

Dojo of the Dragon Eclipse

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Seishi Do: The Way of Life and Death

Concepts and Practices for all those who seek and walk the Path

Steven M. Epler

Seishi Do: The Way of Life and Death

The life of a martial artist is the way of life and death. We discover peace through the art of war. In learning a martial art we first train our bodies to move, we become aware. Next we train to defend; whether it be ourselves, our loved ones, or the defenseless. A martial artist does not only learn the art of external warfare, but also is enlightened to the battles within. To become proficient in the physical art of self-defense is a fairly easy task, to tame the beast within and understand oneself, one's true potential and one's purpose is truly remarkable.

The art of fighting has always spanned a wide range of injury and control over another. Some may believe that a master of the arts is one who can easily kill with the efficient use of minimal technique, however, I believe a master to be one who is skilled in the art of both life and death. They evaluate each situation, determine the possible outcomes and execute their decisions according to the choices they wanted to make and not the actions that may have resulted from misguided reflex. A master is one who is aware of the many facets of conflict and may resolve such conflict in a variety of manners outside of direct physical intervention. Without mastering oneself, one cannot truly become a master of the martial arts. Those who choose to live the Way come to know it as one of several keys that allow us to open our own paths through life and death.

A martial artist will practice the art of Death to better understand the way of Life. We train first our bodies; properly trained, the body will remember to defend itself without conscious thought. In order to either take a life or save a life one must train the body. Second we train our minds; in reality our mind is always in training, however in this second stage is when the conscious mind becomes aware and we begin to further understand the training. Third we train our spirit; we learn to unite body and mind. It is through this practice that one's spirit will thrive reaching higher levels of awareness and peace within.

Seishi Do is more than a martial art, it is a concept. The goal of this ideal is to train well rounded martial artists, requiring a degree of proficiency in different types of combat. This art is structured purely for the benefit of organized learning practices and beautiful customs. The content itself is only structured within concepts. In this concept of Seishi Do, we find a balance of modern and tradition, of order and chaos, of the inner self and the physical self.

The more you travel the path the more you realize that the reason we learn the art of death is so that we may choose to live. We relentlessly practice so that we may never use the skills that we will forever hone. A true martial artist knows that the further you've traveled on the path of the Way, it no longer remains the path. The path becomes a part of you, surrounds you and carries you, you become the Way. Become one with the Way and you shall never separate from it, it will forever be merged with your soul. You do not choose to start the path or end the path; you may only discover the path. Continue the path or lose your way. If you do not yet understand the truth of this, continue the path and you will.

~Steven M. Epler

Dojo

Training hall for study of the Way. Whenever entering or leaving the dojo, one should bow to the shimen (spiritual center), or to the main wall usually holding flags, pictures or shrines. When entering the training floor, one should bow in the same manner as before. After the bow, one should first enter with their left foot (the heart) and then the right. When leaving, this is reversed leaving first with the right foot and then the left. Your heart is first to enter and last to leave. This is your place to study your way, you will treat it as such. Bowing shows respect. When entering and leaving both the dojo and the training floor, you show respect for those who have traveled the path before you, for the ones that shall follow behind you and for yourself. It is showing respect and thanking the building in which you train, the floor on which you sweat and the equipment that shares in your pain. The dojo should be kept clean and orderly. Maintain your belongings and the dojo equipment and ensure when leaving the dojo all things are returned to their proper place.

Dogi and Promotions

Dogi is the attire for study of the Way. Several uniforms will be tolerated though requested is a blue or white, single or double weave judo/jujitsu uniform. Uniforms may be mix-matched with different color tops and bottoms. All first phase students will wear a white obi (belt) when wearing proper uniform. Students who do not have proper dogi will be requested to wear comfortable clothes for working out. Pants or shorts must be held securely without risk of being pulled off. Hygiene is important. Nails will be trimmed and dogi will be presentable. Jewelry will be removed for training. Only those ranked shodan or higher are allowed to wear black dogi top (when in proper uniform, those wearing different uniform may be excused at the discretion of the head instructor).

Phase one learning is selfish learning. All things learned in phase one is learned for the sake of the student alone. They shall focus on their technique, on their footwork, their thought process and their progress. In phase one the student will be introduced to the principles and theories behind basic techniques. This phase is spent completely on the most basic of techniques and self discovery.

Phase two learning is a shared process. In this phase there are two involved, you and your opponent. During phase one you were able to practice on stationary or cooperating targets or opponents. Your target in phase two is your opponent and they do fight back. You will learn what it's like to attack something that thinks, feels and reacts to your every move. Your world is now a little bigger and your awareness grows as do your techniques. As far as your basic techniques are concerned you will now learn how to apply the concepts behind them in situations that require you to adapt in a world that is ever changing.

Phase three learning is all inclusive. In this phase you add environment to your training. One's environment could include many things from the terrain to the actual surface you're fighting on, witnesses, multiple opponents, innocent bystanders, victims, animals, inanimate objects, the weather, and anything else that happens to encompass any situation you may find yourself in. This Phase has no ending, as anything you have or will ever learn is all part of phase three learning. This is the point where martial arts truly becomes life, it's integrated into everything you do, everything you are.

A student may be given a vertical black stripe to represent their sufficient knowledge of the criteria for any one category of techniques per phase (stand up, take downs, ground). During phases one and two students may earn up to two vertical stripes, one per category. Upon completion of the students sufficient knowledge of the third category, during the first two phases, the student will be promoted to

the next phase. In the students third phase they may earn a total of three stripes (next promotion is to black belt which must be tested for). Stripes will be worn on the left side two inches from the end of the belt and multiple stripes will be separated by one half inch.

When students reach phase two, they may choose the color of their own obi. Phase two students will not be recognized by the color of their belt, but rather the black stripe that runs down its center. At phase three students will be given a black belt with a colored stripe of their choosing down the center. Once a student reaches phase two it is strongly advised they be in proper uniform (only excuse is if the student is having financial difficulty).

Shodan will be tested for upon the discretion of head instructor and after the student is able to sufficiently understand and instruct level three material with little guidance. A review board will be selected from senpai or black belts from candidate's own class (min. one, max. three) and guest black belts (minimum three, max. five) from any other class or school. Including the head instructor, the Board will consist of a minimum of five and a maximum of nine. The test will include oral examination with questions from anyone on the board pertaining to the martial arts or character of the candidate. If the Board is satisfied with the candidate's answers, the candidate will have passed this portion of the exam and move on to the next. There will be a test of endurance, technical competency and teaching ability.

Endurance: Will be up to the head instructor to decide the circumstances upon which the candidate will be judged on endurance.

Technical Competency: Candidate will be asked to demonstrate knowledge of technical performance and the concepts behind how they work. This is to include how to nullify the techniques. During this portion of the test Candidate will demonstrate Kumite ability with one and multiple opponents and allies. While demonstrating Kumite ability all phase three material will be tested to demonstrate awareness of environment.

Teaching: Candidate will show ability to teach. This may be shown however the board deems necessary.

Upon completion of the test and having been found competent in the aforementioned criteria along with having acceptable answers to the oral review, the student will then be promoted. Candidate will receive the rank of Shodan, be presented with a black belt and a certificate of promotion signed by the members of the board (solely as witnesses, the guest black belts are not giving you the endorsements of their classes) and by the head instructor. The guest black belts attest to the "shodan character" of the candidate as they have not trained you, you have not received a black belt from them. You will be accepted by them as a fellow black belt.

All should remember that the rank of Shodan and promotion to black belt only represents a seasoned traveler on the path of the Way. This is not indicative as the end of a road; for you who has now become a seasoned traveler, you are only now beginning to fully understand the journey set before you. Continue the adventure and all that you encounter will become a part of you. Awareness is the first step in understanding.

Opening

Students should arrive with enough time to be dressed and ready by the beginning of class unless previously cleared with the instructor. Students will line up in front of head instructor upon the senpai's command of "shugo". senpai will line up at the far right and all other students will be lined up to his left according to seniority. Given enough students different lines may be formed; again, from right to left. Shodan or higher will be lined to Head instructor's right while honored guest instructors will line to the left.

senpai: "Ki o tsuke" attention

senpai: "Sensei ni" Face instructor

senpai: "Rei" bow

senpai: "Shin zen/shomen ni" face spiritual center/front wall (Used if there is anything on the front wall to bow to.)

senpai: "Rei" bow

Sensei will take over class. The class will be divided into three parts: Body conditioning, Techniques and Randori

Body Conditioning

Body Hardening is practiced for several reasons. First, a student must know what it's like to hit a live opponent. The feel of hitting flesh, fat, muscle and even bone must not be foreign. You must know what it feels like to see the grimace on an opponent's face to feel muscles brace or give upon your impact. Second, the student must know what it feels like to be hit. The sharp and intense pain upon impact, the feeling when you don't tighten in time to receive a blow. Third, training in this matter allows for the conditioning of muscles nerves and bones to both deliver and receive devastating blows.

Exercises:

Gauntlet: Setup includes line of 4/5 heavy bags. Choose a length of time for intervals. Choose a number of push ups and crunches per set. Each station is to exercise upper body techniques such as punches or elbows. Given enough room between bags a run exercising lower body techniques may be executed using kicks and knees. Given an off set bag/s stations focus may be switched. At the end of the line each student shall complete the set of push ups and crunches. After all runs the set of push ups and crunches will be doubled then students will break for water. When all return repeat last set of push ups and crunches.

Rundown: Setup includes preferably one heavy bag per student, 4-6 stations. Choose a length of time for intervals. Choose a number of push ups per set. First interval upper body, then everyone does predetermined set of push ups. Second interval lower body, then everyone repeats the set of push ups. Rotate one station. If more people then stations, you will have people in a rest station until push ups. After last station double the push ups then break for water. After return repeat last set of push ups.

Lunges: May be done with weight across shoulders using a barbell, heavy bag or person. If not using weight hands should be held behind one's head and a partner should be aiding in resistance. Crossing the length of the practice floor once will be considered one pass. Will be done in pairs. Choose a number of punches and kicks to be delivered upon each set. First pass: first student will complete one lunge (more lunges will increase the difficulty), second student will strike to the torso with a set of punches, kicks or both. Repeat until first pass is complete. Upon completion of first pass, students will switch roles and complete second pass. Strikes, both punches and kicks, should be executed hard enough to be uncomfortable, but not to injure. Power of the strike will be determined by the student being struck.

Meat Grinder: Students will be paired. Choose length of intervals. Choose up to four exercises, one per set, and number of repetitions per set. First student shall hold upper arms parallel to floor and hand hands toward head (target position). Second student shall strike with punches for first interval to stomach. Everyone shall do a set of exercise 1. Students will switch roles and repeat first exercise.

Next, first student will resume target position. Second student will strike with roundhouse kicks to the upper torso

for the specified interval. Everyone shall do exercise2. Students will switch roles and repeat exercise.

First student will resume target position2 with arms held straight down at the sides. Second will strike with hook punches to the upper arm striking with forearms. Everyone will do exercise3. Students will switch roles and repeat exercise.

First student will resume target position. Second student will strike with roundhouse kicks to outer thigh. Everyone will do exercise4. Students will switch roles and repeat exercise.

Techniques

Techniques will be divided into three main categories: Stand up, take downs and ground. Each main category will be divided into two sub-categories and each sub-category into three tiers: Basic, intermediate and advanced.

Stand Up:

Hard: Techniques using direct contact to inflict a direct result. All striking arts and techniques.

Soft: Techniques using indirect contact or movements to cause an indirect result or overcome someone. Aikido, trapping and evading techniques.

Take Downs:

Dynamic: Any technique that involves removing an opponent from the ground and then rapidly reintroducing them to the ground.

Standard: Such techniques as trips, sweeps, manipulation of body mechanics and mental manipulation.

Ground:

Chokes:

Blood: Any technique that includes the cessation of blood flow to the brain. Oxygen is unable to be delivered to the brain causing tunnel vision and light headedness. When done correctly a state of unconsciousness will occur in a matter of seconds.

Air: Techniques that include the cessation of air to the lungs. Usually overwhelmed by fear and pain and can take much longer to achieve a state of unconsciousness.

Submissions: Any technique to cause such a state of pain or “uneasiness” to result in your opponent’s compliance. Some techniques, if utilized to full potential, may cause minor to severe injury or death.

Randori

Class will end with Randori, or sparring sessions, once students reach phase two. Randori may consist of ground fighting or stand up or a combination of the two. If phase one students are to participate they are to use light contact when striking. If student taps out via submission while ground fighting students will release submission, reestablish position and continue. In preparation of phase three randori may consist of multi-participant sparring as well as random encounter sparring.

Closing

At the end of class Sensei will line up the students to perform Sanchin kata. During phase one, Sensei will define the purposes and proper performance (or may have a student define them) of the kata. Sensei will lead the class through the kata teaching all movements for one run. Second run will be performed with proper breathing and muscle tension.

Sensei: “Shugo”

senpai: “Ki o tsuke”

senpai: “Seiza” formal seating position

Sensei will ask for questions, or perform a short Q&A with the students.

senpai: “Sensei ni”

senpai: “Rei”

senpai: “Shin zen/shomen ni”

senpai: “Rei”

Sensei will dismiss class.

Excluding Dojo etiquette, dogi and promotions, all other class structure is ultimately left to the head instructor and how he/she sees fit to run the class. Therefore exercises, opening/closing ceremonies, techniques, and the “meat” of the class may change from instructor to instructor and even from class to class.

Commands/Terminology							
Opening/Closing Ceremonies				General			
Sensei: Instructor, the one who comes before. senpai: Senior ranked student. Kohai: Junior student. Shugo: Line up. Ki o tsuke: Attention. Sensei ni: Face the Sensei. Shin zen ni: Face the spiritual center. Shomen ni: Face the front. Seiza: Formal kneeling position. Rei: Bow. Tatte: Stand up.				Yoi: Ready. Hajime: Begin. Matte: Wait, temporary stop. Yame: Stop, finish. Ima: Now Osu: I understand, yes, confirmation. Otagai ni: Face each other. Mokuso: Meditation. Mokuso yame: End meditation. Te o kaete: Change hands, te means hand/s Ashi o kaete: Change stance, ashi means foot/feet. Mawatte: Turn around/other way. Karada kitae: Body hardening. Kote kitae: Arm hardening. Ko ashi kitae: Leg hardening.			
Other							
Arigato gozaimasu: Thank you. Domo arigato gozaimasu: Thank you very much. Gomen nasai: (An apology) I'm sorry, Shitsurei shimasu: Excuse me							
Directions		Area		Counting			
Migi:	Right	Jodan:	Upper Level	Ichi:	1	Roku:	6
Hidari:	Left	Chudan:	Middle Level	Ni:	2	Sichi/Nana:	7
Yoko:	Side	Gedan:	Lower Level	San:	3	Hachi:	8
Mae:	Front			Shi/Yon:	4	Kyu:	9
Ushiro:	Back			Go:	5	Jyu:	10

