

Practical hints and guidance for sword owners

On taking some inspiration from Martial artists but still remaining a Backyard cutter.

I have always said that I'm a cutter and not a martial artist and this is because what I do involves the cutting up of targets. It is in no way a simulation of a battlefield event any more than it is the practice of an ancient method of duelling or even some weird form of home defense, it is simply me, with a sword, dividing one thing into two or more things in a way that takes skill and leaves me with a smile on my face. I feel that to a large degree this is the attitude of most cutters out there, we know what we're doing isn't Iaijutsu or Battodo and that means that we are free to enjoy our practices without the implication that we're secret ninjas or somesuch. Why then, if we're not practicing a martial art, do we emulate the draws and movements employed by martial artists quite so closely? It seems that even though we are the first people to separate ourselves from these practices, we are also the ones watching the movements employed by people who have clearly practiced for many years and then almost incorporating their movements sometimes rather clumsily into our own efforts. It seems that I find myself at fault here, because I clearly state that I'm not practicing a Japanese sword art and therefore shouldn't be judged on my ability to perform JSA style movements, but in the next breath I'm talking about my noto or nukitsuke, falling short on my performance of it and expecting people to judge me on a different criteria.

I think there should be some common ground between cutting and martial arts. With some techniques such as nukitsuke there needs to be a degree of modification in the movements because with for example laido, the first strike seems to always be a distracting blow rather than a cleaving, but with others such as Noto or indeed any of the 6 simple cuts we practice, maybe we should be trying to take something more from practitioners of real martial arts and stop hiding behind the convenient 'I'm just an amateur' shield. Now I'm not saying that we should change our game and all become laidoka, but maybe we should for a while start watching the movements that are common between ourselves and practitioners of the JSA and tidy up a little. Take some inspiration from laido or Kenjutsu and work on form for a bit every week. Maybe there is something beneficial to be gained for us as cutters hidden somewhere in the martial arts that we aren't properly noticing or acknowledging and maybe I should start taking a little more responsibility for my lack of decent form.

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