

## **Makino Sensei's Article from 1997**

Translated by Yuriko Terao Nov 2004, Edited by Neil Kemp Jan 2005

This is an article that Makino sensei gave us at the November 2004 seminar in Ozu. He wrote this in 1997 after a lesson from Iwata Sensei, but has added to it from his own 60+ years of experience. I am sure you will find it very interesting.

“Koryu is not just waza. Every Soke has his own philosophy, and he builds the waza around this philosophy adding what he has gained from his own experience. Hence all Soke are slightly different. Each school has its own character. If you don't know the philosophy, or character, of the school you cannot understand their waza fully. If you try to practice their waza without this understanding it is just muscle training, and is virtually useless.

You must have the spirit to cut down the enemy, without this feeling the waza are empty. The sword is not a tool for training it is a weapon to be used against the enemy. Koryu is based on the practical use of the sword (toho).

If you don't understand these ideas you cannot do koryu. It is very important to know the content and meaning of the waza. If you don't then the waza is only superficial. You must express the meaning and feeling in the waza. You have to do this throughout the whole waza. You have to live it to express it. Hakuryoku is the strong spirit to attack the enemy, Kihaku in the strong personal presence, you need to develop both of these to do koryu well.

**Suemonkiri** - Cutting a standing (stationary) object.

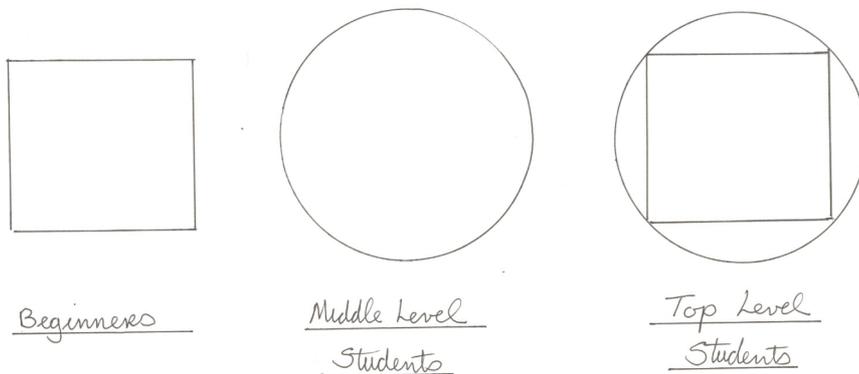
Iaido is not like suemonokiri, the enemy is moving towards or away from you, or dodging your attack. You have to understand the timing and distance of the enemy and take advantage of any weakness that he shows. Because of this the waza have periods of inactivity (sei) and action (do), some movements are slow and others are fast (so you have kankyu) and there are periods where there are pauses (ma) to see what is happening with full awareness of the enemy (zanshin). You have to harmonise all of these in iaido.

## **Main Points to Remember When You Practice**

- 1 Always try to do a real cut (think of Iwata Sensei's example). Your cuts need to be sharp.
- 2 Roughness is not good.
- 3 Too calm iai is not good.
- 4 Restlessness, fidgeting, nervousness is not good.
- 5 You need to have good attitude, confidence, gracefulness and dignity, i.e. show Fukaku. Your waza needs to show “heaviness”, “deepness” and good character.

The different levels of iai development can be represented by the diagrams below. Beginners need to learn to do things precisely and in stages. Hence their waza is rather like following the perimeter of a square, they move from “corner to corner”. At the middle level students can do the waza more fluidly so they start to knock

the corners off of the square and they can move more freely through each stage of the waza.



Hence they can be thought of as rounded in nature. However, at this stage they tend to forget the preciseness of the waza. The more experienced iaido-ka can move freely and do the waza precisely, smoothly and with Hakuryoku and Kihaku.

Iwata Sensei said “do iai with calmness, with no extra power, at the right speed and make it effective according to your body”. Remember, that even in ma and zanshin, or any period of stillness for that matter, something is moving, it may just be the eyes or you hand rather than your whole body.

The most important thing in iai is Nukitsuke. It should be done with full spirit (ki). At sayabanari it is the moment of truth, it decides if you win or lose. Most people like to practice kirioroshi because the cuts sound good, so they practice this a lot. They do not get the sound in nukitsuke so they practice it less, but this is wrong. Nukitsuke is the most important cut. In kendo you take a posture (kamae) before you start, so there is some preparation, but in iaido there is no starting kamae. When you are in seiza for Mae the waza starts even before the hands move to the tsuke to do nukitsuke, so there is no special preparation, you should already be prepared for an attack.

- 6 Too much tension is not good.
- 7 You must calm yourself down before you start the waza (think of a 6' sphere at eye level, falling through the length of your body and shrinking to a small marble at your tanden as you sit ready for the waza).

## **10 Conditions for Enbu.**

- 1 Make it appealing and interesting to the audience.
- 2 Make it lively and vigorous,
- 3 Make it “melodious” (strong and weak, fast and slow) not monotonous,
- 4 Harmonise all the elements,
- 5 Express the waza with your whole body, not just eyes, arms or sword,
- 6 Do the waza smoothly, make the movements like water,
- 7 You must convince the audience with your waza,
- 8 You must show confidence and satisfaction in you iaido, i.e. it must look like you are “speaking” to the enemy. It is as though you are saying to him “Will

- you try to move?” “Will you try to attack, even after you are cut? And such like. You must think “I’ve done my best”.
- 9 You must involve the audience in the enbu. They must generate an expectation of what is going to happen next when watching your waza.
  - 10 You must demonstrate dignity, i.e. Fukaku.

### **Main Points in All Waza (Kotsu)**

- 1 Centre of gravity – how to move properly keeping your balance.
- 2 Explosion of Spirit – Move dynamically, build your spirit and use it explosively (or smoothly), this is using Ki
- 3 Riai – You must take posture and/or move with reason.
- 4 Correct posture (and breathing) is very important in all waza.

In iaido there are waza and jutsu. Waza is superficial, jutsu is deeper with meaning and application. Waza is the outer, jutsu is the inner. But this is only a guideline, there is no standard for this, waza & jutsu are always together.

In daily life we don’t tend to use jutsu in the posture so we lean forward. So when we come to the dojo we do the waza leaning forward, this is incorrect. When you come to do iai you should use jutsu, i.e. straight posture, deep breathing etc. Correcting the bad daily habits is very important, once this has been done you can move on.

### **How to teach people at different levels**

From shodan to sandan they must learn the waza in order, so it appears very flat. You can start to show them jutsu but it is likely that they will not understand and if you concentrate too much on this they will give up and leave. However, some students will be able to grasp what you are teaching so it is worth trying to include more depth so that they can improve. If you think about the types of questions they are asking then you will be able to judge if they are ready or not. Good questions are confirmation of what they are doing, e.g. “I am doing nukitsuke like this and I am trying to use “this”, is it correct? Or I think this means “such and such” what do you think?

From Yondan to Rokudan you must teach speed, rhythm, ma, zanshin metsuke etc. You can improve their waza by teaching them better posture and deep breathing at yondan and godan.

From Nanadan and upwards you need to teach Ki (spirit). They need to start to visualise the enemy, express ki in their waza as if responding to an enemy’s attack. They have to learn to concentrate and focus on each section of the waza to give it depth and meaning and they should be able to show compassion when required e.g. in kaishaku.

### **Three main points in any waza**

Iwata Sensei says “Each waza, and each section in a waza, has a beginning, a middle and end”. The feeling and meaning is different in each case.

**Beginning** – Think of the jo ha kyu for Mae nukitsuke. It should be like a dew drop falling off a leaf. It makes its way slowly to the end of a leaf, where it gathers more and more water and when there is enough it drops off quickly and naturally. So it is a feeling of gathering your energy and spirit before exploding into the cut.

**Middle** – The main cut should be like the spark from a flint when the steel and the flint strike, a very quick short lived explosion of energy. When you are practicing you do everything slowly, but in reality it should be like the spark from the flint.

**End** – You should be able to show Yoin at the end of the waza, or section of the waza. This is like the reverberation that hangs in the air after a bell has pealed, you can still hear the “echo” of the sound. Here is where you are showing zanshin and heaviness in the waza.

So every part of the waza shows sei – do – sei, it starts in stillness (sei), goes through a period of action (do) and returns to stillness (sei).

You need to practice each waza thousands of times, but with reasoning and thought not just mindless muscle training. At each section confirm what you have done. In this way you will begin to understand and you will be able to do the waza more freely.

### **Kaigen – Iwata Sensei’s Admonation/Advice.**

- 1 Do the basics slowly, correctly and precisely,
- 2 Until you learn the waza completely keep repeating them thinking about the meaning. Learn by your body, not by your brain, so keep repeating the waza until your body knows them,
- 3 When you demonstrate in front of people do the waza the same as you do in your everyday practice. Try to be consistent, until you are consistent always challenge the waza,
- 4 Every waza has the 3 element discussed above, a start, a middle and an end, with sai, do, sai in each section. Zanshin should be expressed as much as possible, especially in noto. Zanshin says a lot about a person’s iaido,
- 5 The final goal of training is being able to move and use the sword properly according to you body. It should be your iaido, not someone else’s iaido.

### **Makino Sensei’s Advice**

In the old day’s there was a say like “once you start training you have to be prepared to practice for your whole life. You have to practice hard and correctly until you die”. Please try to remember this sentiment.”

As a closing statement, separate from the article, Makino sensei added - You (British students) have learned a lot at the seminar here in Ozu, but when you go home you have to practice what you were taught if it is to be of value. Please try to do this and pass on what you’ve learned to others.”

I hope you enjoyed the article and if there are any questions ask your own teacher or drop a line into Obi. If I cannot answer it I will ask Iwata Sensei or Makino sensei to give us the answer.

Neil