

Teachings of the Suio Ryu (水鷗流の教え)

By Katsuse Yoshimitsu Kagehiro, Dec. 15, 2007

What is iai?

Nobody knows the answer. To freely seek it out for yourself is good. Each person's own ideas will lead them to various answers; this is also good. Iai is technique used to defeat the opponent, and it is also something that allows you to see within yourself.

The Founder's Way

Logical, efficient swordsmanship¹ and the ways of training the spirit² that accompany it – these two things are all we can offer. In the modern age, imagining aspects beyond this is not possible, as we cannot truly know what it was like to go into battle against an enemy. This is the ultimate essence of iai.

Ways of Training the Spirit

Just as each person's spirit is unique, so too are the methods each person employs when learning. People must not all do things identically or become copies of each other. It is important for each person to get a sense of what is right for themselves alone.

Logical and Efficient Swordsmanship

If you do not experience much that is extraneous through diligent practice, nothing good will remain. Practice this extraneousness with everything you've got. Doing this over a long period of time will lead you to an understanding, and you will reach a point when you will be able to move naturally without using strength. We practice many things in the Suio Ryu, but the approach is the same for all of them. You must gradually accumulate your training in natural movement befitting the martial arts. If you are able to learn and acquire "something," you will be able to do anything you try. However, what that "something" is is not easily understood. You cannot find it just by thinking about it – *practice* is important. Bujutsu is the act of protecting your own life, but it cannot be easily and simply dismissed as solely this.

Fundamentals

*Kihon*³ are essential. Teaching things beyond the fundamentals is not possible, for in martial arts, survival is fundamental. This is most difficult, and seeking it out is likewise difficult. It is not easy. The answer is not found in life, but rather emerges from within the flow of nature. That which emerges comes from one's own experience, and what is revealed is in proportion to the experiences gained.

Conclusion

- 1) It is wholly unique to the individual.
- 2) Searching for that "something" is not easy.
- 3) It is good to not understand everything and to experience the extraneous.
Perform badly.

Translated by Maranda Li. Edited by Antony Cundy, Nov. 5, 2018

Source: <http://www.suioryu-tosuikai.com/oshie.html>

Translator's notes:

1. 合理的な刀法, *gōri-teki-na tōhō*
2. 心法, *shinpō*
3. 基本, *kihon* – usually translated as “basics,” but because Sōke dislikes this term (preferring instead 基礎, *kiso*, meaning “foundations”) it is rendered here as “fundamentals.”