is blocked with the right arm. The left hand grabs the knife hand and twists side/out and down, using the right hand as a fulcrum. The wrist lock is held through submission.

mal position. Remember, the idea is to use *his* ki.

#### Flaws In Your Technique?

Learn the art and you'll be able to defend yourself, was a phrase that my instructor, Sanzo Seki, constantly told his students. He believed that the martial arts should be taught as an art; that if you learn the technique correctly you have a better chance of successfully defending yourself. In jujitsu one technique is one specific move, not like a kata in karate. Seki believed

in lots of repetition, and he also believed that if you learn any martial art correctly it will help you.

*Suwari waza* is uniquely related to this concept because it will work properly only if you're doing the technique correctly. Do it wrong, even slightly, and you're in trouble. *Suwari waza* is one way of finding out what you really know and how well you've learned it.

Most jujitsu techniques, except ground defenses, are taught from a *tachi waza*, ready standing position. *Tachi waza* has many advantages as a

base from which to start a technique. The feet are used to establish a wide base for balance. It is easier to move toward, away or around your attacker from a standing position. Also, your body can be easily moved to maintain or regain your balance if you lose it.

Executing techniques from *suwari waza* reduces your area of balance. That is, since all techniques start and end in a formal sitting position, you do not have the wide base from which to maintain your balance. Thus techniques require much more control.

you have a smaller area of balance you must also maintain a smaller sphere of control in order to properly execute techniques.

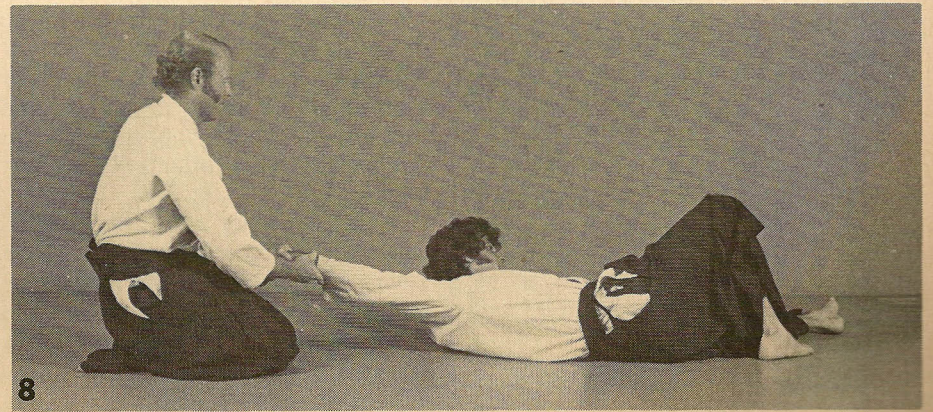
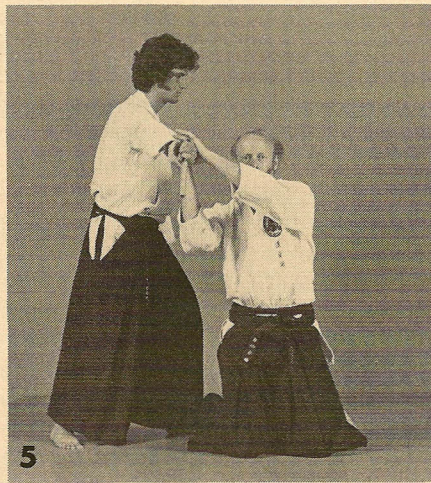
In jujitsu and aikido extensive use is made of *te waza*, or hand techniques. *Te waza* are used exclusively in *suwari waza* for any type of attack. Although the term *te waza* refers basically to hand techniques, for the sake of simplicity it shall also refer to hand, wrist, or finger techniques in this article (*te* = hand, *tekubi* = wrist, *yubi* = fingers). *Te waza* requires a smaller sphere of control, and by controlling the hand, wrist, or fingers of an

attacker you can control his body as well.

The execution of *suwari waza* is fairly simple and straightforward. Although there are exceptions, the same general rules apply to most sequences. Keep in mind that the emphasis is on simplicity.

All techniques start in a formal sitting position. Assuming that your opponent grabs your wrist, you would step forward onto your foot on the same side of your body as the hand that will control the attacker. In this case if the right hand was grabbed you would step forward onto your right

*Blocking an overhead club attack with an X-block, the defender grabs the wrist and forearm and twists inside/out and up, as he shifts his body 90 degrees. A second 90 degree shift brings the attacker's arm directly overhead from where he is thrown to the mat (the motion is smooth and continuous from the moment the wrists are grasped).*



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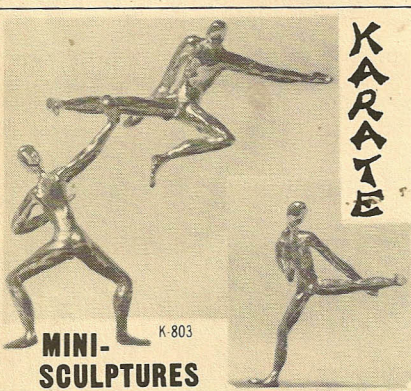
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foot. If the technique you select requires that you end up facing 180 degrees from where you were originally facing, you will have to switch knees as you turn. In the process of turning (if it is a throw), you would execute the appropriate te waza, depending upon the attack. After the throw or take-down you would always return to a formal sitting position. You will then finish the sequence with a nerve hold, joint-lock, or a combination of both, using the attacker's ki to have him move to you so that you can set the same or other hold for a submission.

#### Benefits of Suwari Waza

Some people might question the value of suwari waza. What value is it in the class, to the students, on the street? It might seem that to practice jujitsu from this format would be a waste of time. After all, who's going to defend themselves while sitting in a formal position?

Rather than question its value in terms of applicability, it might be better to accept the exercise for the value that it has. Suwari waza can benefit any student in a number of ways.

First, it helps the practitioner improve his balance and use of ki. Unless the technique is executed properly and within the smaller sphere of control, a loss of balance is inevitable. The use of ki is also developed because of the smaller base. It is necessary to control and use your attacker's ki fully while using yours minimally, if at all. By doing techniques in this way you will improve your balance. You will also improve your understanding of (and use of) ki.

Suwari waza will also help you improve your knowledge of techniques. As you have a smaller sphere of control and you must use ki, you will have the opportunity to use both to properly execute many te waza that you already know. By operating from a smaller base you will end up perfecting the many te waza. Thus, when you return to tachi waza to execute techniques, your movements will be much more fluid and efficient. You will find that you can sense your attacker's ki and use it more effectively against him.

The last major benefit of suwari waza is that the student will get considerable practice in using nerves and joint-locks for takedowns, throws and submissions. Doing techniques from a different base serves to add a new dimension to any instructional pro-

gram. Students have the opportunity to use the same techniques learned standing up, but in a more critical position—sitting down. They will also be able to see how effective those techniques are when they become the attacker in a dojo situation.

There is also the additional benefit of discovering how easy it is to control an opponent on the ground while remaining in a formal sitting position. In suwari waza it isn't necessary to move to your opponent to set a submission once he's on the ground. Through the use of nerves, pressure points and joint-locks, the opponent will gradually move towards you with the hope of escaping from some of the pain and discomfort you are creating in his mind, only to find himself more effectively held in place or the victim of a new hold, pressure point, or nerve technique.

Applicability? Suwari waza can be very easily applied to a street situation. It's relatively easy to defend yourself while standing up. The overwhelming majority of instructional most martial art dojo deals with defenses while standing. Such techniques are easier to teach, require less work to perfect, and look "neat." Ground defenses do not have the "neat" or "professional" look much of the time. They are harder to perfect and require much more practice. Students may have a dislike for practicing ground defenses because of these reasons and because many times they feel that they're awkward.

Suwari waza will help students overcome this problem. It will also help them realize that they can defend themselves when they're on the ground or half-way up. As the ground is the worst place to defend yourself from, suwari waza will give students practice in this critical area. Although they may not start a technique from a formal sitting position in a street situation, they'll still be able to effectively defend themselves and bring their opponent down.

Suwari waza is just one form of practice in jujitsu. Its goal is perfection in the use of techniques and ki. Its value is that it will help you become a better and more efficient practitioner of the art.

*George Kirby is a jujitsu instructor based in Burbank, California, and is also President of the American Jujitsu Association.*