

## Renovating the Traditional Mold

*Now anyone or his uncle can say he follows the path of innovative traditionalism, but that's like someone saying he follows strict traditionalism in his art of Mak Itup Azugo, of which he is the 25<sup>th</sup> inheritor (each inheritor having kept the art in its original form for over two weeks). So let me suggest what I think might be a list of qualities to which an innovative traditionalist should aspire in order to keep the quality of his art alive without restricting it so much that it works only on subtropical beaches on sunny days against tourists with wiffleball bats.*

### **Be Able to Define Your Art**

Do you train in a martial sport, study a martial art based on Asian battlefield tactics, or a modern self-protection system? Most martial systems are mixed. If yours is mixed, can you determine how much emphasis is put on sport, art, self-defense, or other aspect of budo?

Is yours predominantly a striking art? If so, does it concentrate more on weapons, kicking, punching, or shorter blows? Would you consider it a long-distance, middle-distance system, or close-in system?

Is your art predominantly a grappling art? If so, is it dominantly ground grappling or standing grappling? Does it emphasize locks, takedowns, or throws?

### **Adapt or Integrate Your Art**

If you practice a martial sport, you must adapt what you do to the rules of the tournaments you intend to enter. If you practice a martial art or a self-protection system, you will need to consider what type of self-defense situations your art is potentially weak in and find a way to either adapt its techniques or incorporate techniques from complementary arts that more readily address your system's weaknesses. If you must complement your art with another, make sure you clearly understand which is which. If you are creating a new integrated curriculum (which might grow into a new integrated art), it is wise to understand the roots of the techniques so you can go back to look for corrections, as well as supportive training procedures and techniques in an art that has specialized in them.

### **Test Your Art**

If you think a wristlock should work a certain way resulting in your opponent moving to a certain position, apply the lock in increasingly realistic ways to see if the results you get are what were expected.

If you think your block will work against a street punch, at least simulate a street punch in practice, not just a formalized style-specific punch. Although you cannot safely test the

realism of everything, you can test aspects of techniques in a safe environment so the weaknesses are more likely to appear.

After testing the art, address the weaknesses with modified techniques. Even if your traditional art has a generic movement that “must be done” a certain way for beginners, doesn’t that imply that modifications are allowed at a higher level of development?

### **Repeat**

Start over. One or even one hundred times through is not enough. Long term practice with many body types reveals more and more variations and subtleties that can easily escape those who think that dedication means repeating the same stuff in the same way again and again.