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Fifth Edition, August 2017



The nio protectors, Agyo (right) and Ungyo (left) are named after particular sounds; Agyo who sounds “*ah*”, meaning birth or beginning, and Ungyo who sounds “*un*”, meaning death or ending. They also represent overt strength and latent strength respectively. These concepts are prevalent throughout Kendo, especially so in the Nihon Kendo no Kata.

STEPHEN D. QUINLAN

A Beginner's Guide to Kendo

FIFTH EDITION • AUGUST 1, 2017

Formatting Conventions Used Within This Text

This text makes heavy use of formatting and of the margin space to indicate glossary entries, discussion notes, additional or important topics, numbered footnotes, and citations to the bibliography.

Bold Fonts. Terms which appear in a **bold font** can be found in the glossary which begins on p.177.

Kanji. The kanji (漢字, “*Japanese ideograms*”) for Japanese terms are listed in parentheses when they are first encountered. Most often these terms will *not* have their definitions listed alongside the kanji and the reader is urged to consult the glossary.

Hyphenation & Pronunciation. Some Japanese terms have been *artificially hyphenated* to act as a beginner’s aid in pronunciation. Also certain syntax rules for writing Japanese words in English letters, specifically the addition of a “u” to indicate a long vowel in certain situations, have been ignored. Examples would be writing *do* v.s. *dou* or *jodan* v.s. *joudan* as it is understood the “O” is pronounced “Ō”. The reader is encouraged to use the basic pronunciation guide in the appendices on p.176 to help with the pronunciation of unfamiliar terms.

Correct & Incorrect. The convention of marking something with an “O” for *correct* and an “X” for *incorrect* is used throughout.

Margin Notes. Notes pertaining to the current topic discussed in the main text appear as a boxed margin note.

A margin note.

Titled Margin Notes. Additional material of importance related to the current topic, important ideas or concepts that need to be specifically pointed out, or ones which simply require a detailed explanation appear as a titled margin note.

Title

A titled margin note.

Footnotes. Footnotes¹ are numbered throughout the main text and appear as a boxed note in the margin along with the appropriate footnote counter.

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Citations. Citations² to a reference in the bibliography appear as a footnote in the margin, however the text is simply the author of the reference material followed by the numerical bibliography entry. The bibliography begins on p.185.

² Author, [bibliography entry]

Internal Links. All references to page numbers, figure numbers, table numbers, table of contents entries, URLs, and bibliography citations are click-able links within the PDF version of this document.

Any errors within this text are those made solely by the author.

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The Concept & Purpose of Kendo

The Concept of Kendo

The concept of Kendo is to discipline the human character through the application of the principles of the Katana (sword).

The Purpose of Kendo

The purpose of Kendo is:
to mold the mind and body,
to cultivate a vigorous spirit,
and through correct and rigid training,
to strive for improvement in the art of Kendo,
to hold in esteem human courtesy and honor,
to associate with others with sincerity,
and forever pursue the cultivation of oneself.

This will make one be able:
to love his/her country and society,
to contribute to the development of culture
and to promote peace and prosperity among all peoples.



Figure 1: The kanji for Do, literally “the way”. The AJKF’s *Concept and Purpose* and the *Mindset of Kendo Instruction* embodies “do”. The *Concept and Purpose of Kendo* and the *Mindset of Kendo Instruction* were established by the All Japan Kendo Federation in 1975 and 2007 respectively.

The Mindset of Kendo Instruction

Significance of the Shinai

For the correct transmission and development of Kendo, efforts should be made to teach the correct way of handling the shinai in accordance with the principles of the sword.

Kendo is a way where the individual cultivates ones mind (the self) by aiming for shin-ki-ryoku-ichi³ utilizing the shinai. The “*shinai-sword*” should be not only directed at ones opponent but also at the self. Thus, the primary aim of instruction is to encourage the unification of mind, body and shinai through training in this discipline.

³ Unification of mind, spirit and technique.

Rei-Ho – Etiquette

Emphasis should be placed on etiquette to encourage respect for partners, and nurture people with a dignified and humane character. Even in competitive matches, importance is placed on upholding etiquette in Kendo. The primary emphasis should thus be placed on instruction in the spirit and forms of rei-ho (etiquette) so that the practitioner can develop a modest attitude to life, and realize the ideal of koken-chiai⁴.

⁴ The desire to achieve mutual understanding and betterment of humanity through Kendo.

Lifelong Kendo

Students should be encouraged to apply the full measure of care to issues of safety and health, and to devote themselves to the development of their character throughout their lives.

Kendo is a “*way of life*” that successive generations can learn together. The prime objective of instructing Kendo is to encourage the practitioner to discover and define their way in life through training in the techniques of Kendo. Thus, the practitioner will be able to develop a rich outlook on life and be able to put the culture of Kendo into use, thereby benefiting from its value in their daily lives through increased social vigor.

Overview of a Kendo Practice

Chapter Preview

AS WITH MANY MARTIAL arts, a **kendo** (剣道) practice is a very structured⁵ event containing many formalities and traditions that have been upheld for many years. The goal of this chapter is to give a short overview of a **kendo** practice, briefly explain some of the formalities, and indicate where and when they are to be observed.

At the beginning the structure of a practice and the formalities observed may seem confusing; this is to be expected as there is a lot of new information to take in, a lot of subtle dos-and-don'ts with the formalities, and a lot of new terminology to learn. You will become accustomed to all of this surprisingly quickly, and the Japanese terminology will easily be learned over time through regular repetition.

Entering & Exiting the Dojo

At all **dojos** (道場) there is usually a particular threshold or area of the building that marks the border or entrance. This may be a doorway or just an area of the practice floor. Before crossing this threshold, i.e., before entering the **dojo**, it is required that you remove your shoes. On crossing the threshold a **kendoka** (剣道家) is expected to perform a 30° **ritsu-rei** (立礼, p.28, a standing bow. This is done to show courtesy toward the **dojo** and its traditions, the martial art one is about to train in, and all those who trained in and developed the art before you.

Key Points:

1. Always remove your shoes before entering a **dojo**.
2. Always bow before entering or leaving a **dojo**.

⁵ Each dojo will have their own variations in routine and formality. Those listed here seem to be common to most.

What is a Dojo?

Dojo is composed of two characters: do (道) meaning “way” and jo (場) meaning “place”, making a dojo literally a “place to practice the way” (of kendo, for example). This implies that a dojo is not only a special historical building or place, but *any* place where one practices. This can be a traditional martial arts dojo, a gym, a school, a dance studio, or even your home or a public park. Regardless of what the location is, the same formality and etiquette is observed there as any other location.

Tai-So: “Warm-Up Exercises”

At the beginning of practice one of the **dojo's senpai** (先輩) or **sensei** (先生) may conduct **tai-so** (体操), or a warm-up⁶. In many **dojos**, **kendoka** who have **bogu** (防具), p.83, are expected to be wearing their **tare** (垂) and **do** (胴) during warm-up. However some **dojos** do not make this a requirement, leaving the decision up to individual.

To begin, the **kendoka** leading the **tai-so** calls out “**tai-so!**” and all **kendoka** form a group to warm-up together. As a part of **tai-so**, **kendoka** count out loud as a group during the exercises as this warm-up is not just for the body, but also for ones “spirit”; everyone should count as loudly as possible and with lots of energy. See p.19 for more details on **tai-so**.

Opening Formalities

After **tai-so**, a **senpai** will call “**seiretsu!**” (整列). This is the signal for all of the **kendoka** to line up on one side of the **dojo** facing the **sensei**. Everyone should carry their **bokuto** (木刀)⁷, p.62, or **shinai** (竹刀), p.63, in **sage-to** (下げ刀), p.30; senior students also carry their **bogu** at this time if it is required for the practice. It is customary to have your **do** and **tare** on before lining up if **bogu** is to be used during the practice. Thus depending on how the practice is structured, i.e., performing **tai-so** with or without your **bogu** on, you may be given a short break to put on your equipment or sometimes line up “as is”. The **sensei** will make it clear as to what you should do.

The order in which you line up is important⁸. The **senpai** who initiated **seiretsu** is always at the start of the line nearest the **shomen** (正面) and all the other **kendoka** should then line up in order of descending rank at the **senpai's** right. Multiple rows of **kendoka** are sometimes needed depending on the number of students and the size of the **dojo**. See figure 2, p.11, where for this example we assume there is only one **sensei** present. Each person should be arms length from the **kendoka** on their right side as this gives the proper spacing needed for your equipment to be set down properly.

Key Points:

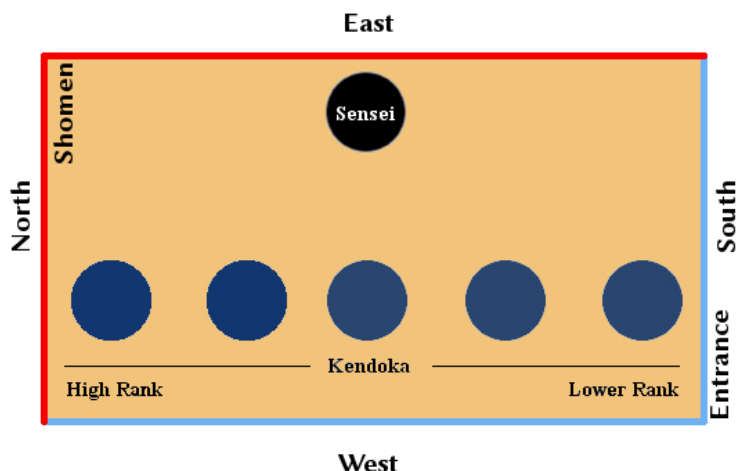
1. The use of **shinai** or **bokuto** is dictated by the type of class. Drill practice, sparring, etc... use the **shinai** whereas **nihon kendo no kata** (日本剣道の形) or basics practice use the **bokuto**.
2. Guests line up as the lowest rank unless invited to do otherwise.
3. Line up quickly and in a straight line.

⁶ For those who require a longer warm-up period, often **kendoka** will show up a bit early to practice and use the time to conduct more warm-up exercises on their own.

⁷ A **bokuto** is initially held in **sage-to** in the *right* hand and then later switched to the left hand. The **shinai** is held in the *left* hand from the start.

⁸ If you are practicing at a **dojo** other than your own, you should always line up at the end of the line, in the lowest rank position, unless invited to do otherwise.

Many **dojos** will also have **kendoka** who are of equal rank sort themselves even further for line up purposes. These sub-divisions, from higher to lower “rank” are whether or not they wear **bogu**, whether they wear the uniform, and finally by age.



After everyone is lined up the **senpai** will call “**seiza!**” (正座). This is the signal to assume the formal sitting position of the same name, p.26, however, you must wait for the proper time to sit. Once the **sensei** are seated, the remaining **kendoka** assume **seiza** starting with the highest rank down to the lowest. The first person to kneel is the **senpai**, then the next in line and so on creating a domino effect. This should be done quickly; assuming **seiza** just after the person next to you begins to move.

Once everyone is seated the **senpai** will call “**mokuso!**” (黙想). **Mokuso**, p.39, is a form of meditation used to prepare for the coming practice. It is not a simple rest period or a chance to relax. Use this time to clear your mind and prepare yourself to focus on performing the upcoming practice with your utmost concentration. **Mokuso** is usually done for about three full breaths (~30-60 seconds) and is ended either by the **senpai** calling out “**yame!**” (止め), “**mokuso yame!**”, or a similar signal.

Upon finishing **mokuso**, if a **shomen** is identified, “**shomen ni rei!**” (正面に礼) is called. All **kendoka** and **sensei** perform **za-rei** (座礼), p.28, or a seated bow, to the **shomen**. The **shomen** is always at the front⁹ of the **dojo** and bowing to the **shomen** is similar to bowing upon entering the **dojo**; a part of **dojo** courtesy. Next, “**sensei ni rei!**” (先生に礼) is called and all **kendoka** perform **za-rei** to the **sensei** (and vice versa). Finally, “**otagai ni rei!**” (お互いに礼) signals a mutual bow¹⁰, at which point everyone says “**onegai-shimasu**” (御願います). This translates to “*if you please*”, however in the context of **kendo** it implies “*please teach/practice with me.*”

Key Points:

1. At the start of practice, bowing is done to the most senior rank position first, lowest rank position last. The **shomen** is always considered the highest “rank” in the **dojo**.

Figure 2: The standard orientation of a modern kendo dojo. The north and east sides of the dojo, marked in red, are considered “high rank” while the west and south sides, marked in blue, are considered “low rank”. The **shomen** is situated at the north side (highest rank area) with the **sensei**(s) sitting on the east. Students sit on the west and the entrance is at the south (lowest rank area). **Sensei** and students line up in descending order of rank with the highest rank closest to the **shomen**. This layout is often altered according to where the entrance to the dojo is relative to the cardinal directions as an entrance cannot be located in the high rank areas. This systematic ordering has its basis in Japanese Shintoism.

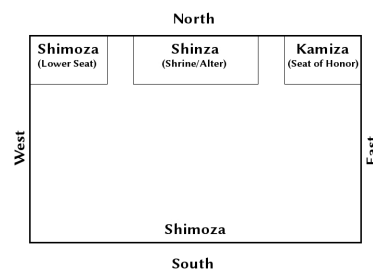


Figure 3: From Tokeshi [88], a traditional dojo layout recognizes the **shinza**, “the place where there is a god or spirit”; the **kamiza**, “the seat of honor”; and the **shimoza**, “the lower seat”, from Shintoism. In most modern kendo dojos, religious aspects have been removed and replaced with a system of etiquette that recognizes a **shomen**.

⁹ The front of the dojo is usually the north side of the dojo, opposite the entrance, unless otherwise indicated.

¹⁰ The commands used and the various bows done may differ between dojo.

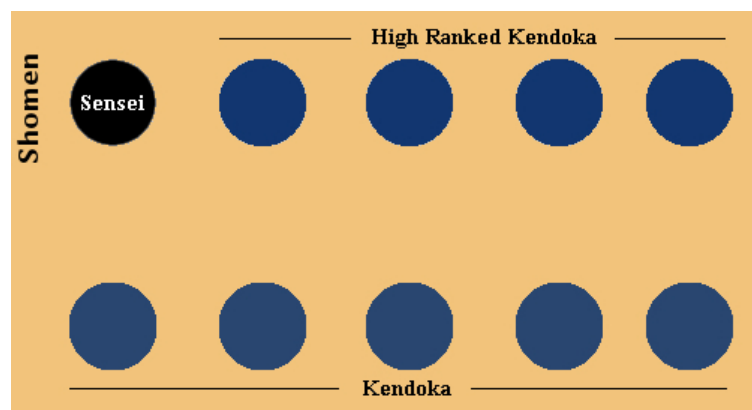
Putting on the Bogu & Beginning the Practice

While still in *seiza*, “**men (wo) tsuke!**” (面を付け) is called, if in a **bogu** class, to indicate that the **kendoka** should put on their **men** (面) and **kote** (小手). See pp.87, 88, 89, 91, and 93 on how to wear the **bogu**. The **sensei** may or may not put on their **men** at this point. Either way, it is important that you put your **men** on *quickly*, preferably *before* the **sensei** finish putting on theirs.

When you are finished putting on your **bogu**, pick up your **shinai** and stand up with it held in *sage-to* while waiting for the class to begin.

General Format for a Bogu Practice

During a standard **bogu** practice, you will pair up with another **kendoka** or **sensei** to practice drills and **waza** (技) together.



Usually the highest ranking **kendoka** will line up alongside the **sensei**, with the lower ranked **kendoka** pairing up across from somebody from this line as in figure 4. Holding the **shinai** in your left hand in *sage-to*, the relaxed position, *ritsu-rei* (15°) to your opponent and say “*onégai-shimasu*”.

Bring your **shinai** to *tai-to*, p.32, and take three sliding steps forward. On the third step *kamae-to* (構え刀), p.33, and assume **sonkyo**¹¹ (蹲踞), p.29. Stand up from **sonkyo** and perform the drill indicated by the **sensei**.

After the exercise assume **sonkyo** if appropriate. **Osame-to** (納め刀), p.33, and take five sliding steps backward. Assume *sage-to*, *ritsu-rei*, and say “*domo arigato gozaimashita*” (どうもありがとうございました) to thank your opponent.

Speed & Etiquette

It is impolite to allow a **sensei** to wait for you to get ready. You are there to wait for the opportunity to practice with them, not the other way around. It is important to put your **bogu** on as quickly as possible; the usual goal is to be able to put your **men** on in about one minute and to be dressed and ready before the **sensei** are. At the same time some try to get dressed and ready as quickly as possible and stand up *before* they have finished putting on their **bogu** properly, often putting on their **kote** and adjusting their **men** strings while lining up with a **sensei**. While this eagerness is to be applauded, impatience and a lack of attention to detail is not.

Figure 4: Initial pairing-up of **kendoka** during a **bogu** practice.

Figure 4 shows only one of the ways in which **kendoka** will arrange themselves for practice. It will be made clear how to line up during practice for each exercise or drill.

¹¹ Not all dojos will perform **sonkyo** and some dojos may not require that you assume **sonkyo** each time you begin a new drill with a new opponent.

When the current exercise is over, the **sensei** will indicate for people to rotate partners. You must change partners quickly as you must not keep the **sensei** waiting to continue with the class. This is especially important when your rotation takes you from one side of the **dojo** to the other as in figure 5.

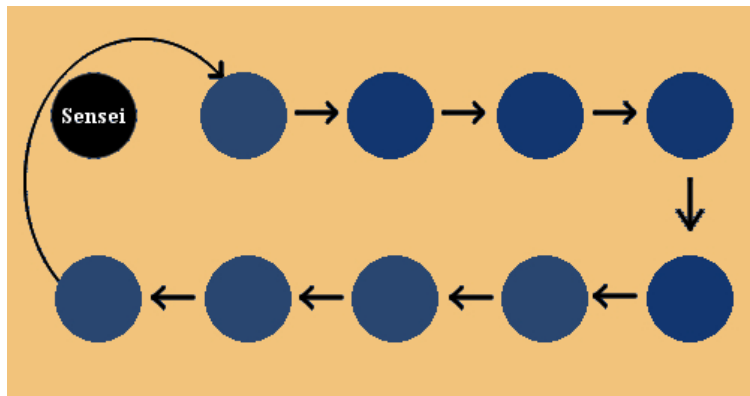


Figure 5: Rotation during practice.

Who Bows First?

It is considered proper etiquette that when bowing to a senior you bow *slightly* before they bow to you; this includes crouching into *sonkyo*. Also the more senior kendoka begins to straighten from their bow, as well as rise from *sonkyo*, *slightly* before you do.

Key Points:

1. Rotate to your next position quickly; don't keep the class waiting.

Closing Formalities

When the practice comes to an end the same formalities used at the beginning are repeated but with a few changes. First **seiretsu** and **seiza** are called. Then the **senpai** will call "**men (wo) tore!**" (面を取れ), to indicate that **kendoka** should remove their **men** and **kote**. Once removed, **mokuso** is called, then **otagai ni** and **sensei ni rei** are called, at which point everyone says **domo arigato gozaimashita**. Finally **shomen ni rei** is called.

Key Points:

1. At the end of practice the bowing order is reversed compared to the start; it starts with the lowest rank and finishes with the highest.

If you are visiting a **dojo**, or have the opportunity to practice with a particularly high ranking **sensei**, it is customary to walk up to the **sensei** once class has ended, **seiza**, and perform **za-rei** to them directly thanking them for their instruction. Finally, **ritsu-rei** upon leaving the **dojo**.

Key Points:

1. It is customary to perform another seated bow directly with a senior ranked **sensei** at the end of practice. Depending on the number of **kendoka** present, groups of 3-4 or more can bow as a group.

Rotate as a Group

When **kendoka** rotate positions between drills, everyone should rotate together. Don't begin rotating early while others are still performing their bows and other formalities, waiting for them to "move out of your spot". Simply wait for everyone to finish and rotate as a group.



Figure 6: Depiction of an Edo period (1603-1868) kendo practice using shinai and bogu.

Core, Hips, & Breathing

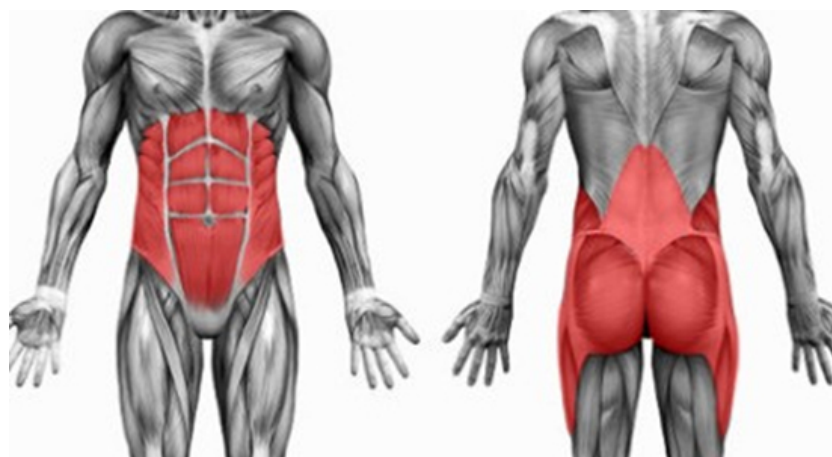
Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER DESCRIBES THREE areas of importance to **kendo**: the core, the hips, and breathing. First the muscles that make up the core are indicated. Next, the correct position and alignment of the hips are shown, and finally the method of breathing used in **kendo**; abdominal breathing. All three are intricately linked to one another.

The Core

The core, often referred to as the **koshi** (腰, “hips, waist, lower back”), is of fundamental importance in **kendo** as it relates to breathing, posture, stability, power generation, and much more. The core is essentially a group of muscles around the trunk of our body, the primary function of which is to give our body stability. The core acts as a bridge of sorts, connecting our upper body to our lower body allowing it to move in a strong and stable way.

In **kendo** it is of crucial importance to learn how to “engage” your core¹². This is done first through correct positioning of the hips, making a *slight* posterior pelvic tilt, and abdominal breathing. All of which are discussed in the following sections.

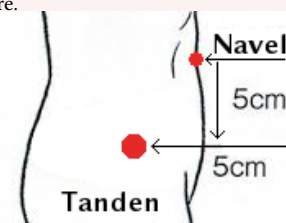


The Tanden

The idea of the core in martial arts is intricately linked to what is called the tanden. The tanden is described as an area below the navel inside our abdomen. The tanden is at our body's center of gravity and said to be the source of our energy. Many arts, including kendo, emphasize we must:

1. Straighten the spine.
2. Tuck the tail bone under the body.
3. Put strength in the tanden.
4. Relax the lower back.
5. Squeeze the buttocks.
6. Move from the hips.

According to Parker [65] and Sagi [70], all of this refers to effective use of the core.



¹² There is no single right way to go about doing this, and different methods will work for different people. However in martial arts the usual method is through emphasis on correct posture and abdominal breathing.

Figure 8: The muscles that make up one's “core”. These include muscles from the hips, waist, buttocks, abdomen, and lower back.

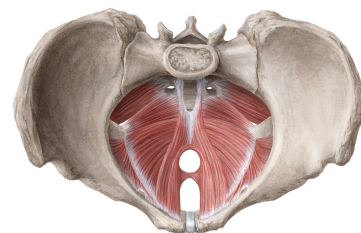


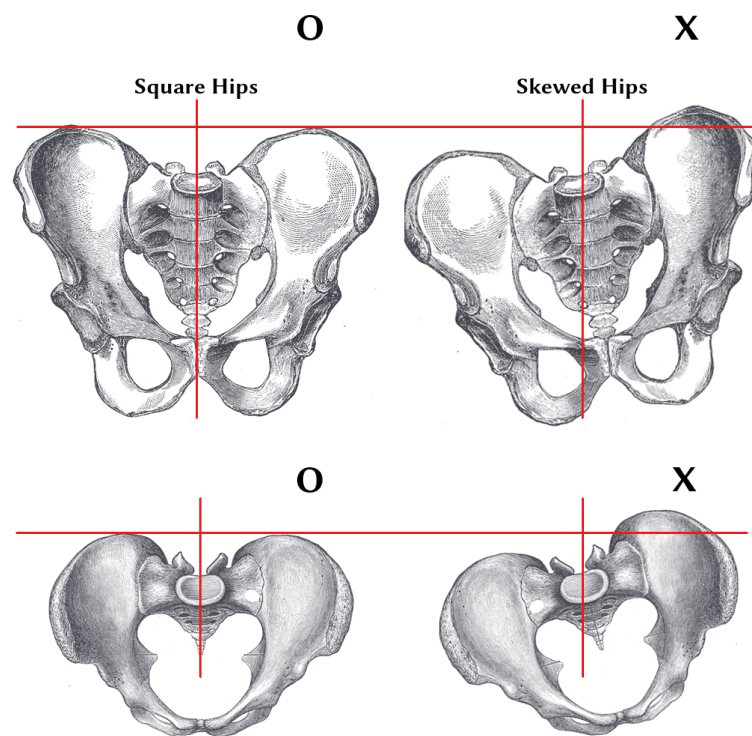
Figure 7: The pelvic floor muscles. Some include the pelvic floor muscles as a part of your core as they provide support for the pelvic organs and helps maintain optimal intra-abdominal pressure.

The Hips

Hip position affects much more than just posture, but has an impact on many different aspects of **kendo** such as posture, stability, balance, and power generation. It is important to be mindful of your hip posture right from the beginning.

Square hips. It is essential that you keep your hips square and engage your core. Engaging your core results in a *slight* “posterior pelvic tilt” due to your abdominal muscles pulling upward on the front of your pelvis. See figure 9.

Skewing your hips forward or back, upward or downward is unstable. Keep your hips and torso aligned, see figures 10 and 11.



Key Points:

1. Square hips is a key aspect of correct posture, balance, and generating power for movement and striking in **kendo**. As this ties in to so many aspects of **kendo**, it is well worth the time and effort to learn how to keep your hips square and then work on gaining flexibility and range of movement from a squared hip position.

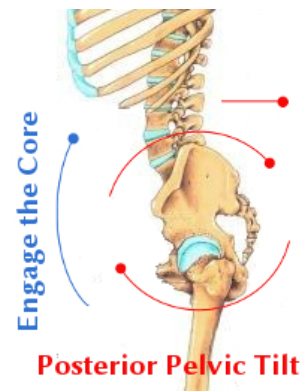


Figure 9: Posterior pelvic tilt. In kendo, starting from a neutral pelvis, engaging the core causes a *slight* posterior pelvic tilt.

Figure 10: Square hips. (Top) Frontal view of the hips skewing upward and downward. (Bottom) Overhead view of the hips skewing forward and backward.

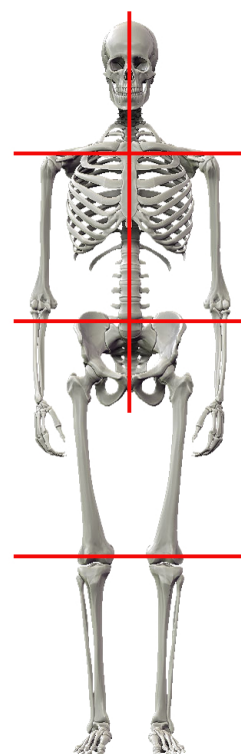


Figure 11: The shoulders, hips, and knees are parallel, the spine is perpendicular to all three. The core is a connecting bridge between the hips and the torso.

Abdominal Breathing

Breathing in **kendo** is the same style of breathing used in practicing **za-zen** (座禅), or seated (Zen) meditation. While this type of breathing is considered to be the natural way to breathe, many people find it difficult.

Most people tend to breathe with the chest; expanding on the inhalation and collapsing on the exhalation. If one watches a baby it breathes from its belly using the diaphragm and abdominal muscles to control inhalation and exhalation instead of the chest muscles. During practice, it is important to focus on breathing correctly as it serves a number of purposes.

First, by controlling our breath through abdominal breathing the upper body is kept from becoming tense, allowing us to move more fluidly and enabling the upper body to become coordinated with the lower body and legs. A relaxed upper body prevents tensed muscles from wasting energy.

Second, by keeping our breathing controlled and *rhythmic*, we help keep our brains from entering what is known as the “fight or flight” response where, essentially, the physiology of our body changes and many of our higher cognitive functions shut down.

Third, and influenced heavily by Zen philosophy, is to help us train our minds in ridding ourselves of distractions, anxieties, etc.. That is to maintain **heijoshin** (平常心) or an “*everyday mind*”.

Finally, correct breathing is an aid to maintaining correct posture, adds power and stability to our striking, and is directly linked to coordinating our body and strike together.

Holding Your Breath During Activity: The Valsalva Maneuver

In any activity, one must consistently exhale during any muscular exertion and not hold their breath.

Holding your breath, or tensing up creating resistance to your exhalation, during an activity results in what is known as the Valsalva maneuver: “*exhalation against a closed or impeded airway*”, e.g., “straining”.

While not harmful when done lightly or infrequently, extended use or when done with high pressure can have some potentially serious side effects¹³: elevated blood pressure, fainting, headache, dizziness, and vertigo to name only a few. This makes it crucial to breathe continuously in a controlled and natural manner during physical exertion.

Key Points:

1. Exhale in a slow, natural manner during any muscular exertion.

Fight or Flight Response

When the body is stressed it engages the “fight or flight” response, affecting the body physiologically and cognitively; the body shuts down unnecessary functions and our thought process becomes more “primal” and less “logical”. While this may be of benefit for simple tasks, complex tasks such as kendo become nearly impossible. Effects of this response include:

Physiologic

1. Increased pulse, blood pressure, and respiration.
2. Hearing loss.
3. Tunnel vision.
4. Shaking.

Cognitive

5. Inhibited cognitive ability: logic, rational thought, etc...
6. Increased anxiety or aggression.
7. Increased perception of negative stimuli and perception of ambiguous situations as negative.
8. Over/underestimation of ability.

There are many anecdotes on breathing in the martial arts, Deshimaru [18], Herrigel [26], Hyams [32], Watts [94], and Starr [79, 78], but it has been shown, Watkins [93] and Yackle et al. [100], that the fight or flight response can be controlled through rhythmic breathing, giving credence to breath control in martial arts.

Blood Pressure and Heart Rate During the Valsalva Maneuver

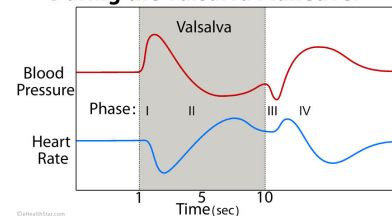


Figure 12: From Modric [55], the effects on heart rate and blood pressure during the Valsalva maneuver.

¹³ Modric [55]

Breathing using the abdomen. Engage your core and maintain throughout inhalation and exhalation. Breathe in through the nose quickly, using your diaphragm to pull the air in, not your chest muscles. As you breathe in you should feel a “ball of pressure” on the inside of your belly, as if the air is being pressed against *all sides* of your engaged core from within. Breathe out slowly through the mouth, by relaxing your diaphragm and allowing your abdominal muscles to press inward and upward. Maintain your exhalation until you feel the need to breathe in again.

During correct abdominal breathing, specifically during the inhalation, one must use their entire core to control the breath. Specifically, one should feel the muscles on the front of the abdomen, sides, and back expand/tighten during inhalation. Incorrect abdominal breathing occurs when only the front of the abdomen expands giving a “bloated” feeling.

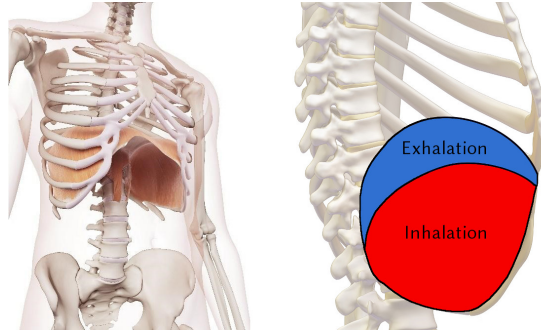


Figure 13: From Long [46], abdominal breathing emphasizes use of the diaphragm.

When one utters their **kakegoe** (掛け声) or “shout, yell” during **kendo** it is through correct and *forceful* abdominal breathing, specifically the exhalation, that one is able to help coordinate their efforts and maintain correct posture while moving by strongly engaging their core. Putting strength in the *tanden*¹⁴ (lower abdomen) causes a slight posterior pelvic tilt which reinforces correct posture which in turn facilitates movement from our center of gravity, both of which mesh together to create power and stability.

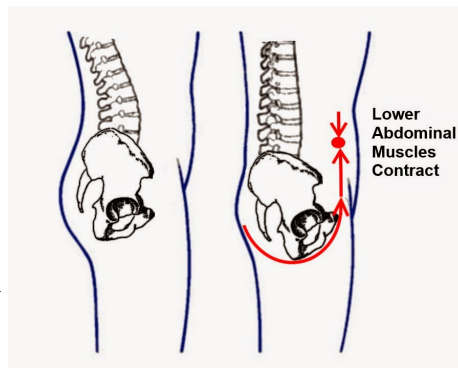


Figure 14: From Parker [65], a pelvic tilt adds power and stability to our posture and consequently our movements.

Key Points:

1. Keep your core engaged throughout. Breathe in through the nose for the count of four, out through the mouth for the count of eight (or longer). Adjust the timing to suit your needs but keep your breath rhythmic, trying to exhale longer than you inhale.
2. With abdominal breathing your chest and shoulders shouldn't move very much; let your diaphragm do the work.
3. On inhalation, you should feel internal pressure on all sides of your lower abdomen: belly, back, and both sides.

¹⁴ Parker [65]

Warm-up & Stretching

Chapter Preview

WARMING-UP BEFORE ANY activity helps prevent injuries, and enables one to perform more effectively.

A General Warm-up

A warm-up increases heart rate and the flow of blood to the muscles. Some form of stretching¹⁵ is often done with focus on the shoulders, forearms, wrists, thighs, calves, and ankles.

Static & Dynamic Stretching

Static stretching. Static stretches are done while stationary and increase one's flexibility when done regularly over the long term. Many tend to "bounce" as they stretch v.s. holding their stretch for a sustained period. During a static stretch one should maintain proper posture and stretch as far as they can *comfortably*, holding that position for about 30 seconds.

It is also necessary to relax¹⁶ the muscles that are involved in the stretch.

Dynamic stretching. Dynamic stretching stretches a muscle under the tension of use. This is usually done by continuous movements similar to the movements done in the main activity. Movement begin small and slow, becoming larger and faster as the muscles loosen to up.

Key Points:

1. Stretching is not a test to see "how far you can go". Stretch as far as you can while *maintaining proper posture*.
2. The full benefit of static stretching comes from a *slow and sustained* stretch. Dynamic stretching should start out small and slow and *gradually* increase in range and speed.

Three Types of Stretches

Static stretching is when one stretches a muscle while it is at rest, e.g., a seated hamstring stretch. Dynamic stretching is when one stretches while the muscle is in motion. An example would be stretching the hamstring by swinging the leg forward and backward in a continuous motion. PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation) stretches are a form of static stretching where one either flexes the muscle being stretched or resists through a range of motion via its antagonist. The flex or resistance is held for a period, then released and the stretch is relaxed. The same exercise is then done again however the "distance" of your stretch will have increased. PNF stretching bypasses the "stretch reflex" allowing this increase, see margin note on p.20.

¹⁵ There is still debate between having a dynamic stretching only warm-up versus including both static and dynamic stretching, see Sporting Excellence Ltd. [77]. Most dojos often perform a combination of both.

¹⁶ This is much more difficult than it may seem as it requires substantial concentration.

Safe & Effective Static Stretching

Pain. If a stretch hurts, *stop!* Reduce the distance you are stretching by a small amount until you reach *your* comfortable maximum. This does not mean to reduce your stretch so that you feel nothing. Instead, reduce your stretch so that you feel a deep stretch v.s. pain.

Relax. Try to relax the muscles you are stretching while you stretch them. Many people will find that their muscles begin to quiver or shake during a deep stretch. If this occurs, hold the position but focus on relaxing the muscles that are being stretched, breathing slowly and naturally with your abdomen. The point at which people notice this quivering is a good indication of where your comfortable maximum is.

Breathe. Breathe deeply with your abdomen while you stretch, see p.13, exhaling as you move or exert your muscles; don't hold your breath. See p.17 on the Valsalva maneuver.

Duration. Hold each stretch around thirty seconds, or two or three breaths, without "bouncing". Hold the stretch in a steady position.

Protect the knee. Never put weight on your knee with it bent more than 90°, i.e., your knee should always be directly over your ankle not ahead of it, as this puts stress on the joint which could result in injury.

Opposites. Stretch opposite muscles. If you stretch one muscle, stretch that muscle's antagonist as well.

Posture. Proper posture during a stretch is infinitely more important than how far you can stretch. Don't sacrifice your posture for stretching distance as it is a false sense of accomplishment and not effective stretching.

Never rush. Stretching must be done *slowly* and with a sense of purpose.

Key Points:

1. Static stretching requires slow, deliberate, and relaxed movements.
2. Take your time. Flexibility is built up slowly over time with practice.
3. Dynamic stretching is a good warm-up prior to exercise. Static/PNF stretching is most beneficial when done regularly over the long term.

The Science of Stretching

When we stretch, we are attempting to lengthen muscle fibers, ligaments, connective tissues, and to a small extent tendons. Ligaments and connective tissue will lengthen over time with repetition. It is the muscles that tend to make stretching difficult due to the "stretch reflex", a response of the nervous system to muscles stretching too far, too fast, or both. This causes the stretching muscles to fire inhibiting our movement. Examples of this are the "quiver" we get when we stretch deeply. This reflex is controlled by muscle spindles which monitor muscle position (length) as well as how quickly a stretch occurs and sends signals to the nervous system accordingly as a mechanism to prevent injury from slips, falls, etc. Muscle spindles react vigorously to stretch velocity compared to length which is why stretching slowly, without bouncing, is the effective way of stretching. Flexibility training is not simply making our muscles and other tissues "longer", but re-training our automatic responses to accept longer stretches before triggering the "stretch reflex"; this takes time and concentration. In a similar, but opposite way, there is the "Golgi tendon reflex", an automatic response which causes muscles to relax while stretched in order to avoid damage to the tendons. High level athletes requiring maximum range of motion make use of these reflexes to obtain the required flexibility. PNF (proprioceptive neuromuscular facilitation) stretching, fools the stretch reflex by inhibiting the muscle spindles from firing allowing us to stretch further yielding faster gains in range of motion. It requires an expert trainer to induce the Golgi tendon reflex. See Ruiz [69], *Proprioceptive Muscular Facilitation (PNF) Stretching* [67], and Wikipedia [97, 98, 99].

Common Static & Dynamic Stretches

Neck. *Static:* bend, tilt, and rotate your neck forward, backward, left, and right, holding each position.

Dynamic: continuously roll your neck through the above positions.



Figure 15: Neck warm-up.

Shoulder. *Static:* bring your right arm to your left shoulder. Grab your right elbow, and pull your arm to the left as far as possible. Don't twist your torso.

Dynamic: Swing your arms horizontally across the front of your body and then outward. Repeat this several times.



Figure 16: Shoulder warm-up.

Tricep. *Static:* bring your right hand to your left shoulder blade. Grab your right elbow and pull your arm to the left as far as possible. Don't twist your torso or bend your neck to the left.

Dynamic: Swing your arms upward bending your elbows and try to touch the backs of your shoulder blades. Swing them forward and then repeat.

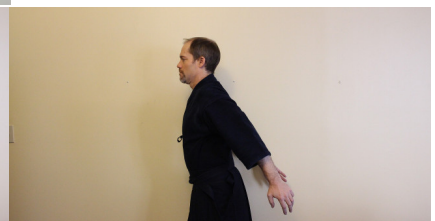
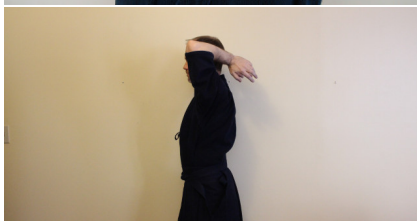


Figure 17: Stretching the tricep.

*Shoulder & upper back. **Dynamic:*** stand up straight with your shoulders and neck relaxed. Slowly rotate the shoulders in a circle being sure to extend them as far forward, upward, backward, and down as possible on each rotation.



Figure 18: Warming-up the shoulder and upper back.

*Wrist. **Static:*** grab your right hand, palm away from you. Extend your arms forward. Pull your right hand toward you, stretching your wrist.
Dynamic: make a fist and continuously bend the wrists, forward and backward.



Figure 19: Stretching the wrist.

*Quads. **Static:*** while standing bring your left foot up behind you. Pull your foot up behind you as far as possible using one or both of your hands. Do not lean forward as you pull your foot up.



Figure 20: Stretching the quads.

Hamstrings. Static: sit on the floor with your legs in front of you making sure you are on your sitting bones. Keeping your toes pointing up and bending at the waist, lower your chest toward your knees. When at your maximum, lower your chin toward your chest.

Dynamic: while standing, swing your leg forward, knee straight, as high as you can stretching your hamstrings. Swing the leg backward, knee bent, as far as you can pressing your foot to the ceiling stretching your quad. Keeping your hips square and a straight posture. Repeat several times then switch legs.



Figure 21: Stretching the hamstrings.

Hip. Static: get on to your hands and knees, hands directly below the shoulders. Bring your right foot forward between your hands with the knee bent at 90°. Fully extend your left leg backward.

Dynamic: while standing, bring your knee to your chest then back down and switch legs. Repeat this several times. Keep your hips square and posture straight throughout.

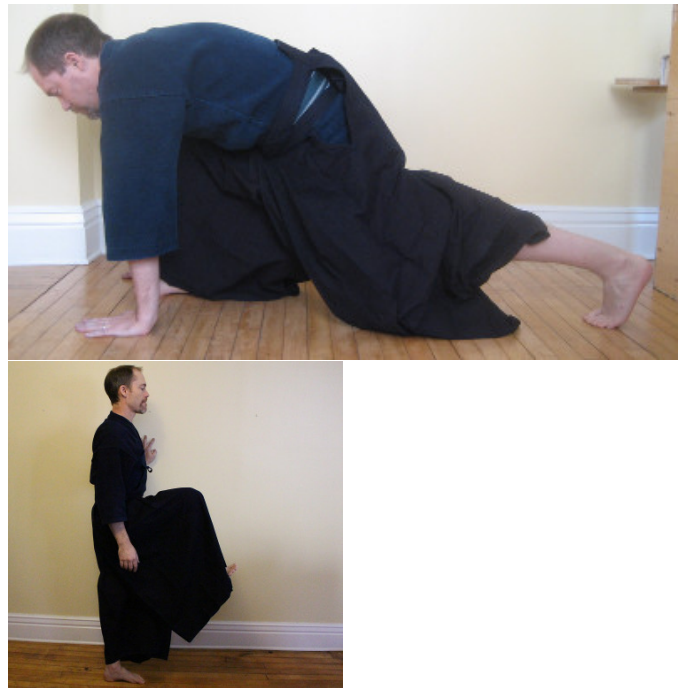


Figure 22: Stretching the hip.

Ankle. Static: while sitting grab your foot and bend your ankle forward, backward, left, right, internally, and externally, pausing at each position. **Dynamic:** while standing or sitting slowly rotate the ankle in as large a rotation as possible.



Figure 23: Ankle warm-up.

Achilles tendon & calf. Static: stand up straight putting your hands against a wall if needed. Bend your right knee 90°. Keeping your left foot fully on the floor, extend it out behind you keeping your toes pointing forward.

Dynamic: stand with your toes on the edge of a step or stair with your heels hanging over the edge. Slowly lower heels down over the edge such that they sink below the level of your toes. Then, using your calf muscle, raise your heels up ward by standing on your tip-toes. Repeat this several times being sure to sink all the way down and lift all the way up.



Figure 24: Stretching the Achilles tendon.

Key Points:

1. It is in your best interest to be sure that you are sufficiently warmed-up before you begin your practice. If you require a longer warm-up than provided, it is up to you to ensure you take the time needed before practice.

Rei-Ho: “System of Etiquette”

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER WILL GIVE details on the **rei-ho** (礼法), the “system of etiquette”, observed in a **kendo dojo**. Explanations for the various formalities are given along with a number of points on what one should and should not do. In particular, this chapter will discuss:

shizentai (自然体), p.25

seiza, p.26

rei, p.28

sonkyo, p.29

sage-to, p.30

tai-to, p.32

kamae-to, p.33

osame-to, p.33

bogu setup, p.36

carrying the **bogu**, p.37

According to *Jim Breen's Online Japanese Dictionary* [38], **rei** means “expression of gratitude”. Often simply translated as “courtesy” **rei** can be broken into two subdivisions: **rei-gi** and **rei-ho**. **Rei-ho** is the “technical” aspects of **rei**, i.e., how to bow, stand, line up, etc. **Rei-gi** (礼儀) are the reasons behind the courtesy, i.e. why you want to show the courtesy.

Shizentai: The “Natural” Posture

Shizentai translates to “natural body”, i.e., natural posture¹⁷. While in the **dojo** stand in **shizentai** whether receiving instruction during a class, during a short break between exercises, or simply waiting for class to begin. Your posture greatly affects your ability to learn and perform proper strikes and **waza** in **kendo** and can even affect **kamae** and footwork. Attention to **shizentai** is essential.

¹⁷ According to Musashi [58], “All in all, regarding your physical carriage in (military) strategy, it is vital to make your normal, everyday posture your strategic posture, and to make your strategic stance your usual stance. You must investigate this thoroughly.”

Foot position. From a normal standing position with the feet side by side, angle the toes outward by about 15°–30° and bring the heels in toward one another.



Figure 25: (Left) Normal standing position. (Right) Shizentai; the toes are angled outward 15°–30°, heels touching.

Shizentai. Stand with hips & shoulders square, arms at your side. Bring the shoulders and neck back straightening your posture. Extend the spine by pointing the top of your head, *baihui* (百會) point in Chinese martial arts, *hyakue* in Japanese, straight up; the chin will naturally tuck in slightly toward the chest. Engage the core, p.15, causing a *slight* posterior pelvic tilt, p.16; this is to actively “connect” the torso to the hips to create a strong posture, *not* to completely flatten the lower back. Legs should be straight but not locked and feet should be pointing out by a small angle, heels together. The body should be relaxed.



Figure 26: Shizentai: the natural posture. (Left and Center) A kendoka standing in shizentai. (Right) From Sagi [70], “flattening” the cervical and lumbar spine by pointing the baihui point on the head upward and “tucking the tail bone under the body” respectively.

Seiza: The Formal Sitting Position

The modern standardized formal sitting position is called **seiza** and is used frequently in **kendo**. The following description assumes a **kendoka** is assuming **seiza** without a **shinai**, **bokuto**, or **bogu**.

From **shizentai** take a small step back with your left foot and kneel down on your left knee keeping the bottoms of your toes in contact with the floor. Then, kneel down onto your right knee. The toes of both feet are still in contact with the floor.



Figure 27: Assume seiza by kneeling onto your left knee then the right.

Lower your hips and momentarily sit on the back of your heels. Raise your hips back up slightly, then relax your toes and flatten your feet out behind you. The tops of your feet are in contact with the floor. Lower your hips again and sit down onto your ankles.

Your toes can be in one of two positions, either on the floor side-by-side or the big toes can cross over one another.



To get up from **seiza**, reverse the process for entering into it; standing up on the right foot then the left.

Figure 28: Flatten your toes then sit on your heels.

Key Points:

1. Enter into **seiza** moving the left foot, then the right. Get up from **seiza** with the right foot first, then the left.
2. Never use your **shinai** to help you get up.
3. Many will find **seiza** difficult. It is acceptable to wear knee pads if necessary; it will become easier as you gain flexibility.
4. If you cannot assume **seiza** due to injury, you will be shown ways to modify it according to your ability.

Variants of Seiza

A variation of **seiza**, known as *kiza* (跏座), used in other martial arts is to remain sitting with the toes underneath you instead of flattening them out. While there is no *rule* against this, this is generally not used as a part of kendo etiquette.

*Rei: "Bowing"**Ritsu-Rei: "Standing Bow"*

Ritsu-rei is used upon entering or leaving the **dojo**, and before and after performing a drill or practice with an opponent.

From **shizentai**, p.25, bend at the hips, tilting your body forward about 15°, and maintain your gaze forward¹⁸.

If you are performing **ritsu-rei** where a higher level of courtesy is required, bow at an angle of about 30°. Do not maintain your gaze forward during this version of **ritsu-rei**.

You should not allow a senior to start bowing before you do. You should strive to bow first to them.



Figure 29: Proper ritsu-rei position.

Be sure to bend at the hips and not the shoulders or neck when you bow. The hips, back, neck, and head should all stay in a straight line; don't let your neck or shoulders to "curl".

¹⁸ Maintaining your gaze forward does not mean to keep your face forward by bending your neck back; it refers only to your keeping your eyes looking forward. This can be visualized as being similar to somebody "looking over the tops of their glasses."

Za-Rei: "Sitting Bow"

Za-rei is used when a higher level of courtesy is required¹⁹.

Assume the **seiza** position as outlined on p.26. Place your left hand on the ground in front of you, maintaining your gaze forward.

Place your right hand on the ground, your gaze still in the forward direction. The index fingers and thumbs of your hands should make a triangle shape on the floor.

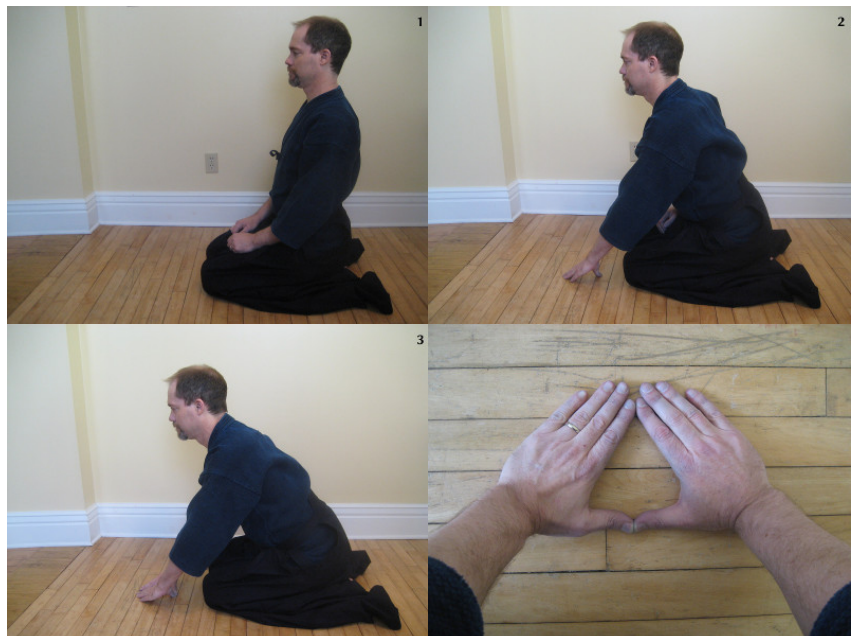


Figure 30: From seiza, place your hands on the ground.

Bend at the hips and perform a seated bow. Your nose should point into the center of the triangle your hands are making. Your forearms ought to be touching or nearly touching the floor. Do not bend so far forward that somebody seated in front of you could see the back of your neck; this is improper.

Straighten up and return your gaze to the forward direction. Bring your right hand, then the left, back onto your thighs.



Figure 31: Bend at the hips when performing za-rei.

Sonkyo: The Formal Crouching Position

Sonkyo is the formal crouch in **kendo** and is unique to Japanese **rei-ho**. It is derived from a more formal type of movement while kneeling called *shikko* (膝行) which was used to show respect and humility toward a senior.

Assuming sonkyo. Stand with your feet in the standard **kendo** footwork position, see p.43. While remaining on your toes, rotate your left heel inward about 45° and your right heel inward by about 15°. Keeping your back straight squat down such that you are sitting on your heels. The centerline of your hips will naturally rotate toward your left leg by about 15° to 45°, but your torso and **shinai** or **bokuto** should remain along your original centerline.

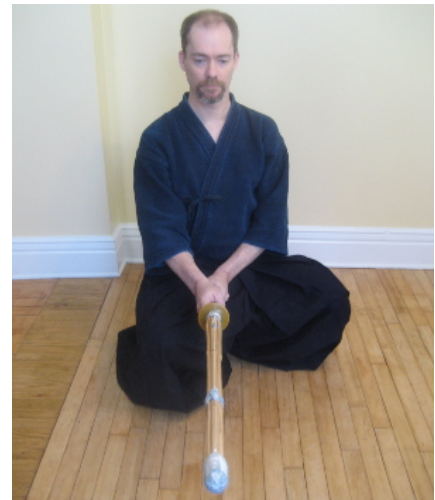
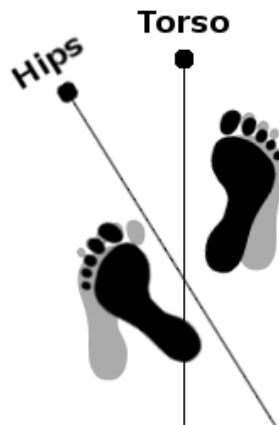


Figure 32: The sonkyo position.

Key Points:

1. Keep your posture straight while assuming and sitting in **sonkyo**.
2. If you cannot assume **sonkyo** due to injury, it can usually be modified to accommodate the individual.

Carrying the Bokuto & Shinai: Sage-To

In the **dojo**, there are certain formalities that must be observed. One of the most important is how one carries the **shinai** and **bokuto**. They both represent a **katana** (刀) and *must be treated as though they were the real thing*. **Sage-to**, “*hanging sword*”, is the correct way to carry your weapon.

Always remember that the shinai and bokuto represent a real blade while you are in the dojo.

Sage-to. Hold the **shinai** in your left hand, blade side in your palm, below the sword guard. The grip is primarily with the thumb and index finger, however all fingers are closed. A **bokuto** is held in **sage-to** in the right hand. Often both the long and short **bokuto** are carried together; the short **bokuto** is held with the thumb and index finger, the long between the index and other three fingers.



Figure 33: (Left) Gripping the shinai, (Right) gripping both bokuto in sage-to



Figure 34: Proper sage-to position. Let the shinai or bokuto hang naturally at your side without opening your fingers. The shinai is held in the left hand, the bokuto in the right hand.

Key Points:

1. Never rest the **shinai** or **bokuto** on its tip.
2. Don't spin or twirl the **shinai** or **bokuto**.
3. Treat the **shinai** and **bokuto** as real blades.

Laying Down & Picking Up the Shinai & Bokuto

Shinai. Holding the **shinai** in **sage-to** in the left hand, crouch down onto your left knee and place the tip of the **shinai** on the floor, then the sword guard.

Bokuto. Holding the **bokuto** in **sage-to** in the right hand, crouch onto your right knee and set it (or both) down on your right side. If the short **bokuto** is also carried, the short sword is set down closest to you, the long sword just beside it. The blade side of a **bokuto** should always be facing toward you.



Figure 35: Kneel to lay the shinai down.

Picking up the shinai or bokuto.

When picking up your **shinai** or **bokuto**, the above process for setting it down is reversed. If you drop your **shinai** or **bokuto** on the floor, to pick it up position yourself with the handle in front of you, then kneel down and pick it up with both hands; do not bend over and pick it up.

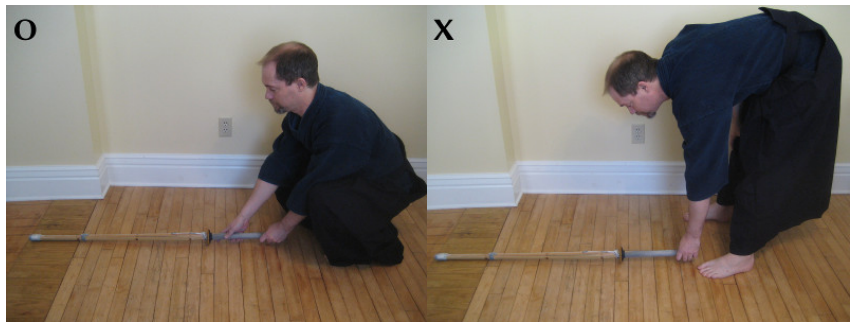


Figure 36: (Left) Properly and (Right) improperly picking up a dropped shinai.

Key Points:

1. From **sage-to** a **shinai** is put down on your left. For **bokuto** from a right handed **sage-to** put it down on your right.
2. Lay the **shinai** or **bokuto** down gently and quietly; tip then handle.
3. If carrying both long and short **bokuto**, the short **bokuto** is always set down closest to you and the long **bokuto** just beside it. The blades of each should be facing you. You may use both hands when setting the **bokuto** down.
4. Always pick up a dropped **shinai** or **bokuto** up by the handle.
5. Dropped or not, always crouch down to pick up a **shinai** or **bokuto**; don't just bend over.



Figure 37: Setting down the bokuto from **sage-to**. The blades should face toward your body with the short bokuto closest to you, both sword guards level with your knee.

Drawing & Sheathing: Tai-To, Kamae-To, & Osame-To

There is a proper way for **kendoka** to “draw” and “sheathe” their **shinai** or **bokuto** during practice depending on the setting.

Tai-To: The Ready Position

Tai here means “*belt, obi, sash*” and **to** means “*sword*”. Thus **tai-to** can be interpreted as the command to “wear your weapon in your belt”. **Tai-to** mimics the position one assumes when about to draw an actual sword from a sheathe worn in the traditional belt/sash.

Tai-to, sometimes referred to as **tai-to shisei** (帯刀姿勢), is an intermediate step for both drawing and sheathing your weapon that is between **sage-to** and your active fencing stance.

Shinai. From **sage-to**, bring your left hand up to your hip. Without changing your grip, place your left hand thumb on the sword guard. This is done only if you *not* wearing **kote**. The sword should be angled downward about 30°–45° with the end of the handle at your centerline.

Bokuto. **Tai-to** with a **bokuto** is the same as with a **shinai**. However as a **bokuto** is held in **sage-to** with the right hand, it is first passed from the right hand to the left in front of the body, hands at about navel height. Once in the left hand, lower your right hand and directly assume **tai-to**.



Figure 38: Place your thumb on the sword guard for tai-to if not wearing kote.



Figure 39: (Left) The end of the handle of the shinai or bokuto is on your centerline, (Right) the shinai or bokuto tilts at an angle of 30°–45° below your hip.

Key Points:

1. In **tai-to** place your thumb on the sword guard if you are *not* wearing the **kote**; leave it off if **kote** are worn.
2. The end of the handle should be on your centerline.
3. The sword should be angled such that the end of the handle is higher than the tip, approximately 30°–45°.

Kamae-To: “Drawing” the Bokuto & Shinai

Kamae (構え) means “stance”. Thus, **kamae-to** is interpreted as the command to “bring your weapon into position” or “assume your stance”²⁰.

Kamae-To from Sonkyo

Kamae-to from **sonkyo** is always used at the first drill with an opponent, for sparring, and at competition matches.

1. From **sage-to**, **tai-to** and, starting on your right foot, take three sliding steps forward using **ayumi-ashi** (歩み足), p.46.
2. On step three, grab the handle with your right hand below the guard.
3. As you finish your step pull the **shinai** or **bokuto** forward as though pulling it out of a sheathe and begin to crouch into **sonkyo**, p.29.
4. As you crouch, turn your right hand over bringing the tip from behind you to point toward your opponent. The tip should make a circular arc going over your shoulder²¹ and into **kamae**.
5. As you finish drawing the sword, grab the handle with your left hand and come fully into **sonkyo**. You should be in a crouched version of the **chudan no kamae** (中段の構え), p. 49.

Kamae-To While Standing

Kamae-to from a standing position is the same as that from **sonkyo**, however during the third step one remains standing. This is often used between drills, resuming practice after adjusting equipment, etc...

Osame-To: “Sheathing” the Bokuto & Shinai

Osame is from the verb *osameru*: “to put away”, giving it the meaning “put away your weapon”. **Osame-to** can be performed standing or in **sonkyo**. The process is the reverse of the corresponding **kamae-to** save that one takes five small steps back to the initial **rei** position, not three.

²⁰ During **kamae-to**, it is understood that this command always indicates the **kendoka** is to assume **chudan no kamae**.

Start How Far Apart?

When **kendoka** meet to perform a drill, spar, or tournament match they perform **rei** a distance of nine steps apart. For **kamae-to** they take three large steps forward to meet at the mid-point. For **osame-to**, from the mid-point they take five small steps backward to their starting position nine paces from each other. Beginners often need to practice adjusting their steps to get the forward and backward distances correct.

²¹ There is a slight angle as you draw according to Inoue [34]. The tip moves diagonally from over the left shoulder down into **kamae**.

The process of assuming **sonkyo** and drawing ones weapon should be considered as one smooth step, both actions done simultaneously.

As Inoue [33] and Inoue [34] explain, bring the **kensen** vertically up and then back to your left side into **tai-to** when performing **osame-to**. Never bring the **bokuto** to the **tai-to** position from below or from the side.

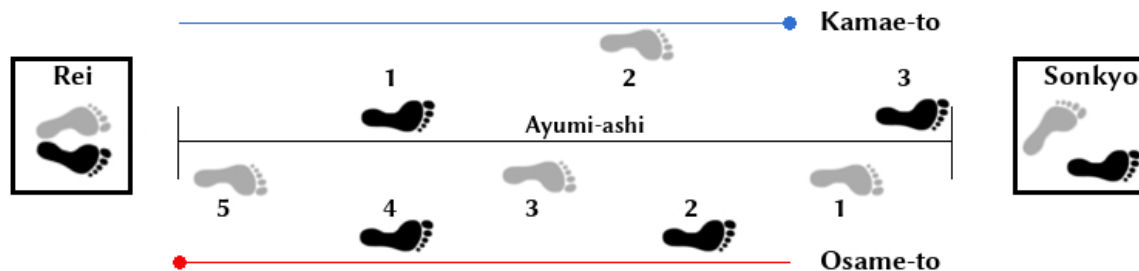
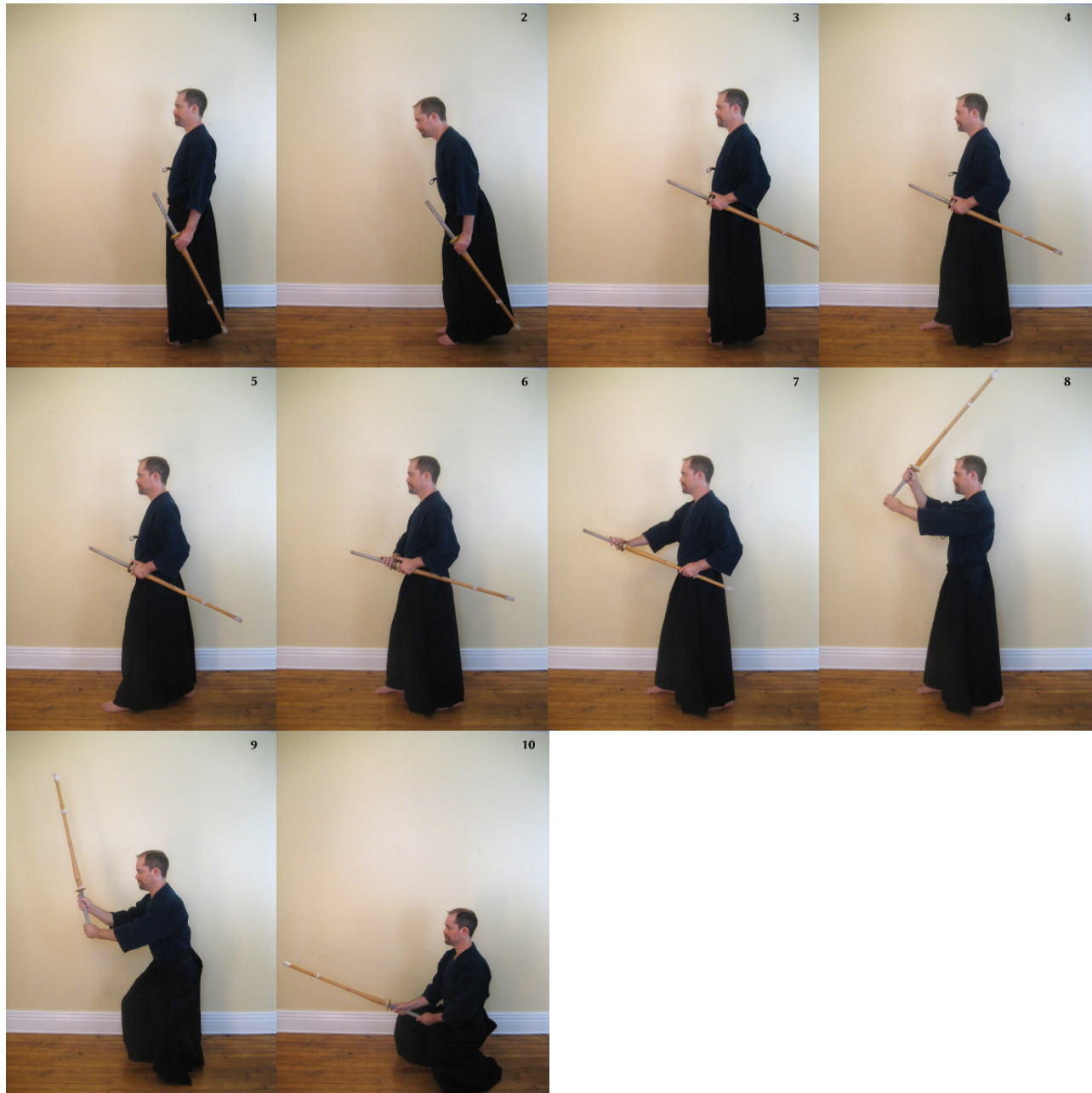


Figure 40: Schematic diagram of **kamae-to** and **osame-to** from **sonkyo**. Three steps forward for **kamae-to** and five steps back for **osame-to** respectively.



Key Points:

1. For **kamae-to** take three large steps forward using **ayumi-ashi**, p.46.
2. Bring the tip diagonally up and over the left shoulder, never horizontally across from your hip.

Figure 41: Kamae-to via sonkyo. The process is: sage-to, rei, tai-to, three steps forward, and “draw” the shinai or bokuto as you crouch into sonkyo. With bokuto, one switches from sage-to in the right hand to tai-to in the left after the bow.



Key Points:

1. For **osame-to** take five small steps backward using **ayumi-ashi**, p.46.
2. Bring the tip up and over your left shoulder to your hip, *never* horizontally across your body.

Figure 42: Osame-to via sonkyo. From sonkyo "re-sheathe" the shinai or bokuto, stand up into tai-to, take five steps back, sage-to, and then rei. With a bokuto, one switches from tai-to in the left hand to sage-to in the right and then bows.

Setup & Carrying of the Bogu

There are a number of formalities for how one handles their **Bogu**.

How to wear the bogu will be covered in detail beginning on p.87.

Setting up the Bogu

The **bogu** and **shinai** are setup with the **shinai** on the left and the **bogu** at the front-right of the **kendoka**. The sword guard of the **shinai** should be level with the knee when sitting in **seiza**.

With the **bogu** still tied up, assume **seiza** resting the **bogu** on your lap. See p.95 on how to tie the **bogu** up for storage.



Figure 43: Assume seiza with the bogu.

Remove the **kote** and lay them on the floor, perpendicular to you, in front and to the right of your right knee. The fists of the **kote** should point to your right.

Set the **men** on top of your **kote** with the **men-tate-gane** (面縦金) sitting on the wrists of the **kote**. The **men-himo** (面紐) should be placed neatly inside the **men** itself.



Figure 44: Setting out the kote and men.

Set the **do** and **tare** (still tied together) on the floor in front of the **men** and **kote**, or untie the **tare** from the **do** and place the **tare** on top of the **do**.

Either fold the **tenugui** (手拭い) and place it inside the **men** or lay it unfolded across the top of the **men**.



Figure 45: Set the do and tare down in front of the men.

Key Points:

1. Not all **dojos** demand that the **kote** point to the right, and not all will set up the **tare** and **do** in this manner. There are always exceptions and variations in formalities. If you visit another **dojo**, simply adapt to the customs used by the **dojo** you are in.

Picking up & Carrying the Bogu

When **kendoka** are told to **seiretsu**, p.10, at the beginning of a **bogu** class, they need to pick up and carry their **men**, **kote**, and **shinai** prior to lining up.

Kneel onto your left knee beside your **bogu** and put down your **shinai**.



Figure 46: Set your shinai down while kneeling beside your bogu.

Pick the **men** up in your right hand, the **men-gane** (面金) in your palm and the chin facing away from you. Hold the **men-dare** (面垂) against the **men-gane**. Put the **tenugui** and **kote** in the **men**, the fists of the **kote** pointing toward you. Then pick up your **shinai** in your left hand and hold it at the waist.



Figure 47: Hold the men in your right hand, the shinai in your left.

Stand up from **seiza** with your **shinai**, and hold it in **sage-to**. While holding your **shinai** and **bogu** in this manner, proceed with **seiretsu**.

When **seiza** is called, kneel onto your left knee, put your **shinai** down, reverse the process for picking up the **men** and **kote**, and then complete **seiza**.



Figure 48: Shinai in sage-to, men and kote in your right hand.

When carrying the **men** be sure the **himo** are tucked neatly inside, and the **men-dare** are held against the **men**. Don't carry the **men** under your arm, or have it hanging at your side one-handed. Instead, hold it neatly in the palm of your hand.



Figure 49: Hold the men and men-dare in the palm of your hand.

Key Points:

1. Don't hold the **men** like a "football" under your arm. Hold it in the palm of your hand in front of your body.
2. Be sure the **men-himo**, **kote**, and **tenugui** are placed neatly inside of the **men**.

Mokuso: “Meditation”

Chapter Preview

Mokuso is the meditation done at the beginning and end of a practice alongside the other formalities²². The purpose of **mokuso** is briefly given, followed by sections on posture and breathing during **mokuso**.

The Purpose of Mokuso

Mokuso is a form of meditation done at the start and end of a practice.

While the practice of **za-zen** and its influence²³ with respect to **kendo** are beyond the scope of this text there are a few aspects which should be discussed. The purpose of **mokuso** is: learning to breathe properly, and to bring oneself into a specific state of mind. This mindset is that of being focused, but not dwelling²⁴ on one thing in particular. A Zen quotation on this point is:

“The moons reflection on the surface of the stream doesn’t move, doesn’t flow away. Only the water goes by.”

This is difficult to achieve. The moons reflection on the stream represents our mind, and the stream represents our thoughts and ideas. While the rippling of the stream causes the reflection on it to waver briefly, the reflection remains, unmoving.

Key Points:

1. **Mokuso** at the start of practice is to set the proper state of mind needed during **kendo**. Take this time to prepare yourself.
2. The style of breathing and the posture for **mokuso** is the same as that used during **kendo** practice itself.
3. **Mokuso** at the end is a chance to remind yourself of the proper state of mind, regardless of what occurred during practice.

²² The practice of mokuso stems from (Zen) Buddhism which, along with Shintoism, Confucianism, and Taoism, were major influences on modern kendo through their influence on its founders. Many aspects of kendo tradition originate from these four ideologies.

²³ Herrigel [26], Stevens [81], Takuan [85], Deshimaru [18], and Leggett [45]

²⁴ Cleary [14] quotes Japanese Zen master Takuan as indicating that “focusing on your breathing and your ‘hara’ is a beginners device to train the mind, but is itself causing you to dwell and focus. After a time, this tool must also be left behind.”



Figure 50: “The moons reflection on the surface...”

The following excerpt²⁵ discusses **mokuso**:

*“Kendo practitioners are not professional meditation practitioners. They do not take the lotus position²⁶. They take the folded-knee posture, which was the formal sitting posture of the samurai as well as of cultured people in the Tokugawa period. Even today, cultured Japanese sit on their matted floors in the folded knee posture. But there is a subtle difference between the two postures, that taken by the cultured people and that taken by the samurai. Because the samurai were required to be alert at all times, their big toes on both feet were positioned close to each other-not overlapped or spread apart-so that they could be used to spring up in case of a sudden attack. The kendo practitioner today, therefore, uses this formal position in the dojo (unlike a judo practitioner, for example, who sits with his feet folded in front). Aside from this subtle difference, kendo meditation posture is identical with that of Buddhists; the practitioners sit in an upright position (back straight, shoulders relaxed, chin up but placed close to the throat) with the eyes closed (or half closed, the eyes then focused on the tip of the nose). Above all, they must breathe deeply, silently, and rhythmically, and preferably count numbers-for example, one to four-repeatedly. This kind of meditation is referred to as **ana-apana** in Sanskrit, **shu-hsi kan** in Chinese, and **susoku kan** in Japanese, that is, counting-number meditation. It is derived from the ancient yogic practice as a means to concentrate on numbers and thereby eliminating external distraction.*

For Mahayana Buddhists, the purpose of meditation is two-fold. First, it is to develop one-pointed concentration, to empty the mind, and get rid of discursive thoughts. The kendo practitioner does the same in order to get rid of attachments. But whereas the Zen practitioner faces the wall to realize one-pointed concentration, the kendo practitioner faces the opponent to realize the same. Meditation as such is simply a ritual to establish the proper mindset.

We have said that both Shingon Mikkyo and Zen have had a considerable impact on classical kendo, but the goal of Shingon Mikkyo is to realize human-cosmos integration. Aren't the meditation schemes formulated by these two schools of Buddhism different? Only their expression is different. The ultimate goal of both schools is to cultivate direct cognition.

*That which has realized it is referred to as the true self. Technically, the true self in Shingon Mikkyo is referred to as **nyojitsu chi-jishin** or 'knowing ones own mind, just as it is', cited in the *Mahavairocana-sutra*; in Zen it is referred to as **kensho**, 'knowing the true state of mind', an expression cited by Huineng, the sixth patriarch. These two terms correspond to **mushin**.*

Mushin was previously described as the alternate state of consciousness. We now need to be more specific. Mushin, as the two terms cited above illustrate, actually refers to reconstruction of the human consciousness that which is absent of verbal fabrication, has become aware of the true self, and has developed the ability to exercise direct cognition.

²⁵ Kiyota [42]

²⁶ The lotus position is where one sits cross legged, with the right foot resting on the inner left thigh and the left foot on the inner right thigh.



Thus, although meditation, whether Shingon Mikkyo or Zen, is usually practiced within the confines of a hall today, many skilled swordsmen practiced meditation in isolation, outdoors, often on a hilltop. In doing so, they faced the cosmos itself. In the clarity of this natural solitude, there is no intrusion of human scheming and calculation²⁷, of convention and intellectualism. Because the purpose of meditation is to look inside oneself, some also meditated inside a cave for prolonged periods-sometimes weeks-cutting themselves off from outside influence.

Mushin was described categorically for the sake of convenience. These categories are actually conceived of as one discipline to be realized all at once. There is no time to pass through graded and fragmented states in the development of discipline when one is faced with an opponent who is ready to attack at lightning speed. To this extent, then, notwithstanding the fact that kendo meditation is designed to set the stage to realize mushin, it is not based on a gradual doctrine. It is abrupt. Even the term mindset is not just a preparatory stage to realize mushin. Actually, a practitioner goes through the gradual stage (establishing a proper mindset) and then realizes the abrupt, just like a college student who enters as a freshman, goes through graded stages of the educational process, and finally receives his or her diploma. At that time, what was gained through the gradual stage is distilled into wisdom, not fragmented knowledge. The impact of Shingon Mikkyo and Zen on kendo is pronounced because the meditation schemes both represent stem from an abrupt doctrine.

Take the case of one-pointed concentration in the context of kendo. It will be recalled that one-pointed concentration requires the practitioner to focus on the opponent. The question is, what part of the opponent? He should focus on the opponent's eyes. The eyes tell everything: the opponent's degree of alertness, his intent, and, most important of all, the moment of his charge. But he should not concentrate on these items in a sequential order. The practitioner, although focusing on one point, is aware of the totality of the situation.”

Posture During Mokuso

The following excerpt²⁸ discusses posture during meditation:

To sit **za-zen**:

1. Let your posture be full of energy; otherwise it is like flat beer in a bottle opened the night before.
2. Your arms should not be stuck to your sides. There should be tension in your hands, and especially the fingers. The thumbs should touch and form a horizontal line: neither mountain nor valley.

²⁷ According to Nitobe [61], the samurai (侍) believed education in politics, wealth, and finance, were to be left to “lower classes” as they were not honorable trades.

Mindset During Za-Zen

From Deshimaru [18], “What is the right attitude of mind during za-zen?”, Taisen Deshimaru replied “The three things in za-zen are posture, breathing, and attitude of mind. If correctly practiced they lead to the very principle of za-zen; hisiryo consciousness, thinking without thinking. You cannot stop thinking entirely during za-zen. You cannot stop your thoughts. Some forms of meditation teach that you must not think. Others say you must think about God, form images of God or beautiful things, or you must think about a koan or some philosophical problem. That is not the right attitude. In Zen what you must do is let your thoughts pass by. As soon as a thought arises, let it go. If money comes, or a young lady, or sex, or food, or Buddha, or God, or Zen, let it go. During za-zen you must let everything go by; but willing yourself not to think is also thinking.”

²⁸ Deshimaru [18]

To perform **mokuso** in the proper position:

Assume **seiza**, p.26, with a straight posture as with **shizentai**, p.25, resting your hands in your lap. Your hands should be directly in front of your **hara** (腹, “lower abdomen”) with your fingers and thumbs making the shape of a circle. Close your eyes about $\frac{3}{4}$ shut, and look toward the floor about two meters in front of you or toward the tip of your nose.

This hand position is known in Japanese as **zen-jyoin** (禅定印), or **jyoin** (定印) for short, the **mudra** (Sanskrit: मुद्रा, “gesture”) of meditation. It is also known as **hokkai-jyoin** (法界定印), or “meditation *mudra* of the dharma realm”. Hand gestures such as this are prominent throughout many sects of Buddhism and have a variety of different meanings. This **mudra**, and the practice of **mokuso** itself, stem from the influence of Zen Buddhism on **kendo**.

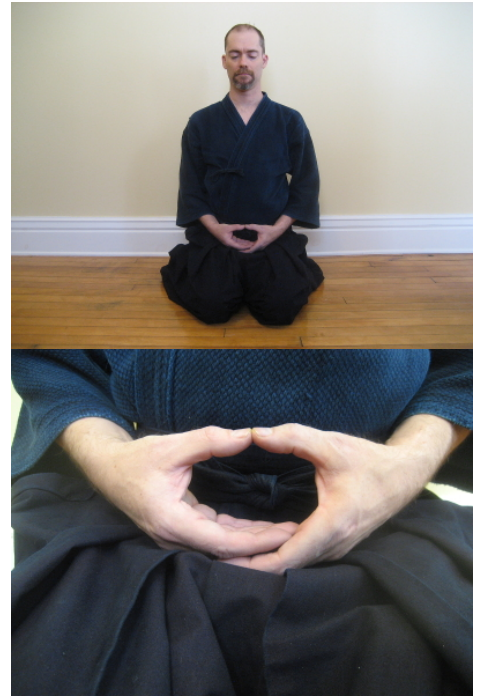


Figure 51: (Top) Mokuso, (Bottom) “zen-jyoin”, the mudra of meditation, held during mokuso. Mudra are symbolic hand gestures, originating in Hinduism and Buddhism, employed in the iconography and spiritual practice of Indian Religions.

Key Points:

1. **Mokuso** is such a part of **kendo** that, for all intents and purposes, it can be considered a part of the formalities. Given that, it is important to assume correct posture and position during **mokuso**.
2. If one is unable to assume **seiza** due to injury, the seated position for **mokuso** can be adapted to fit the individual.

Breathing During Mokuso

Inhalation. Breathe in slowly through your nose. As you breathe in, be sure to use your abdominal muscles and diaphragm to inhale.

1. Your entire abdomen, front, back, & sides, expands as you breathe in.
2. Visualize your diaphragm pulling the air downward, with the sensation of compressing it in your belly.

Exhalation. Breathe out slowly through your mouth using your abdomen to control your breath.

1. Your abdomen presses inward and up toward your spine.
2. Your exhalation should be as slow as you can.

Inhale when you feel you need to, but try to exhale as long as you can.

Mudra in Martial Arts

According to Muromoto [56], “The use of mudra and other aspects of mikkyo (密教, lit. “secret teachings” refers to the esoteric practices of Shingon Buddhism) are found in many instances in many koryu, because mikkyo and Shinto were the religions of the samurai who founded those ryu that were created before the 1600s. Subsequent ryu developed after the imposition of the Tokugawa government were heavily influenced by Neo-Confucianism, and then later by Zen Buddhism. Although Zen was popularized among the warrior class in the Kamakura period, the 1300s, it did not greatly affect martial arts until the latter part of the Edo Period, with the writings of the Zen priests Takuan and Hakuin. And even at that, Edo Period (1600-1868) martial arts were equally influenced by Neo-Confucianism and even, in the latter part, mystical Shinto.”

Ashi-Sabaki: “Footwork”

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER WILL INTRODUCE various types of **ashi-sabaki** (足捌き), or “footwork”, used in **kendo**. Emphasis is placed on the two most common types of footwork, however secondary footwork is briefly discussed.

ashi-gamae (足構え), p.43

okuri-ashi (送り足), p.45

fumi-komi (踏み込み), p.46

ayumi-ashi, p.46

hiraki-ashi (開き足), p.46

tsugi-ashi (突ぎ足), p.46

Ashi-Gamae: “Foot Position”

Footwork is the foundation for all techniques in **kendo**. Without strong footwork, your **waza** and even your **kamae** will be flawed. The following steps describe a simple method that will help you find the position needed for proper **ashi-gamae**.

1. Begin in **shizentai**, p.25. Place your feet side-by-side touching each other.
2. Turn your left foot 90° to the left making a reversed “L” shape.
3. Turn your left foot another 90° to straighten it. Your feet should be shoulder width, the toes of your left foot beside the heel of your right, with both feet straight.



Once the feet are in the correct position, raise the heel of the rear foot²⁹ *without bending the knee*. Your weight should be distributed between the ball of the rear foot and the whole of the front foot.

Definition of Sabaki

Sabaki can be translated to both “work”, as in footwork, or as “handle, deal with”. A more general term combining both definitions would be “management”. This gives the term ashi-sabaki the broader scope of “managing the feet” (effectively) v.s. the simpler term “footwork” which is often just limited to the idea of *moving* the feet. This notion is often extended to the term tai-sabaki, or “body-management”, implying effective movement of the entire body.

Figure 52: How to assume proper ashi-gamae.

Proper Foot Position

Foot position will vary somewhat from person to person depending on size, build, gait, balance, etc. Giving measurements of exactly how far apart and where the feet ought to be placed is not possible; it can only be approximated. The “proper” positions must be modified to suit each person.

²⁹ As a guide, it is said that one should be able to fit the palm of their hand underneath the heel of the rear foot, and a piece of paper under the heel of the front foot.

Weight Distribution

It is important to have the correct weight distribution between your feet while standing in **ashi-gamae**. This ensures that you are in the optimal position to be ready to move or to attack.

When standing in the correct **ashi-gamae**, without altering your posture or lowering your rear heel, put approximately 70–80% of your bodyweight on your *rear* foot.

Key Points:

1. The feet should be about shoulder width apart and angled straight forward. Don't turn or twist your feet, keep them parallel.
2. The rear heel should be raised at all times without the rear knee bending; keep the knee straight, but not "locked".
3. The toes of the rear foot should be beside the heel of the front foot.
4. Put about 70–80% of your weight on the rear foot and the remainder on your front foot.
5. Many people will lean backward slightly putting their shoulders over their rear foot, allow their lower back to curl inward, and drop their rear heel after putting so much of their bodyweight on their rear foot. This is a symptom of not engaging your core sufficiently.
6. The sensation of correctly weighted **ashi-gamae** is that of *almost* standing completely on the toes of your rear foot. Don't lean your upper body backward while doing this to balance yourself or allow your rear heel to drop to the floor. Engage your core and you will be able to balance yourself with a straight posture.

Footwork has even been the basis of classic anecdotes³⁰ teaching wayward swordsmen Zen concepts!

"A master ordered the samurai to go to the dojo and from morning to night he was to do footwork around the outer edge of the dojo. The samurai did this for one year, without ever touching a sword. Finally he said, 'I have had many teachers. But none have ever taught me as you are. Please, I wish to learn the true way of the sword!' The master took him to a deep chasm in the forest with a small log bridge and told him to cross. Seeing the deep chasm, the samurai was unable to cross. Then a blind man came along tapping his cane on the ground and walked over the bridge without hesitation. The master explained 'You have spent one year walking about the edge of the dojo which is much smaller than that log bridge. Why can't you cross?' The samurai thought for a moment, when finally he understood. He crossed the bridge and his training was complete; he had finally come to realize the true way of the sword."



Figure 53: Proper ashi-gamae.

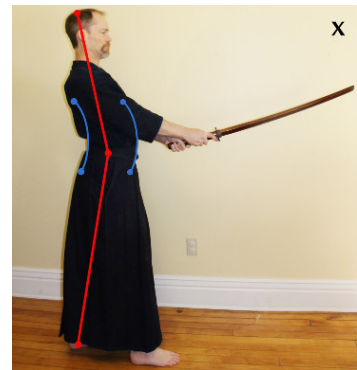


Figure 54: Incorrect posture after putting bodyweight on the rear foot; the core is not engaged, the rear heel has dropped, the lower back is arched, and the upper body is generally leaning back toward the rear foot.

³⁰ Deshimaru [18]

Square Hips, Straight Feet

"Square hips" is synonymous with "straight feet" in that if you perform one correctly, you generally get the other automatically. So, the importance of having straight feet in the proper ashi-gamae is really another way of ensuring you have square hips, p.16. It is from here, square hips & straight feet, that a kendoka can most efficiently generate the balanced power needed to drive themselves forward to strike.



Figure 55: “Blind men crossing a bridge”, Hakuin Ekaku, 1685-1768. The caption in figure reads: “Both inner and the floating world around us are like the blind man’s round log bridge: a mind that can cross over is the best guide.”

Okuri-Ashi: Kendo’s Fundamental Footwork

Okuri-ashi³¹ (摺り足) is the most fundamental footwork in **kendo**.

Performing okuri-ashi. With proper posture and correct **ashi-gamae**, inhale, then use your hind leg to push you forward sliding your front foot on the floor as you exhale. As you move forward in a small step, with the feeling of “standing up on your front foot”, use your front leg muscles to quickly pull up your rear foot into to correct **ashi-gamae**, see p.47 and figure 60, p.48.

Key Points:

1. Keep your hips square, p.16, and your feet straight while performing **okuri-ashi**. Maintain a straight posture, p.25, core engaged, p.15.
2. Your rear leg should be straight in order to be able to effectively generate power to push you forward.
3. Inhale while still, exhale for the duration of your movement.
4. Bring your rear foot forward quickly, don’t let it drag behind you. Use the muscles of your front leg to pull your rear foot forward; don’t drag your rear foot forward with the muscles of your rear leg.

The following excerpt³² discusses footwork:

“Although your stride may be long or short, slow or fast, according to the situation, it is [your footwork] to be as normal. Flighty steps, unsteady steps, and stomping steps are to be avoided.

Among the important elements of this science is what is called complimentary stepping; this is essential. Complementary stepping means that you do not move one foot alone. When you slash, when you pull back, and even when you parry, you step right-left-right-left, with complimentary steps. Be very sure not to step with one foot alone.”

³¹ Often people will use the term **suri-ashi** to refer to **okuri-ashi**. **Suri-ashi** translates to “sliding footwork” and, unless stated otherwise, its use is implied in all types of footwork.

³² Musashi [57]

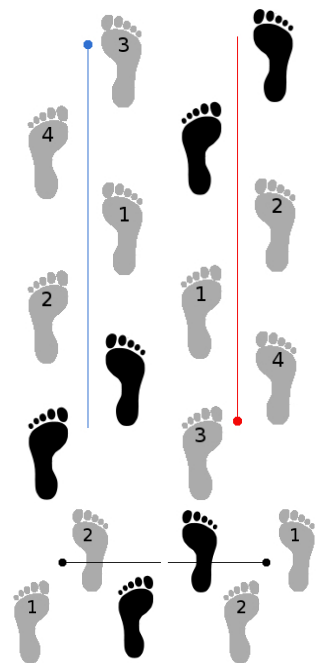


Figure 56: Okuri-ashi: forward, backward, left and right.

Fumi-Komi: “Lunging Footwork”

Fumi-komi, short for **fumi-komi-ashi**, is an advanced adaptation of **okuri-ashi** where one takes a powerful, non-**suri-ashi** (摺り足) type of step. Often described as a “lunge”, it is used during an attack against an opponent as it allows one to cover distance quickly. Proper **fumi-komi** is often associated with a characteristic “stomp”, a side effect of the front foot clapping the floor upon landing.

Performing fumi-komi. While in proper **ashi-gamae** and with straight posture and square hips, use the hind leg to push the body forward powerfully (**fumi-kiru**, 踏み切る). At the beginning of the step, as the rear leg pushes, the front foot slides on the floor (**suri-ashi**). After the step has begun the front foot comes off of the floor *slightly* to allow the **kendoka** to step forward (**fumi-komi**) rather than slide forward. When the front foot lands at the end of the step the rear foot must be pulled up quickly (**hikitsukeru**, 引き付ける) using the front leg as with **okuri-ashi**, p.45.

Key Points:

1. Maintain a straight posture, p.25, and square hips, p.16, and an engaged core, p.15, throughout. Exhale using abdominal breathing, p.17, as you step forward.
2. Push your whole body forward with your rear leg (**fumi-kiru**). Pull up your rear leg (**hikitsukeru**) by using your front leg. See p.47 and figure 60, p.48.

Secondary Footwork

Ayumi-Ashi: “Walking Footwork”

Ayumi-ashi refers to regular “walking footwork” used to cover large distances between you and your opponent. Once the distance has been closed one would switch to **okuri-ashi** as shown on p.45.

Hiraki-Ashi: “Opening Footwork”

Hiraki-ashi is a circular side-step used to move you out of your opponents centerline. This serves two purposes: removes their ability to attack effectively and shifts control of center to you.

Tsugi-Ashi: “Thrusting Footwork”

Tsugi-ashi, a combination of **okuri-ashi** and **fumi-komi** steps, is used to cover large distances before attacking or allows you to attack if the opponent retreats while you pressure them by moving forward.

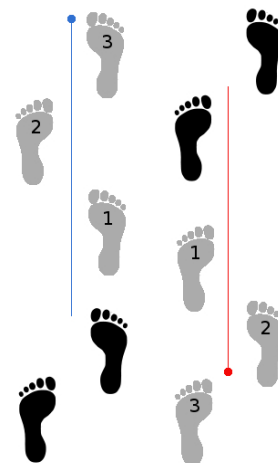


Figure 57: Ayumi-ashi: (Left) forward and (Right) backward.

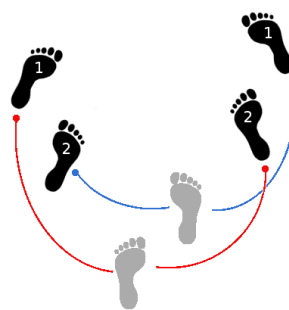


Figure 58: Hiraki-ashi: left and right.

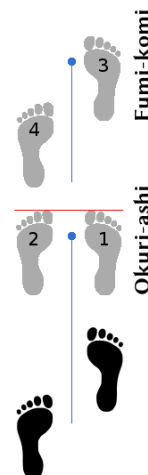


Figure 59: Tsugi-ashi style footwork.

Weight Distribution Revisited: Dynamic v.s. Static

When in **ashi-gamae** weight distribution is essentially static. However it changes while you are moving or attacking; *weight distribution is dynamic, not static*. While your rear leg pushes your weight forward during your step it should feel as though it is still supporting you throughout the movement. However after you have finished pushing forward and you are bringing your rear foot back into place, all of your weight is transferred to your forward foot until you can return to proper **ashi-gamae**.

This transfer of weight is the reason for emphasizing to “push” your body with the rear leg and to “pull” your rear leg forward with the front leg; the rear leg supports all your weight and puts you in an excellent position to push your body forward while at the end of the step your forward leg supports your weight allowing you to pull up your rear leg. This “rear leg–front leg, push–pull” applies to *all* footwork, especially **okuri-ashi** and **fumi-komi**, pp.45–46.

Keep the Core Engaged

Dynamic weight distribution that occurs during footwork and strikes happens naturally whenever we move, see Farley and Ferris [22]. However, it is essential that this be done without altering posture, or needlessly tensing the upper body as this will affect the ability to strike effectively. In order to accomplish this, it is essential to have and maintain a properly engaged core.

Dynamic Weight Distribution During Footwork

1. *Before moving.* While standing in **ashi-gamae** the weight distribution should be about 70–80% of bodyweight on the rear foot.
2. *Initiating a step.* As your body is pushed forward, your weight is supported primarily on the rear foot throughout the push.
3. *Finishing a step.* As you finish a step and the rear foot is brought back into position, your weight shifts to the front foot until you return to **ashi-gamae**.

Key Points:

1. While you are pushing forward with your rear leg, keep the knee straight and have the sensation that the ball of your rear foot is rooted into the ground for the *full duration* of the forward push. Pulling it up early creates a jumping or hopping type movement during your footwork; this is not efficient or stable.
2. When the push is completed, and your forward foot has reached the full length of the step you are taking, all bodyweight is transferred to the forward foot. Using the thigh muscles of the forward leg, stand up straight on your forward foot while allowing your rear foot to come up off the floor and the rear knee to bend. This will naturally pull the rear foot forward without dragging it. Return to **ashi-gamae** and your initial weight distribution.
3. It is crucial to maintain an engaged core throughout this movement as this then allows you to maintain a straight posture.



Giving this much detail on something as simple as weight distribution may seem like splitting hairs, however these subtleties are directly linked to a number of important areas in **kendo**.

The most basic is that it ensures efficient and optimal footwork. An advanced application of using weight distribution is how one uses feigned and actual movement of their body to “pressure” the opponent without losing proper **ashi-gamae**, posture, or readiness to strike. This is briefly introduced on p.152, but is best discovered through practice.

Figure 60: Okuri-ashi and/or fumi-komi-ashi. Weight distribution is dynamic throughout the movement: (1) Proper **ashi-gamae**, core engaged with straight posture, and bodyweight primarily on the rear foot. (2) Bodyweight is pushed forward from the hips, posture remains straight with core engaged, and the rear leg is straight with the sensation of the foot being rooted into the ground throughout the push. (3) Bodyweight is transferred to the forward foot and, with straight posture and core engaged, the rear leg is pulled forward by the muscles of the front leg with the sensation of “standing up on one foot”. Once the rear foot has been brought back to the correct position, weight distribution returns to the initial setup as in (1).

Kamae: “Stances”

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER WILL DISCUSS the **kamae** or *stances* used in **kendo**. While there are a number of different **kamae** available, some of them having a number of variations, a high level of detail is given to the most fundamental of them all: **chudan no kamae**. The various **kamae** introduced are:

chudan no kamae , p.49	gedan no kamae (下段の構え), p.56
seigan no kamae (正眼の構え), p.52	waki-gamae (脇構え), p.57
jodan no kamae (上段の構え), p.53	nito kamae (二刀構え), p.58
age-to (上げ刀), p.54	hanmi kamae (半身構え), p.59
hasso no kamae (八相の構え), p.55	mu-gamae (無構え), p.59

Chudan no Kamae: “Mid-Level” Stance

Chudan is the most fundamental **kamae** in **kendo**, and is referred to as **mizu no kamae** (水の構え) or the “*the kamae of water*” due to its adaptability. In fact, it is considered the basis for learning all of the other **kamae** in both the physical and mental sense of the term. A strong **chudan no kamae** is in fact a **kendoka**’s primary source of physical offense or defense.

Details on assuming **chudan** will be given in the following sections:

proper grip, p.50	proper position, p.51
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Shizentai & Ashi-Gamae

Before holding a **shinai** or **bokuto** in **chudan**, first assume **shizentai**, p.25, then assume the proper foot position as discussed on p.43.

According to Budden [9], “Chudan no kamae is the kamae of water. Hold your weapon still like a pool of water, but not like stagnant water. Water with a strong under-current; watching, waiting, and always covering protect yourself by being observant and calm, alive and waiting but fully aware.”

Key Points:

1. Posture and foot position is the foundation of good **kamae**: keep your core engaged, p.15; hips square, p.16; keep your posture straight, p.25; feet straight, p.43; and maintain the correct weight distribution, p.44.

Holding the Shinai or Bokuto

This section is divided into two parts. First, the correct grip and then the correct position with respect to yourself and your opponent.

The Grip: Proper Hand Position

Left hand. With a **shinai**, grip the handle at the bottom, the end flush with the little finger. With a **bokuto**, the end is outside of the fingers. The middle, ring, and little finger grip tightly; the index and thumb are closed but serve only to support. Your index and thumb make a “V”, the “point” centered with the top of the handle. See figure 64.

Right hand. Grip the **shinai** or **bokuto** with the right hand similar to the left hand, however all fingers of the right hand are primarily for support; do not grip too tightly. With a **shinai**, the index finger should be one to two finger widths from the **tsuba** (拵, “sword guard”); with a **bokuto** the index finger rests against it.

Key Points:

1. Don't grip the handle with a clenched fist; spread your fingers slightly and let the handle rest diagonally across your palms.
2. Be sure the “V” shape made by your index finger and thumb of both hands are centered on the top of the handle.
3. Keep the fingers of the right hand relaxed *but not open*.
4. Don't grip with your thumbs on the top of the **tsuka** (柄, “handle”).
5. Hold the **tsuka** with the sensation that the majority of the pressure on the handle from your grip is from your finger tips.
6. If holding a **bokuto**, the end of the **tsuka** is flush with the edge of the palm, not the baby finger, and the index finger of the right hand should touch the **tsuba** instead of there being space between the two.

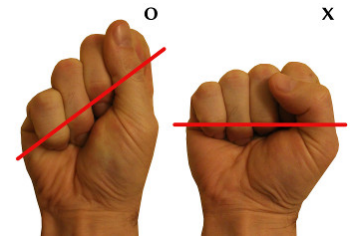


Figure 61: Grip with (Left) fingers spread, (Right) a fist. A fist causes the handle sit horizontally, spread fingers causes it sit diagonally.

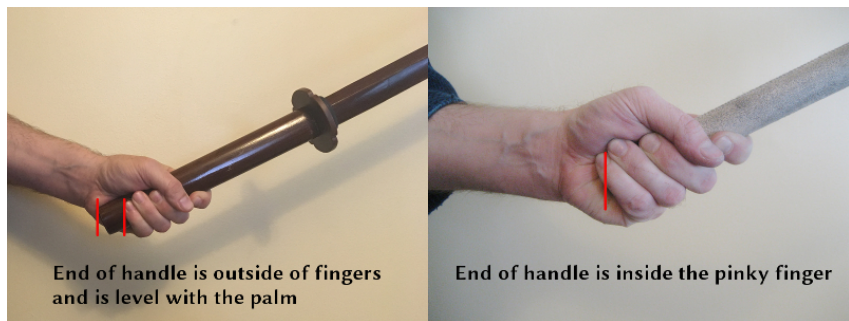


Figure 62: The left hand grip (Left) with a bokuto and (Right) with a shinai.

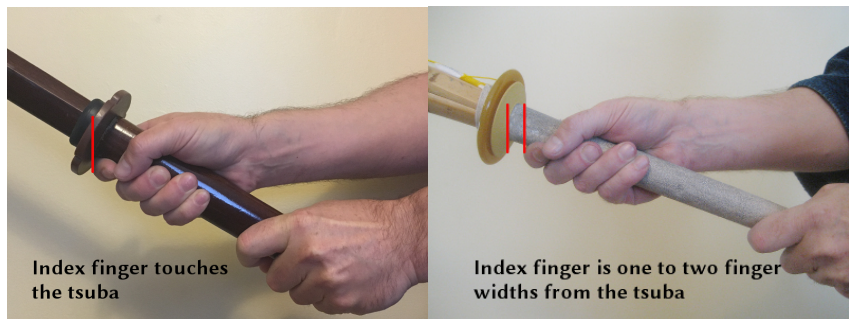


Figure 63: The right hand grip (Left) with a bokuto and (Right) with a shinai.

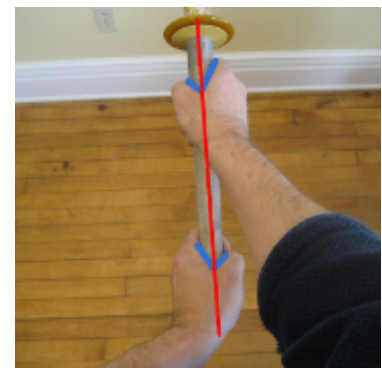


Figure 64: Forming a “V” with the hands.

The Position: Proper Position & Angle

Once you have a proper grip you must orient the **shinai** or **bokuto** so it is at the proper position and angle.

Position and angle. With the end of the handle³³ pointing toward your navel, angle the tip toward your opponents throat. The **shinai** or **bokuto** should be aligned with your centerline.

Key Points:

1. The end of the handle should be one fists width from the abdomen.
2. Keep about one fists width between your right forearm and the bottom of the handle.
3. The left forearm should rest lightly against your body and the right arm, just above the elbow, should do the same.

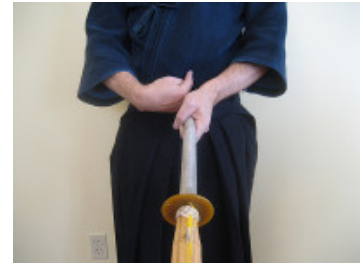


Figure 65: The shinai is held on the centerline of the body, approximately one fists width away from the abdomen, with the bottom knuckle of the left thumb pointing directly toward the navel.

³³ Some say the end of the handle, while others say the knuckle at the base of your left thumb, should point at the navel.

Chudan no Kamae



Key Points:

1. The **shinai/bokuto** should be held on your centerline; *this is crucial*.
2. Maintain a straight posture, p.25, and proper foot position, p.43.
3. Engage your core, p.15, while keeping your shoulders relaxed.

Figure 66: Chudan no kamae: the kamae of water.

Alternate Kamae

In **kendo** there are a number of different **kamae** other than **chudan**. The following excerpt³⁴ discusses **chudan**'s importance:

"The five kinds of guard are the upper, middle, lower, right-hand, and left-hand guard. What is important in this path is to realize that the consummate guard is the middle...the center is the seat of the general, following the general are the other four."

Seigan no Kamae: "Aiming at the Eyes" Stance

Seigan no kamae is a variant of **chudan** often used against an opponent in one of the upper stances as it, among other things, offers better protection against attacks from this **kamae**. There are **migi** (右, "right") and **hidari** (左, "left") versions with **hidari** being the most common.

Seigan differs from **chudan** by both the position of the tip and the position of the left fist.

In **chudan** the tip is kept near the level of the opponents throat and held in the mid-line. In **seigan** the **shinai** tip is directed at the opponent's eye; the left or right for **hidari** and **migi seigan** respectively. The left fist is also held an additional one fists width in front of the navel and one fists width *above* the navel.

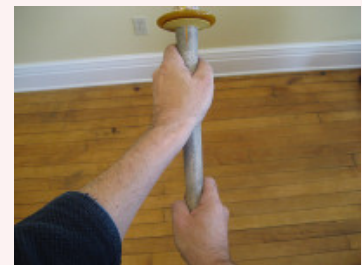


Seigan kamae is primarily used when against an opponent in one of the upper stances, p.53, or in the upper two-sword stance, p.58. One will often alternate between **chudan**, **migi** and **hidari seigan**, and possibly even variants of a "one-handed stance", p.54, when confronted by such an opponent.

³⁴ Musashi [57]

Left-Handed Kamae

While exceptionally rare, there exists a left-handed (**hidari-te**) version of each **kamae**, the standard version being right-handed (**migi-te**). The right and left-handed versions of a **kamae** indicate which is the forward hand on the handle/grip. For example, standard **chudan** is a right-handed **chudan** where the right hand is forward. Left-handed **chudan** would be the opposite. The left-handed variations of **kamae** are usually reserved for those people in which the standard version of a **kamae** are just not plausible, usually due to an injury or handicap of some sort.



Throughout this book the standard right-handed **kamae** is used in all descriptions.

Figure 67: Seigan no kamae.

According to Inoue [34], it is a common error, due to previous ambiguous wording of the AJKF kata guidelines, to turn the blade sideways or to keep it pointing directly downward as you assume **seigan** from **chudan**. The blade should be angled slightly when in **seigan**; not straight down, and not flat/sideways.

Jodan no Kamae: “Upper-Level” Stance

Jodan no kamae, also known as **hi no kamae** (火の構え) and **ten no kamae** (天の構え) or “the kamae of fire” and “the kamae of heaven” respectively, is an aggressive **kamae** where you must not pass up opportunities to initiate a strike and demonstrate a fearlessness of being hit.

Jodan forgoes the defensive options available in **kamae** such as **chudan** and puts its entire emphasis on attack; **jodan** exposes nearly all targets to the opponent: the left and right forearms, the left and right sides of the torso, and the throat are all unprotected.

The following excerpt³⁵ discusses **jodan no kamae waza**:

“Always with the feeling of controlling the opponent from above, try to strike him at the moment when he is about to step forward, to the rear, or is beginning a strike. Since these are always attack techniques, the spiritual element exercises more control over their success or failure than technical skill.”

The “spirit” aspect of **jodan** cannot be emphasized enough. In fact, there is a common Japanese play on words used for people who do not have a sufficient spirit; the word for joke (冗談) is pronounced “jodan”, allowing one to imply a person’s **jodan kamae** is “a joke”. Also called **kakashi** (scarecrow, 案山子) **jodan** which implies that the **kamae** is empty posturing compared to the “real thing”.

There are two primary variants of **jodan**: **migi** and **hidari jodan**.

With **migi jodan** the **shinai** is raised overhead at a 30°–45° angle with the left hand in the centerline. The left hand is approximately one fist width in front of the forehead and one fist width above.

In **hidari jodan**, the left foot becomes the forward foot. The **shinai** is raised overhead at a 30°–45° angle as with **migi jodan**, however it is also turned to the right by about 30°–45°. The left hand moves off of the centerline slightly to sit around the left eyebrow and the right hand sits between the right eyebrow and the right collarbone.

According to Budden [9], “Jodan can be defined as a kamae of total attack. Having a strong spirit and thinking nothing of defense, you have only to cut down with the sword.”

35 Renmei [68]

Etiquette & Using Jodan

When assuming **jodan**, one purposefully exposes all of their targets and assumes an attitude of “come try and hit me!”; this could be misinterpreted as arrogance. It is proper etiquette to say “*shitsu-rei shimasu*”, “I’m being impolite”, or “*go burei shimasu*”, “I’m being rude”, before assuming **jodan** against a senior. It is also proper etiquette to receive permission to use a non-**chudan** **kamae** from your sensei prior to doing so in the dojo.



Figure 68: (Left) Migi jodan no kamae and (Right) hidari jodan no kamae.

Age-To: "Raised Sword"

Age-to is a left or right **kata-te** (片手, "one-handed") variant of **jodan** shown here only for completeness. The **shinai** is held over head in one hand with the other at the waist.

Age-to, in modern **kendo**, is rarely used. It is often only seen as a temporary position; an extended pause after a **kata-te** strike while preparing for another, some will use it as a means to block an opponent's strike, or sometimes, a **kendoka** using **jodan**, will pull one of their hands off of the **shinai** assuming **age-to** in response to their opponent's pressure. This is very different compared to it being used as a primary/consistent **kamae**.

Age-to, when it does make an appearance, has often been used as a counter to somebody using **hidari jodan**.

The following excerpt³⁶ discusses **age-to**:

"This single-hand technique can be likened to a missile. It is a technique designed to enable the kendoist to strike his opponent with the first stroke from a distant interval."

³⁶ Warner and Sasamori [92]



Figure 69: (Left) A right handed age-to kamae. (Right) An opponent in hidari jodan no kamae.

Hasso no Kamae: “Eight Phases” Stance

Hasso no kamae is referred to as **moku no kamae** (木の構え) “*the kamae of wood*”. **Hasso** is rarely used in modern **kendo** save for the **kendo kata**.

The following excerpt³⁷ discusses **hasso**:

“From chudan no kamae, assume a two-hand left Jodan no Kamae and step forward with your left foot, the tsuba at the level of your mouth, and the cutting edge (hasaki) toward your opponent. Do not extend or contract your arms and keep your shoulders relaxed. Point your left foot forward and the end of your right foot slightly out, the heel slightly raised.”

Hasso no kamae is also called the kamae of wood - moku no kamae. Like a large tree rising high into the sky, you assume a majestic and dignified stance to overcome your opponent.

Hasso no kamae allows you to observe your opponent and change to an attacking posture in response to any forward movement from your opponent.

According to Budden [9], “Hasso is the kamae of standing like a big tree thrusting upward to heaven, quiet yet firm, with roots deep under the ground. Cut by going through the jodan position like the rush of a falling tree, unstoppable.”

³⁷ Ozawa [64]



Figure 70: Hasso no kamae: the kamae of wood, shown here with a bokuto as this kamae is, except for rare occurrences, unused in modern kendo save for kendo no kata.

Gedan no Kamae: "Lower-Level" Stance

Gedan no kamae is the low positioned **kamae** and is referred to as **chi no kamae** (地の構え) or the "*kamae of earth*". Even though it may look defensive, spiritually it is in fact an aggressive one. You must constantly threaten to invade your opponents space, forcing them to attack or to move revealing an opening. The **shinai** is held lowered, in the center of your body, with the tip pointing at the opponents kneecaps.

Gedan is rarely used in modern **kendo** and is usually only seen in **kendo kata**.

The following excerpt³⁸ discusses **gedan**:

"From chudan no kamae, lower the kensen to a position slightly below your opponents knees, as if you were going to attack his hands or feet."

"Gedan no kamae is effective as a defensive kamae, since your opponent will be afraid of receiving a thrust (tsuki) and at the same time is prevented by your kensen from easily executing a strike or thrust himself."

"Should your opponent attempt to make a strike or thrust, remain in gedan no kamae and thrust your weapon up aggressively."

According to Budden [9], "Gedan is the kamae of ground or sand: earth attitude but performed with a very strong spiritual bearing. It should have the same feeling as jodan and chudan but is more a kamae of defense in waiting, inviting."

³⁸ Ozawa [64]



Figure 71: Gedan no kamae: the kamae of earth. Gedan, like hasso and waki, is essentially unused in modern kendo save for kendo no kata. However, it can often be employed as a *temporary kamae* as a way to pressure the opponent as part of a ruse or deception. The duration of this is fleeting and is not the same as one adopting this posture as their kamae.

Waki-Gamae: “Side” Stance

Waki-gamae is referred to as **kane no kamae** (金の構え) “the kamae of metal”. This kamae is not seen in modern kendo except during kendo kata.

The following excerpt³⁹ discusses waki-gamae:

“From chudan no kamae, step back with your right foot and bring the kensen down behind you, so that your weapon is pointing down to the right. The important point is to assume a kamae which prevents the blade from being seen by your opponent.

Your left foot should be pointing forward and the end of your right foot pointing slightly out, the heel slightly raised.”

“Waki-gamae is also called the kamae of metal - kane no kamae. Although in terms of form this does not seem to be an attacking kamae, you can in fact attack immediately from waki-gamae.”

“Waki-gamae enables you to prevent your opponent from knowing what weapon you hold. You can hold this kamae for a short time or a long time, depending on your opponents movement.”

³⁹ Ozawa [64]

The idea of metal refers to the fact that something of value, i.e., the type and length of your weapon, is hidden from sight much like metal is hidden from sight within some type of ore. According to Budden [9], “Waki-gamae is a kamae in which you don’t show your opponent your strength or your weapon. You can react as you wish.”



Figure 72: Waki-gamae: the kamae of metal, shown here only with a bokuto as this kamae is essentially unused in modern kendo save for kendo no kata.

Nito Kamae: “Two Sword” Stance

Nito kamae is a **kamae** where two **shinai** are used; the **daito** (大刀, “long sword”), and the **shoto**⁴⁰ (小刀, “short sword”). The **daito** is the primary striking weapon in **nito kamae**, however if the **daito** is being actively suppressed by the opponent, or if one uses the **daito** to suppress an opponents **shinai** it is possible to land a **yuko-datotsu** (有効打突, “effective strike”) with the **shoto**.

There are two general variants of **nito**: regular (**daito** in the right hand) and reversed (**daito** in the left hand), each with two variations on foot position as well as three possible grip variations on the **daito**.

Nito has a set of five separate stances however the most commonly used **kamae** are **nito jodan** and **nito chudan kamae**.

⁴⁰ The long and short bokuto are known as the *tachi* and *kodachi* respectively.

Niten Ichi Ryu & Kendo

It is important to note that nito kendo is not the same as the original niten ichi ryu, much like itto kendo is not the same as the original sword schools it evolved from; they are modernized applications.



Figure 73: High, middle, and low grip positions of the daito.



Figure 74: Ashi-gamae variations for nito/reversed nito jodan no kamae.

Hanmi Kamae: “Half Body” Stance

Hanmi kamae are used with the **kodachi** (小太刀) in the **kendo kata**.

Hanmi translates to “*half body*” indicating ones torso is only “half exposed” to the opponent by pulling the left shoulder back. As such a **hanmi kamae** minimizes striking areas exposed to the opponent.

There is a difference between the focus of the tip for the **kodachi** and the **tachi** (太刀). With the **tachi**, the line of extension from the tip directed toward the specified area is how we determine correct position whereas with the **kodachi** the tip itself is level with the specified area. This is an important distinction.

When assuming a kodachi kamae (hanmi or not), the left hand is placed on the hip. The index finger is on the forward side of the hip and the thumb is on the back side. The index and thumb rest on the upper set of the uniforms belts above the hip. When breaking kamae, the left hand is lowered to rest on the thigh. If one is wearing a sheathe for the kodachi the opening at the top of the sheathe is held instead of placing the thumb and index finger on the hip.

Opponents Kamae	Kodachi Kamae	Level of the Tip
Jodan no kamae	Chudan hanmi	Level with opponents face
Gedan no kamae	Chudan hanmi	Level with opponents chest
Chudan no kamae	Gedan hanmi	Level with opponents knee

Table 1: Hanmi kamae and where to align the tip of the kodachi v.s. various tachi kamae.



Mu-Gamae: “Void” Stance

Mu-gamae is translated as “*empty stance*”, “*no stance*”, or the “*void stance*”.

For the purposes of this text the focus will be on the spiritual and philosophical **kamae** rather than the physical stance. In this context, **mu-gamae** refers to the state where ones spirit and presence is enough to face an opponent; there is no need for an overt physical **kamae**.

In **kendo**, the action of taking **gedan hanmi no kamae** (下段半身の構え) in the third short sword **kata**, is meant to express **mu-gamae**.

Figure 75: Tip position for hanmi kamae. With a kodachi hanmi kamae, the tip is held level with the target area on the opponent instead of its line of extension being directed toward it.



Figure 76: Miyamoto Musashi, founder of Niten Ichi Ryu, is often depicted in mugame.

Kendo-Gu: “Kendo Equipment”

Chapter Preview

THERE ARE A NUMBER of different components to a **kendoka**’s equipment, all of which must be used and maintained properly. With respect to both safety issues and the appropriate appearance of the **kendoka** demanded in **kendo**, the maintenance of ones equipment is an integral part of practicing **kendo**. The following items are covered:

bokuto, p.62

shinai, p.63

hakama (袴) & keiko-gi (稽古着), p.71

bogu, p.83



Kendo & Safety

Kendo is one of the safest martial arts that involves physical contact with the opponent, see Schultzel et al. [72]. However, this level of safety presupposes a number of things.

1. Equipment is worn correctly and securely for the duration of the practice.
2. All components and fittings are currently in good working order.
3. All components and fittings are regularly inspected for damage.
4. A kendoka never knowingly uses any equipment that is damaged or loose in any way.

If the protective armour is not worn correctly or falls into disrepair, it will no longer be able to protect the wearer from strikes by the opponent. If the shinai is not kept in good repair, then every strike performed with it has the potential to seriously injure the opponent even if wearing their own equipment correctly. It is crucial that all equipment be worn correctly and that it is kept in good repair in order to prevent needless injury.

A common adage in kendo is “you can’t do real kendo unless you know that your opponent is completely safe”.

Figure 77: A kendoka in full bogu with shinai.

The Bokuto: “Wooden Sword”

The **bokuto** is the wooden sword used in **kendo**, primarily during the **ni-hon kendo no kata** (日本剣道の形) and **kihon bokuto waza** (基本木刀技), however it can also be used to practice basics. The **bokuto** resembles an actual sword much more closely than a **shinai** making the **bokuto** an important link between the use of an actual sword and **shinai kendo**.

Various locations and components of the **bokuto** are as follows:

1. **Kensen** (剣先). The tip of the **bokuto**.
2. **Mono-uchi** (物打). The upper portion of the **bokuto**, approximately 25cm as measured from the **kensen**, used for striking.
3. **Omote** (表). Not a specific “part” of the **bokuto**, **omote**, or “outside”, refers to the left hand side of the **bokuto**.
4. **Ura** (裏). Not a specific “part” of the **bokuto**, **ura**, or “inside”, refers to the right hand side of the **bokuto**.
5. **Shinogi** (鎗). The ridge on the side of a blade and running along its length. The **shinogi** is very strong and hence is used for deflecting or manipulating the opponent's sword. In general, this should also transfer to deflections in modern **kendo** with a **bokuto** or **shinai**.
6. **Tsuba**. The round sword guard.
7. **Tsuba-dome** (鐔止め). The rubber ring that holds the **tsuba** in place.
8. **Tsuka**. The handle of the **bokuto**.
9. **Tsuka-gashira** (柄頭). The bottom of the **tsuka**.

Bokuto Size & Weight

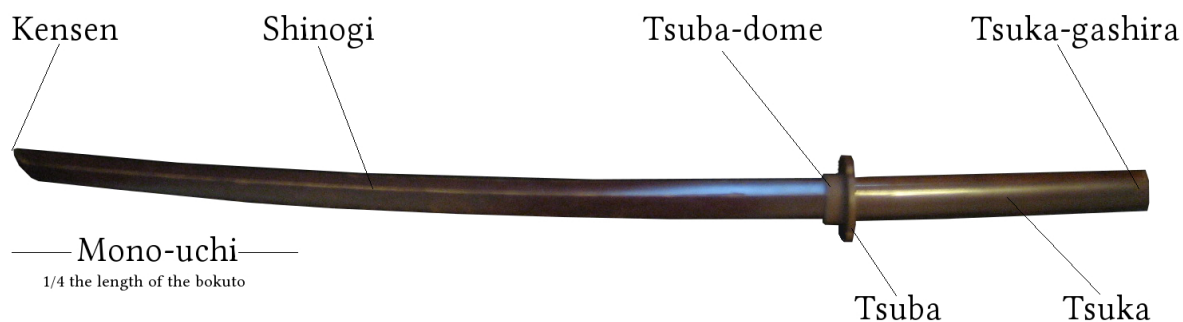
Save for the type of wood, there is little difference between bokuto. According to All Japan Kendo Federation [4], standard length for kendo bokuto is approx. 102cm for tachi, 55cm for kodachi. Common differences for non-kendo bokuto are weight and thickness. There is no regulated weight, only length, making it acceptable to use non-standard bokuto as long as they meet length requirements and have a tsuba affixed with a tsuba-dome.

Bokuto Maintenance

Bokuto require little maintenance:

1. Ensure the tsuba and tsuba-dome are undamaged and that they both can be securely attached to the bokuto.
2. Ensure the bokuto is not cracked or damaged.

If the bokuto has splinters, sand them down before use. If the tsuba/tsuba-dome is damaged, replaced before use. If the bokuto is cracked, do not use it; it must be replaced.



Key Points:

1. The **bokuto** serves as a link between a real sword and the **shinai**. Learning correct and effective use of the **bokuto** will in turn lead to correct and effective use of the **shinai**. This is a crucial aspect of **kendo**.

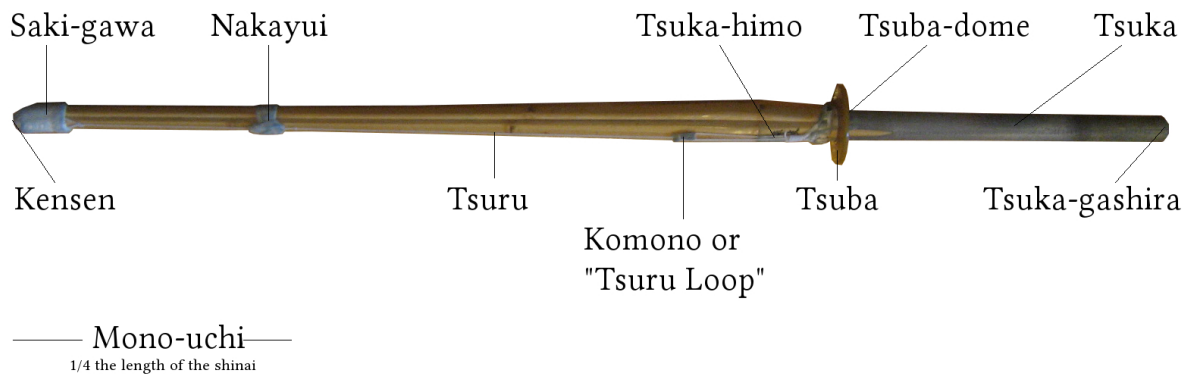
Figure 78: Bokuto components.

The Shinai: "Bamboo Sword"

The **shinai** is the bamboo practice sword used in **kendo**. It is constructed out of four bamboo slats, which are held together by three pieces of leather and a string. The **shinai** is constructed in such a way that it is flexible, with the ability absorb a lot of force, as well as being rigid. This flexibility ensures one will not injure ones opponent, while the rigidity allows it to emulate a real sword.

Various locations and components of **shinai** are as follows:

1. **Kensen**. The tip of the **shinai**.
2. **Saki-gawa** (先革). The leather cap on the tip of the **shinai**.
3. **Mono-uchi**. The upper portion of the **shinai**, approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ the total length, used for striking. Also called the **datotsu-bu** (打突部).
4. **Nakayui** (中結). The leather tie $\frac{1}{4}$ the length of the **shinai** from the tip.
5. **Jin-bu** (刃部). The blade portion of the **shinai**.
6. **Tsuru** (弦). The string along the top of the **shinai**.
7. **Omote**. The "outside"/left hand side of the **shinai**.
8. **Ura**. The "inside"/right hand side of the **shinai**.
9. **Komono** (小物). A small leather bit used to tie the **tsuru**. Often a simple loop is tied in the **tsuru** itself instead of using a **komono**.
10. **Tsuba**. The round sword guard.
11. **Tsuba-dome**. The item that holds the **tsuba** in place.
12. **Tsuka**. The handle of the **shinai**.
13. **Tsuka-gawa** (柄革). The leather covering for the **tsuka**.
14. **Tsuka-gashira**. The bottom of the **tsuka**.
15. **Tsuka-himo** (柄紐). A leather string on the top of the **tsuka** used in anchoring the **tsuru**.



Properly Sized Shinai

For adults, a rule of thumb is that those shorter than about 165cm (5'5") use size 38 shinai and those above use 39. People significantly shorter, or a petite build, use smaller shinai. The length of the tsuka can help find the proper size. Sit the tsuka-gashira in the elbow and the side of the index finger, from the middle knuckle to the tip, should rest on the underside of the tsuba. A gap indicates the shinai is too large. If the fingers are cramped, the shinai is too small. Using the hands to measure length, the tsuka ought to be roughly three fists plus two finger widths long.



All shinai, regardless of size, must comply with the specifications on p.172.

Figure 79: Shinai components.

Preparing a New Shinai for Use

Pre-sanding. Shinai slats have a bit of a sharp edge when new. The idea of pre-sanding these edges is to make them more rounded. This is to (1) allow the slats to slide across each other more readily, and (2) a rounded edge is less likely to dent or fray upon impact, reducing the occurrence of splinters. *Lightly sanding the edges with a **shinai** knife or sandpaper is recommended.*

Pre-oiling/treating the slats. The common ideas behind oiling or treating the bamboo is to (1) help prevent the slats from drying, (2) oiling helps ensure the **shinai** maintains a legal weight for tournament use, p.172, especially after sanding away damaged material.

Oils such as walnut oil, mineral oil, or any light cooking oil⁴¹ will seal the pores of the bamboo by absorbing into the surface layer. Rubbing beeswax or paraffin wax on the slats instead of oil will also seal the pores. *Pre-oiling and light re-application after any sanding is recommended.*

Key Points:

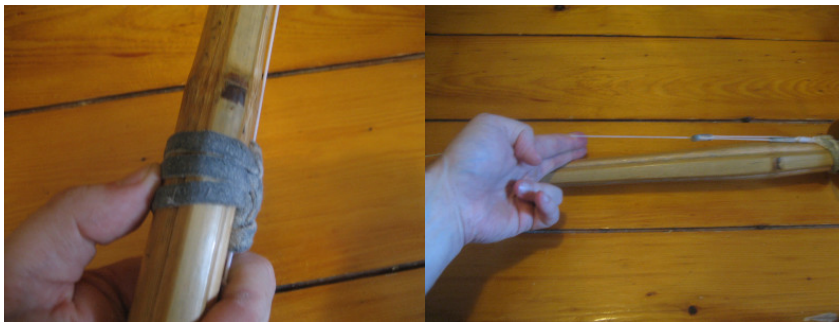
1. Apply a coat of oil and allow it to fully absorb. Repeat 1–2 times per day for about three days, or until it takes several hours to absorb.
2. Bamboo sands *very* easily. A **shinai** knife can easily damage the slat if not careful. If using sandpaper use 200 grit or finer; heavier grits remove material too easily and leave the bamboo rough.

Maintaining the Shinai

The **shinai** must be kept in good working order to ensure its safety. It is a good habit to check the slats and fittings for damage and to tighten the **tsuru** and the **nakayui** *before each practice* to ensure safety.

The following are general guidelines:

- (1) If you can move the bands of the **nakayui** by rubbing your thumb along it, it must be tightened.
- (2) The **nakayui** of a carbon fiber **shinai** must be tightened before every use.
- (3) For the **tsuru**, if you can *easily* put two fingers stacked vertically between it and the slats it needs tightening.



Key Points:

1. Loose **shinai** can lead to serious injury. *Never* use, or allow a fellow **kendoka** to use, a loose or damaged **shinai**.
2. When checking the tension make it a habit to inspect all of the fittings for any damage. *Never* use a **shinai** that has damaged fittings.



Figure 80: (Top) Un-sanded slats have pointed edges, (Center) after light sanding the edges are rounded. (Bottom) Use a cloth to rub oil onto the slats.

⁴¹ Some say not to use cooking oils as they will go rancid. While true, the lifespan of a **shinai** is far less than the time it takes for oil to go rancid.

Figure 81: Rules of thumb for shinai tension.

How to Tie the Shinai Components

How to Tie the Tsuru to the Saki-gawa



Figure 82: Tie the tsuru to the saki-gawa.

How to Attach the Komono or Tie a “Tsuru Loop”

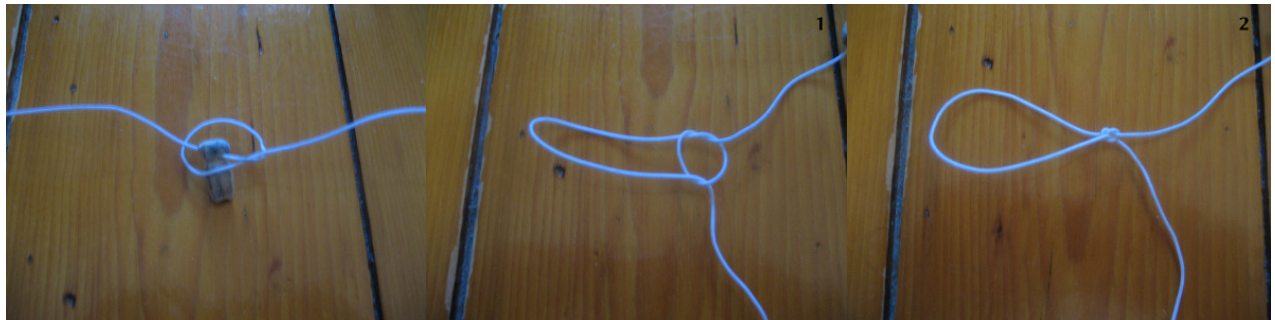


Figure 83: Attach the komono or tie a “tsuru loop”.

How to Tie the Nakayui

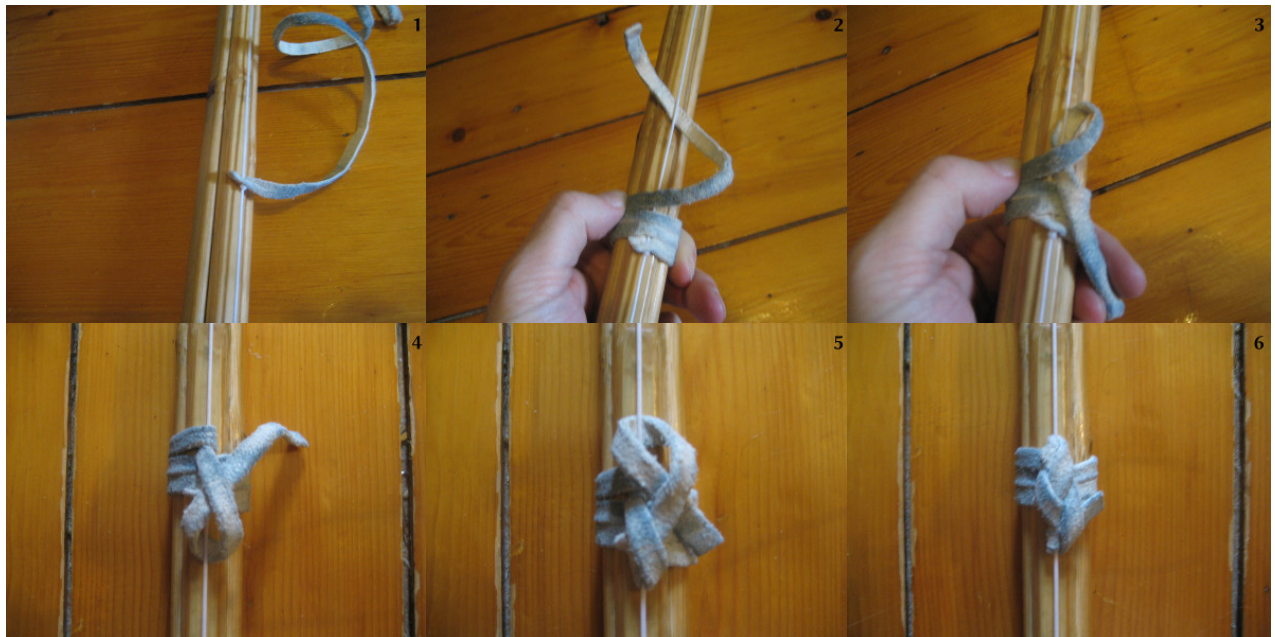
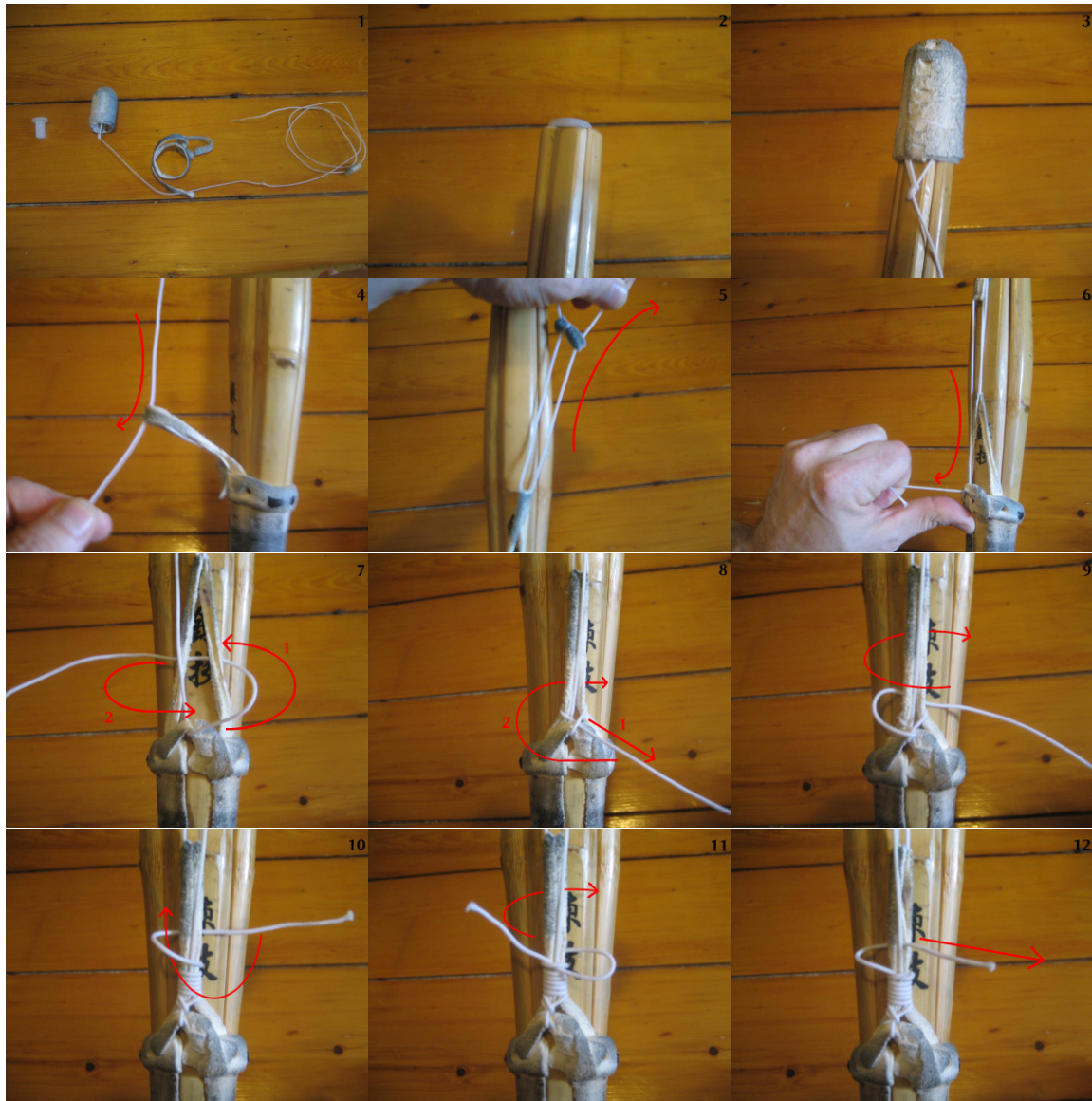


Figure 84: Tie the nakayui. (Top) Wrap the nakayui around the shinai three times and secure it with a loop. (Bottom) Tie the nakayui in place by making three more loops.

How to Tie the Tsuru to the Tsuka**Key Points:**

1. Tying the components of the **shinai** will seem daunting at first, even with instructions. The process is actually quite easy and is often best understood once it has been shown to you directly.

Figure 85: How to tie the tsuru. (Top Row) Put the plastic spacer in the shinai, then replace the saki-gawa. (Second Row) Pull the tsuru through the tsuka-himo, then through the komono, then through the lower part of the tsuka-himo. Pull tight. (Third Row) Keeping tension, make a loop around the tsuka-himo and thread the tsuru through it. Pull tight. Wrap the tsuru around the tsuka-himo in the opposite direction of the previous loop. (Bottom Row) Wrap the tsuru around several times, make a loop and thread the tsuru through to tie it. Pass the tsuru through the tsuka-himo. Cut off any excess.

Repairing Splinters in the Bamboo

When splinters appear in the **shinai** it must be sanded down until smooth again. This is most easily done by disassembling the **shinai** and using sandpaper or a specialized **shinai** repair tool, sanding along the grain 5cm above and below the splintered area. It is also a good idea to rotate the slat which does the striking from time to time as this will greatly extend the life of the **shinai**. If a slat has cracked do not use or try to repair it; replace it.



Key Points:

1. Alternate which slat is used for striking by rotating the **tsuka-gawa** 90° before reassembly. This ensures all slats are used equally.
2. Regular maintenance is crucial to ensure your **shinai** is safe to use; cracks & splinters can cause serious injury.

Replacing Damaged Components

Eventually all **shinai** will become damaged such that parts will need to be replaced. Replacements for the **saki-gawa**, **nakayui**, **tsuru**, and the **tsuka-gawa** can be purchased new, however these parts can also be salvaged from **shinai** that have been damaged in other areas. This includes salvaging undamaged slats from one **shinai** to replace damaged slats in another.

It is unsafe to use **shinai** that are damaged; replace the **shinai** immediately and put it aside for later repair or to salvage components from.

The Structure of Bamboo

Bamboo fibers have a dense outer layer and a softer inner layer. The more the outer layer is sanded away, the weaker it becomes. Bamboo sands easily, so it's important to rotate the slats so the strongest areas receive the most impact. This increases the lifespan of your **shinai**.

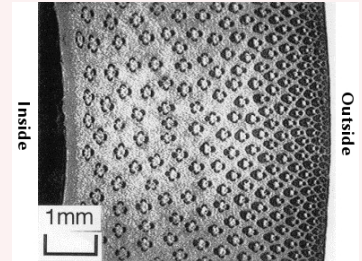


Figure 86: (Left) sandpaper and (Right) a shinai tool are used to remove splinters.

Figure 87: (Left) A cracked bamboo slat and (Right) a cracked carbon slat. Bamboo cracks and splinters are easily visible on inspection. When a carbon slat is cracked the black, internal carbon fiber can be seen. In both cases the **shinai** is no longer safe to use; it must be replaced.

New or Used Parts?

A fittings replacement package can be purchased at any kendo retailer if needed, usually for somewhere around \$20. Given a new basic **shinai** costs on the order of \$30–\$40, repair kits are more convenient than economical.



Salvaging undamaged parts from other **shinai** is the most economical way to get replacement fittings.

Salvaging Components of one Shinai for use in Another

There are a few tools that will be very useful for **shinai** repair: a **shinai** knife or some sandpaper to remove splinters, a small saw, and a set of needle-nose pliers.

It is recommended that you do your repairs over a cloth or towel to catch any sharp bits of bamboo.



Figure 88: Basic shinai repair toolkit.

Untie the **nakayui** and then untie the **tsuru** at the base of the **tsuka-gawa**. Remove the **tsuru**, **saki-gawa**, and **nakayui** and remove the **saki-gomu** (先ゴム) from the tip of the **shinai**. Inspect each to ensure they are safe to continue using; if damaged, they must be replaced. Next, pull the **tsuka-gawa** off the bottom of the **shinai** and inspect this for any damage; replace as needed. Keep any undamaged fittings from your damaged **shinai** as you can use these salvaged parts when repairing future **shinai**.



Figure 89: Disassemble the shinai.

Key Points:

1. Inspect each component of the fittings for any rips, tears, holes, or fraying. If any are damaged they must be replaced.
2. Carbon **shinai** require a special **saki-gomu**. If it is damaged, you must replace it with a carbon **shinai** **saki-gomu** before using the **shinai**.



Figure 90: Saki-gomu for a carbon shinai.

Replacing Broken Slats with Salvaged Slats

The **shinai** slats are loosely attached to one another by a small metal square set into small grooves on the inside of the **tsuka**. Carefully separate the slats and be sure not to lose the metal square.

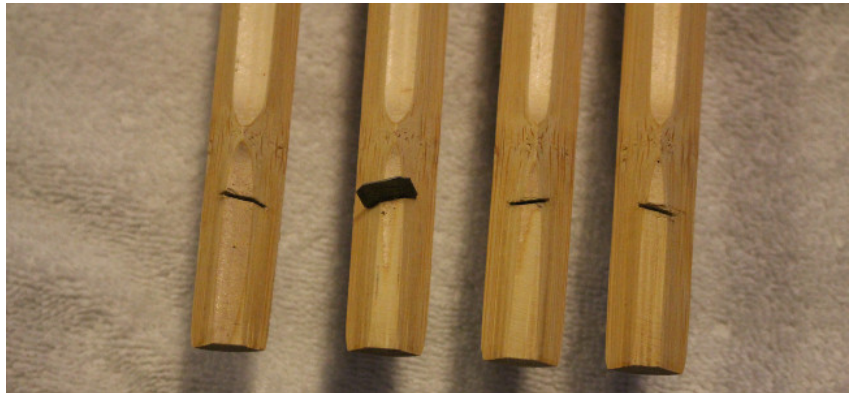


Figure 91: The slats are held together by a small metal square.

Once separated, inspect the slats for any damage. Dispose of any slats that are cracked, and use the **shinai** knife or sandpaper to sand down any splinters on the remaining slats.



Figure 92: Discard any cracked slats and remove any splinters on those you keep.

Replace the damaged slats with those salvaged from another damaged **shinai**. You will notice that the grooves for the metal square do not line up between the different slats. A new groove will have to be cut into the slats for the square to sit in.



Figure 93: New grooves must be cut into the replacement slats.

Place the square in one of the slats you will be using. Then, bring one or more of the new slats into the position it will sit at in the reassembled **shinai**. Make sure the bottoms of the slats are lined up evenly, and then squeeze the slats against the square.



Figure 94: Line up the new slats with the old and squeeze them against the square.

Squeezing the replacement slats against the square will score the bamboo slightly. This mark indicates where the new groove must be cut into the bamboo. Mark each of the replacement slats in this way. Make sure each slat sits in the position, relative to the other slats, that it will be when the **shinai** is fully assembled, i.e. make sure you mark the groove with the slat sitting at the top, bottom, left, or right sides of the square.

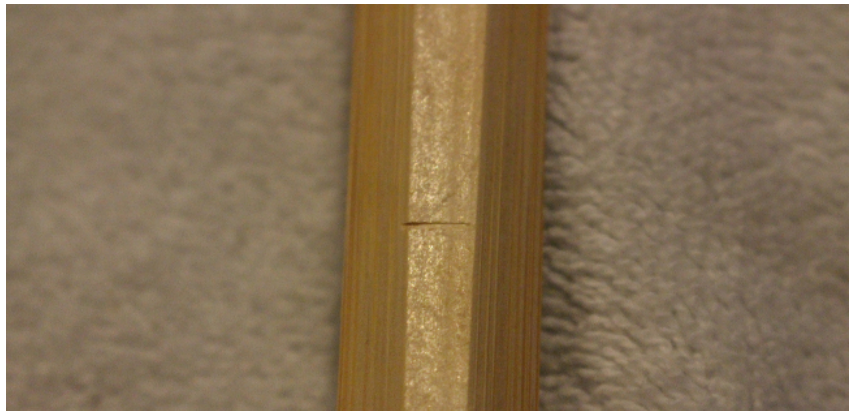


Figure 95: Use the square to mark the location(s) of the new grooves.

Use a small saw to cut into the mark on each slat, creating a new groove on each.

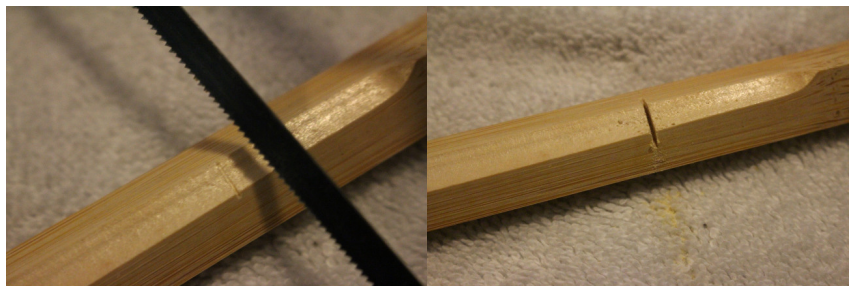


Figure 96: Use a small saw to cut each new groove.

Once the new grooves are cut into the slats, replace the square and put each slat into place. If they do not fit together closely enough, the grooves may need to be cut deeper into the bamboo. Once they fit together snugly, replace the **tsuka-gawa** and then re-attach the rest of the fittings. The joints of the bamboo will almost always be misaligned. This tends to make salvaged **shinai** have a shorter lifespan than those made from the same stock. This makes it even more crucial to check your **shinai** regularly for damage.



Figure 97: Reassemble the shinai.

Key Points:

1. Salvaged slats almost always have shorter lifespans than new ones making it even more important to check for any damage before, during, and after each use, and ensuring the fittings are tight and in good condition.
2. **Shinai** maintenance is crucial to keeping both you and your opponent safe and it saves you from having to buy new equipment as frequently!
3. Once proficient, a **shinai** can have slats replaced, fittings replaced & re-tied, and be ready to use in ten to twenty minutes.

Hakama & Gi: The Kendo Uniform

The **hakama** and **keiko-gi**, hereafter **gi**, are the traditional clothes worn during a **kendo** practice. As **kendo** is a martial art descending from a Japanese military class, as well as being a modern **do**, appearance is an integral part of the practice of **kendo**.

Showing proper attention to one's appearance while practicing shows respect for yourself, your **sensei** and peers, all **kendoka** who have trained before you, and perhaps most importantly to the meaning of the art you practice.

Gorin Gojo & Bushido 五倫五常 武士道

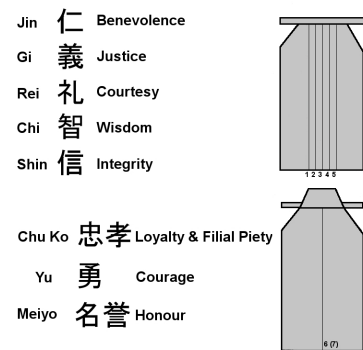


Figure 98: The hakama's pleats symbolize a number of ideals from Confucianism and Bushido (Bannister [7], Holt [29]). The five front pleats represent the five cardinal Confucian values (*gojo*). The two back pleats are said to represent *chu* & *ko* which give rise (Wikipedia [96]) to the *gorin*, the Confucian five bonds of filial piety. Others indicate the rear pleats represent *yu* and *meiyo* from Bushido.

Wearing the Gi, Obi, & Hakama



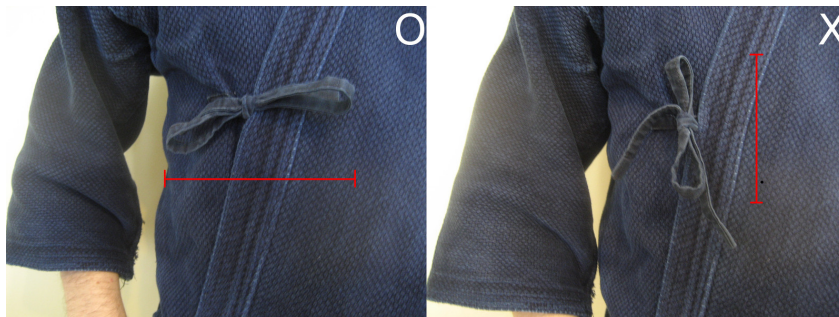
Figure 99: The gi, obi, and hakama.

Keiko-Gi: "Practice Jacket"



Figure 100: Wearing the keiko-gi.

Tie the inner then the outer pairs of **himo** (紐) in bows. The outer bow should lay horizontal, with loops of equal length.



If your bow lays vertically then simply reverse how you loop the himo while tying it and it will sit properly.

Key Points:

1. The outer bows should lay horizontally, not vertically.
2. Ensure your gi closes at the collar bone; don't let it gape open.
3. If clothing is worn under the gi it should not be visible.

Figure 101: (Left) Correctly tied himo lay horizontally, (Right) incorrectly tied himo lay vertically.

Obi: “Belt”

Tie the **obi** (帯) as indicted in figure 102. Be sure that it is neat, secure, and at the proper level on your waist.

This is only one of many methods for wearing the obi. See *Various Methods to Tie the Obi and Hakama (Japanese)* [91] for more.

**Key Points:**

1. The **obi** is completely optional. It is included here to help show how to tie the belts of the **hakama** correctly in the following section.
2. The **obi** is the sash that allowed the sword to be worn on the hip in the iconic fashion; the sheathe was inserted between the belts of the hakama and the outer layers of the obi.
3. The method that a modern **kendoka** “draws” or “sheathes” their **shinai**, pp.32–35, is a stylization of how an actual sword worn in an **obi** is drawn from the hip; not exactly the same, but close enough to emulate the original root motions.

Figure 102: Wearing the obi. The obi is completely optional in modern kendo. Use of the obi here is as an aid in learning to wear the hakama properly, specifically on how to tie and space the belts of the hakama correctly.

Hakama: "Split pants/skirt"

Step into the **hakama** with your left foot, then the right. Next, pull the waistband of the **hakama** up to your waist. If wearing the **obi**, the **hakama** waistband should sit such that it is flush with its upper edge.



Figure 103: Bring the hakama to the waist.

Bring the long belts from the front of your waist to your back and cross them over one another above the knot of the **obi**. Then, on a downward angle, bring them back to the front at the bottom edge of the **obi**.



Figure 104: Wrap the belts around your waist.

Cross the belts, right then left, in front of you at the bottom edge of the **obi**. Turn the belt which is coming from right-to-left upward, then bring both belts behind you.



Figure 105: Cross the belts in front.

As you bring the belts behind you, keep them below the bottom of the **obi**. Once behind you, tie the belts in a bow.



Figure 106: Tie the belts behind you.

Pull up the backside of the **hakama** and put the small spatula attached to the **koshiita** (腰板) in behind the long belts sitting above the **obi**. Bring the small belts from the back to the front keeping them on top of the descending long belts.



Figure 107: Bring the small belts to the front.

Cross the short belts, right-then-left, in front of where the long belts had crossed. Bring the short belt which is coming from the left under then up and behind the crossed long belts in the front of your waist.



Figure 108: Bring one short belt up and behind the long belts.

Make the lower belt into a “backward 7” then bring the upper belt over the top then up through the loop.



Figure 109: Tie the belts in a knot.

Pull the knot tight, then tuck the excess belt in behind the lower set of long belts on each side. Tuck the excess length into your “pocket”.



Figure 110: Tuck away excess belt length.



Key Points:

1. When putting on the **hakama**, tradition is to step into it with your left foot first then the right. When removing it, step out of it with your right foot first then the left.
2. The belts of the **hakama** must be tied neatly and securely.
3. After you tie the long belts of the **hakama**, figures 103 – 106, ensure the **gi** is still neat and tidy at your back. Take the time to straighten out any wrinkles or bunching, and straighten out any bulges.
4. The **hakama** should come to a level just above the foot covering the bones of the ankle.
5. The bottom of the **hakama** should be angled somewhat, being higher at the rear than it is in the front.
6. It is considered improper if there is a space or gap between your neck and the collar of the **gi** or between your lower back and the **koshiita**.
7. The bottom of the “V” at the neck of the **gi** and the knot for the belts on the front of the **hakama** should be aligned on your centerline.

Figure 111: (Left & Center) Properly worn gi, obi, & hakama. (Right) The “V” of the gi’s neckline and the knot of the belts on the front of the hakama should both be aligned with your centerline. The hemline of the hakama should be sloped not horizontal; the hemline should be higher at the back and lower at the front.

Folding the Gi & Hakama

Folding your **hakama** and **gi** after each practice is necessary to keep them looking neat. This also ensures the pleats in the **hakama** are not lost.

Folding the Gi

Lay the **gi** out neatly on a flat surface. Bring the right-hand sleeve across the front of the **gi** until the cuff reaches the right shoulder.



Figure 112: Lay the gi out and fold the sleeve over the chest.

Fold the sleeve in half by folding it back onto itself. Repeat both folds for the other sleeve.



Figure 113: Fold both sleeves.

Fold the bottom of the **gi** upward to the mid point. Fold the **gi** upward again. This folds the **gi** into thirds and is the final step.



Figure 114: Fold the bottom of the gi upward two times.

Key Points:

1. Folding the **gi** makes it compact for easy transportation in the limited space of a **bogu** bag and keeps it wrinkle free and looking neat.

The method given here is only one method in which to fold the gi and hakama. Subtle changes will be found among different kendoka, but the general outline will be common to all.

Folding the Hakama

With practice the **hakama** can easily be folded in a few minutes.

Hold the **hakama** open with the **koshiita** under your chin. Pull the inseam to the right (*the inseam will naturally fold in this direction*) and then close the **hakama**. Lay the **hakama** on a flat surface, face down. Move the two sets of belts out of your way and then flatten the **hakama** out. Folding the inseam properly makes a huge difference with this step.



Figure 115: Pull the inseam to the right.

There are two pleats on the back of the **hakama**, one pleat on top of the other. Move the “top” pleat aside from the “bottom” one down the length of the **hakama**, exposing the bottom pleat.



Figure 116: Expose the rear pleats.

Straighten the bottom pleat along the length of the **hakama** being sure that it is centered with its origin at the **koshiita**. Bring the top pleat back on top of the bottom one and straighten it in the same way as the bottom. Make sure that the pleat is centered with its origin along its entire length.



Figure 117: Straighten the rear pleats.

Carefully turn the **hakama** over so that the front is now facing upward. You must be sure to keep the rear pleats intact while doing this. There are five pleats on the front. Similar to those on the back some sit on top of others. Move aside the “top” pleats to expose the “bottom” pleats that are underneath.



Figure 118: Turn the hakama over.

Straighten the exposed pleats in the same way as the pleats on the back side of the **hakama**. Bring the top pleats back to the center and straighten those.



Figure 119: Straighten the front pleats.

Run your hand down the length of the **hakama** to help flatten any bulges. This also helps remove dirt or lint. Fold the outer edge of the **hakama** in toward the center. Be sure this fold is the same width down the entire length of the **hakama**.

The width of this fold should be such that the crease it makes is directly in line with where the belts attach to the **hakama** itself. Repeat this fold on the other side of the **hakama**. Again, be sure it is the same width along the entire length.



Figure 120: Fold the outer edges inward.

Carefully slide your hand underneath the bottom of the **hakama** being careful not to disrupt the pleats underneath. Flip the **hakama** forward folding it up about one quarter its length.

Fold the **hakama** up again another quarter of its length. Repeat this fold a third time. The **hakama** should now be folded into quarters.



Figure 121: Fold the hakama into quarters.

Folding the Belts of the Hakama

Turn the **hakama** over again so that the **koshiita** is facing up and separate the two sets of belts. Take one of the long belts and fold it in half onto itself.



Figure 122: Fold the long belt in half.

Fold the same belt in half onto itself once again. Take the folded belt and lay it diagonally across the center of the **hakama**.



Figure 123: Fold it in half again.

Fold the other long belt in the same manner and lay it diagonally across the center of the **hakama**. The folded belts should make an "X". Take one of the small belts and lay it over the center of the "X". Here the belt on the left side is done first.



Figure 124: Make an "X".

Now bring the short belt underneath the center of the "X". Now fold the short belt diagonally over the top of the left descending arm of the "X". Had the right-side short belt been used initially it would be folded over the right descending arm.



Figure 125: Bring the belt under and behind the "X".

Bring the belt under and back over this same part of the “X” two times, i.e., wrapping the belt around this portion of the “X”. Repeat this for the second short belt.



Figure 126: Wrap each belt around two times.

Bring the short belt on the left diagonally across the center of the “X” to the right and through the loop made on the lower descending arm of the “X” on the right. Repeat this step for the short belt on the right side by bringing it through the loop on the lower arm of the “X” on the left.



Figure 127: Bring the belts through the loop on the opposite side.

The **hakama** are now folded. If both hakama and gi are folded correctly they ought to make about the same sized rectangle.



Figure 128: Properly folded hakama.

Key Points:

1. Folding the **hakama** allows for easy transport, keeps the pleats intact, and the **hakama** wrinkle free.
2. It is improper to wear a disheveled uniform, or wrinkled **hakama**.

Washing the Gi & Hakama

Keeping your **hakama** and **gi** clean is a necessity as with any type of sports equipment. This is explained in the following excerpt⁴²:

“Proper care of the keiko-gi and hakama is an essential part of Kendo. During keiko, these garments will absorb body perspiration and become soiled and smelly. Obviously, this is unhealthy for the wearer and offensive for others in the dojo.”

Washing the Gi

Wash your **gi** in cold water with a mild detergent.

Washing the Hakama

1. **Hakama** should always be hand washed.
2. Fold the **hakama** as indicated beginning on p.78. Fill a basin with enough cold water to submerge your **hakama**. Mix in mild detergent if needed.
3. Place your **hakama** in the water. Unfold the **hakama** if space permits. Let the **hakama** soak for about twenty minutes.
4. Drain the dirty water after the **hakama** have been soaked and, using clean water, rinse the remaining detergent from the **hakama**.
5. Remove your **hakama** from the basin and hang them to dry.

Drying the Gi & Hakama

Gi. Hang the **gi** in a well ventilated area by putting a rod or **shinai** through the arms. The **gi** can also be dried in a dryer.

Hakama. Always hang the **hakama** to dry! Hang in a well ventilated area using the small inside loops. Use clothes pins to keep it aligned.



⁴² Ozawa [64]

Soaking in Vinegar?

The dye used on the hakama and gi tends to readily bleed out, especially when new. There is a widespread belief that soaking your uniform in vinegar will bind the dye to the material. This is true *only* for silks and nylons; it will have no effect on cotton or synthetic hakama and gi.



Figure 129: Hanging the hakama to dry.

Figure 130: Hanging the gi to dry.

The Bogu: “Protective Armour”

When **kendoka** advance in their training⁴³ they may begin wearing **bogu**.

Description of the Bogu

The **bogu** is the protective armour worn by a **kendoka** during practice.

Men. The **men** is the helmet worn by the **kendoka**.



⁴³ The time period required for a kendoka to be considered ready to begin wearing bogu is different among dojos. For adults, it usually ranges from as little as three months up to one year of practice before bogu may be used.

Figure 132: Parts of the men.



Figure 131: An extra padding insert for the men. If the men is slightly too big, or the padding is worn out, a padding insert can be placed inside the men. This piece of equipment is optional.

Kote. The **kote** are gloves worn to protect the hands and forearm.



Figure 134: Parts of the kote.



Figure 133: A kote support pad. If needed, extra padding can be worn on the wrist underneath the kote. This is useful if one's kote have become worn, or if one has a pre-existing bruise, sprain, or other injury. This piece of equipment is optional.

Key Points:

1. Padding, such as a **kote** pad, and in particular support braces, e.g., knee, ankle, or elbow brace, *should only be worn if you require them*, i.e., you have an injury. If worn they should be secure, pose no risk to yourself or others, and are preferably *unseen*.
2. Braces and support pads may be worn at tournaments if permission is received from the head judge or court judge.

Do. The **do** is the torso/abdomen protector.



Figure 136: Parts of the do.



Figure 135: There is another loop on the inside of the do used to hang the bogu for ventilation.

Tare. The **tare** is the waist protector.



Figure 137: Parts of the tare.

Some references, e.g., Ishiwata and Bond [36], use the term *hara-obi* (腹帯) or “gut belt” for tare-obi and *waki-himo* (脇紐) or “side straps” for tare-himo.

Preparing the Bogu for Use

Attaching the Do-Himo

Attach the four **do-himo** (胴紐) to the **do-chikawa** (胴乳皮); the two long himo on the upper left and right do-chikawa and the two short himo on the lower left and right.



Figure 138: Attach the do-himo.

Attaching the Men-Himo (Kanto/Kansai Style)

Wrap the **men-chikawa** (面乳皮) around the fourth **men-yoko-gane** (面横金) from the bottom. Pass the loop end of the **himo** over both ends of the **men-chikawa** and then pass the opposite end of the **himo** through the slits of the **men-chikawa**.

The **himo** can be attached directly to the **men-gane** (面金) if you do not have **men-chikawa** however the **himo** are more likely to fray at the attachment point.

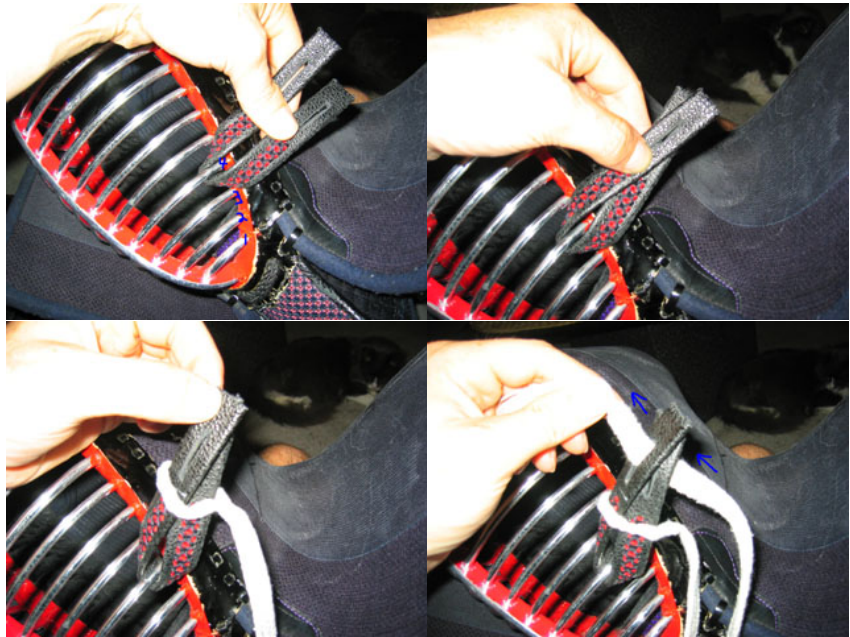


Figure 139: Placing the men-chikawa.

Pull the slack of the **men-himo** through the slits. Repeat this for the **himo** on the other side.

The **himo** for kansai style are attached similarly with a specialized **men-chikawa** at the top of the **men-tate-gane**.



Figure 140: (Left) Attached men-himo for “kanto” style. (Right) Attached men-himo for “kansai” style..

With kanto style, bring the left **himo** around the back of the men and, on an upward angle, around to the right side and then thread it through the space between the **men-tate-gane** and the uppermost **men-yoko-gane**. Bring the excess **himo** back to the left side. Repeat this with the **himo** from the right side. When finished, both **himo** will be threaded through the top of the **men**, and they will make an “X” at the back of the **men**.



Figure 141: Lace the men-himo.

Preparing the Men

Method #1. Use the **men-himo** to hold the **men-dare** along the side of the **men** pulling them forward so they overlap slightly on the front. The crease made in the **men-dare** should approximate your jaw line. Tie the **himo** tightly to hold everything in place.



Figure 142: Molding with the men-himo.

Method #2. Tie the **men-himo** at the back of the **men** as if it is being worn, and then firmly sit the **men** inside of the **do-kawa** (胴皮). The crease made in the **men-dare** should approximate your jaw line.



Figure 143: Molding using the do.

Preparing the Kote

Crease the wrist area of both **kote** by bending it forward, back, left, and right repeatedly.

Then wearing one **kote**, lightly stretch and widen the area between the thumb and index finger.



Figure 144: Breaking in the kote.

Putting on the Bogu

Bogu is always put on, adjusted, and taken off in **seiza**.



Put on, remove, and adjust your bogu in as little time as possible; don't keep others waiting.

Figure 145: Sitting in seiza with shinai to put on the bogu. The shinai is on the left with the tsuba level with the knee. Here the tare and do are already worn and the rest of the bogu, men and kote, are set down at the front-right of the kendoka. There should be enough room to perform za-rei between the bogu and the shinai.

Wearing the Tare

Bring the **tare-obi** (垂帯) to your waist. Bring the **tare-himo** (垂紐) to your back, crossing them at the base of the **koshiita**, and pulling them tight. Be sure the **tare-himo** are not twisted.

Bring them back to the front and tie them in a bow underneath the central **o-dare** (大垂) in the front of the **tare**. Push the bow up and behind the **o-dare** and **ko-dare** (小垂). Straighten out the **hakama** if needed.



Figure 146: Wearing the tare.

Key Points:

1. Tie the **tare** securely so that it does not move or twist during practice.

Wearing the Do

Holding the **do** to your chest, bring the long **do-himo** attached on the upper right side of the **do** across your back to the left, and pull it through the **mune-chikawa** (胸乳皮). Wrap the **himo** around the **mune-chikawa** creating a loop.



Figure 147: Bring the right do himo through the left mune-chikawa and make a loop.

Create a second loop with the excess **himo** and pull this loop through the first one. Pull the slack of the original loop tight around the new loop by pulling on the shoulder portion of the **himo**. Tuck any excess **himo** behind the **do-mune**. Repeat this for the other side.



Figure 148: Create a second loop and pull it through the first, then tighten the slack of the original loop.

Tie the short **himo** in a bow behind you, making sure the loops and the excess **himo** or of the same length. Grab the **himo** on either side of the bow and pull outward to tighten the bow.



Figure 149: Tie the short do-himo in a bow behind you.

Key Points:

1. The bottom of the **do** should cover the large stitching at the bottom edge of the **tare-obi** and the top of the **do-mune** should sit somewhere around the sternum, below the neckline of the **gi**.
2. Tie the **do** securely so that it does not come undone during practice.
3. The loops and excess string on the top knots should be equal length with the loops pointing outward. The loops and excess string on the rear knot should be equal length, the bow sitting horizontally.



Figure 150: (Top) A band of large stitches at the base of the tare-obi. (Bottom) The bottom of the do just covers this stitching.

Wearing the Tenugui: “Hand-Towel”

The **tenugui** is worn underneath the **men** primarily to absorb perspiration during practice. There are many methods for wearing the **tenugui**. Find the method which is the most comfortable and quickest for you.

The two most basic methods are described below here.

Method #1: Making a Cap

1. Place the **tenugui** flat on the floor in front of you.
2. Fold the **tenugui** in half from top to bottom.
3. Fold the sides of the **tenugui** diagonally across the center.
4. Turn the **tenugui** over.
5. Fold the sides diagonally over the center again making a triangle.
6. Fold the triangle up inside the pocket made by the folded **tenugui**. This creates a “cap” which is put on the head, and pulled down so that it covers the ears. The thick part should be on the forehead.

Correctly Fitted Tenugui

Regardless of which method you use, it is important that you learn to put on the tenugui with a proper fit. If it is too tight it can become very uncomfortable during practice under the compression of the men or men-himo. If it is too loose, it will move around underneath the men; if it slips forward it can make it difficult to see, and if it slips back it will not cover your forehead allowing perspiration to get in your eyes. In either case, too tight or too loose, the men will have to be removed and the tenugui adjusted.



Figure 151: Wearing the tenugui. This method creates a “cap” that the kendoka wears on their head.

Method #2: Wrapping Around the Head

1. Pull the the top edge of the **tenugui** overhead to the base of the skull.
2. Wrap each side of the **tenugui** across the forehead, over the ear, to the opposite side of the head.
3. Fold the front over itself and onto the top of the head. Ensure that the folded portion does not stick out the back of the **men**.



Figure 152: Another method of wearing the tenugui.

Wearing the Men

Method #1: Kanto Style

Place your chin securely in the **men**, followed by your forehead. Bring the **men-himo** to the back of your head and pull them tight. Keeping the **himo** tight, tie them securely in a bow.



Figure 153: Tie the himo in bow.

The knot should sit directly behind the level of your eyes⁴⁴. Make sure the loops and the excess **himo** are the same length and are no longer than 40cm.

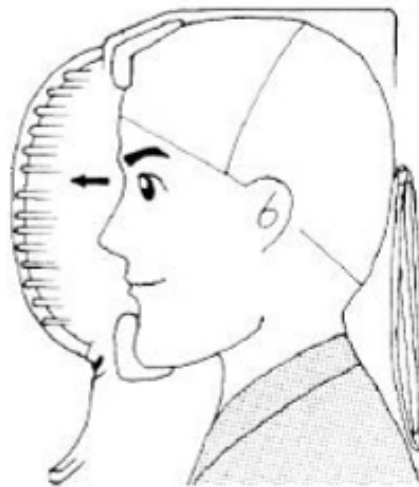


Figure 154: Himo tied at eye level.

Straighten the **himo** on the sides of the **men** so that they don't twist, and that there is no space between the two upper **himo**. On both sides of the **men** grab the **men-dare** below the lower set of **himo** and pull it forward and away from your head. This creates space necessary for both ventilation and safety.



Figure 155: Neaten the himo.

Key Points:

1. The **himo** on the sides of the **men** must be flat with no gaps between them. The rear loops and excess string should be the same length.
2. Pull the **men-dare** forward and away from the ear.

⁴⁴ Ishiwata and Bond [36]

Kanto is an eastern area of Japan, kansai is western.

Method #2: Kansai Style

Kansai style requires longer **men-himo**, 8 shaku compared to 7 shaku for kanto, and a special **men-chikawa**. Place your head in the **men**, chin first, and grab hold of both **himo**. Bring the **himo** to the back of your head and cross them behind the level of your eyes. Then bring them to the front of the **men** at the level of your chin.



Figure 156: Cross the himo at the back.

Cross the **himo** in front of your chin, and bring them again to the back. Pull the **himo** tight to secure the **men**. Cross the **himo** again behind the eyes and, laying them below the **himo** already on the side of the **men**, bring them to the front.



Figure 157: Cross at the front and back.

Keeping the tension in the **himo**, pull each **himo** separately through the space between the topmost **men-yoko-gane** (horizontal bar) and the **men-tate-gane** (vertical bar). Bring the **himo** to the back of the head, below the **himo** already present, and tie them in a bow at eye level. Be sure the loops and excess **himo** are the same length and no longer than 40cm.



Figure 158: Pass the himo through the men.

Straighten out any twists or gaps between the **himo**, then from below the lower set of **himo** pull the **men-dare** forward and away from the head to create a space for ventilation.

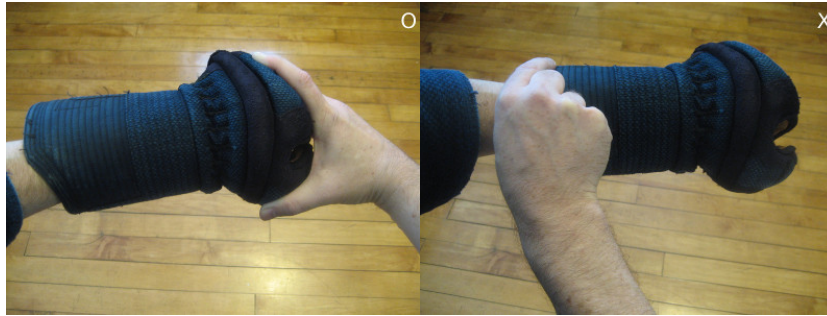


Figure 159: Adjust the himo and men.

Wearing the Kote

There are a few things to note when wearing the **kote**:

1. **Kote** are put on in a specific order: first the left **kote**, then the right.
2. When putting the **kote** on, always push it on⁴⁵ via the **kote-gashira**, (小手頭). Don't pull it on via the **tsutsu** (筒).



⁴⁵ Ishiwata and Bond [36]

Figure 160: (Left) Proper and (Right) improper method of putting on the kote.

According to Tokeshi [88], the tradition of putting your right kote on last and removing it first comes from the fact that the samurai wanted to keep their right hand “free” until the very last possible moment in case they needed to respond to a surprise attack.

3. **Kote** are removed in a specific order: first the right **kote**, then the left.
4. When removing the **kote** always pull it off⁴⁶ via the forearm portion (**tsutsu**), not by the fist.



⁴⁶ Ishiwata and Bond [36]

Figure 161: (Left) Proper and (Right) improper method of removing the kote.

Key Points:

1. Don't tighten the **himo** on the **kote** such that the **kote** are tight against your arm. The **kote** offer the best protection if the forearm portion is somewhat loose.



Figure 162: Another optional piece of equipment is the “kote shita” or kote mitten/glove. These washable gloves are worn under the kote so that any sweat or grime is absorbed by the glove instead of the kote, extending the lifespan of the kote. The image shown here is a specific brand name version of the “glove” style v.s. a “mitten” style.

Removing the Men & Kote

In **seiza** remove the **kote** and place them on the floor in front of you and to your right, thumbs together and the fists pointing to your right.



Figure 163: Remove your kote.

Untie the **men-himo** and bring them to the front of your **men** and gather them up neatly; don't remove the **men** before doing this. Holding the gathered **himo** in your hand, loosen the **men** by pulling the sides away from your head. Take the **men** off, head then chin, and hold it in your right hand with the **men-gane** in your palm.



Figure 164: Remove the men.

Holding the **men** in your hand place the **himo** in the **men** and remove your **tenugui**. If you need to wipe perspiration from your face hold the **men** in front of your face while you do so. Wipe the inside of the **men** with the **tenugui** to remove excess perspiration.

Set the **men** on the **kote**, the **men-tate-gane** laying on the wrists. Fold the **tenugui** and place it in the **men** or lay it open across the top. Push the **men** and **kote** forward and to your right, as in figure 145 on p.87 to allow room for **rei**.



Figure 165: Remove the tenugui.

Removing the Rest of the Bogu & Packing Up

Method #1: Simple Storing of the Bogu

After removing your **do** and **tare**, lay the **tare** in front of you on your lap, the **zekken** (ゼッケン), facing upward and the **tare-obi** toward your stomach. Wrap the entire length of both **tare-himo** neatly around the **o-dare** one at a time, being sure to keep them both flat.



Figure 166: Lay the tare down face up.

Lay the **do** face down onto the front of the **tare**, the **tare-obi** aligned between the upper and lower **do-himo**. Bring the upper set of **do-himo** under the **tare** and cross them. Bring one **himo** to the top of the **do** and one **himo** to the bottom. Tie the **himo** together on the back of the **do**. Bring the bottom set of **do-himo** to the front of the **tare**, passing them both underneath the **ko-dare**. Tie the bottom set of **himo**.



Figure 167: Simple storage of the bogu.

Key Points:

1. This is a very common method for packing up the **bogu** as it allows for it to be easily carried and transferred to a **bogu** bag.
2. A common variation of this method is to wrap the **tare-himo** around the edge of the **tare-obi** instead of the **o-dare**.



Figure 168: Wrapping the tare-himo around the edge of the tare-obi instead of the o-dare is another common method of tying up the tare for storage.

Method #2: Hanging the Bogu

Tie the **tare** to the **do** as in method #1 but using *only* the long **himo**.

Unlace the **men-himo** from the **men-gane** leaving them attached via the **men-chikawa**. Gather them together and fold the **himo** at approximately $\frac{1}{3}$ their length to make a loop out of both **himo**. Thread this loop through the uppermost space of the **men**.

Pull the loop through the **men-gane**. With the remaining **himo** on the right form another loop by folding them again. Make these two sets of loops equal in size and tie them together at the top of the **men**. There are now four individual loops.

Thread one loop into a **kote** through the forearm opening and out the gap between the **kote-himo** and the palm. Open the loop bringing it over the fist. Repeat this for the other **kote**.

Pull the remaining loops through the **mune-chikawa** on the inner side of the **do-mune**. Set the **men** inside the **do** with the **kote** between the **men** and the **men-dare**.

Tie the short **do-himo** around the back of the **men** to secure it. The **bogu** can now be hung up by the **men-himo** pulled through the loop on the inside of the **do**.



Figure 169: Make two sets of loops.



Figure 170: Attach the men & kote to the do.

Key Points:

1. Hanging the **bogu** is most useful if it must be put in a specific place to get proper ventilation or if space is an issue.

Stowing Bogu in a Bogu Bag

The following are recommended⁴⁷ ways for stowing **bogu** in a **bogu** bag.

⁴⁷ All Japan Budogu Association [2]

Method #1. Tie the bogu as shown on p.95 and then place in the bogu bag. The **hakama** and **gi** can be placed inside the **men** or they can be put in the bag first and the **bogu** can be placed on top of it.

Method #2. Tie the bogu as above, but place the **kote** inside the **men**.



Figure 171: Stowing the bogu in a bogu bag. (Left) Method #1 and (Right) method #2.

Key Points:

1. The **bogu** bag is for transportation only. Do not leave sweaty **bogu** in it to dry as bacteria will begin to grow causing it to smell.

Basic Bogu Care & Maintenance

The following simple steps will extend the lifespan of your equipment.

Tenugui. Rinse and dry the **tenugui** thoroughly after each practice.

Men. Use a damp cloth or **tenugui** to wipe away any dirt or grime and be sure the **men** is aired out and dried thoroughly after each use. Inspect the **himo** to ensure they are in good condition, replacing as needed.

Tare. When packing up the **tare** flatten out any creases in the **tare-himo** to help prevent tearing or fraying.

Do. Check both sets of **himo** to ensure they are in good condition, replacing as necessary. Also be sure the various **do-chikawa** are securely attached to the **do**. Tighten them if they are loose, replace if torn or damaged.

Kote. With use the palms will crease slightly. Gently stretch these creases after use before allowing them to dry. The **kote-himo** will loosen over time and the **tsutsu** will deform into a triangular shape. When this occurs, reform the **kote** and retie the **himo**. If the palms develop any tears or holes have them patched as soon as possible. Be sure the **kote** are aired out and dried thoroughly after each use.

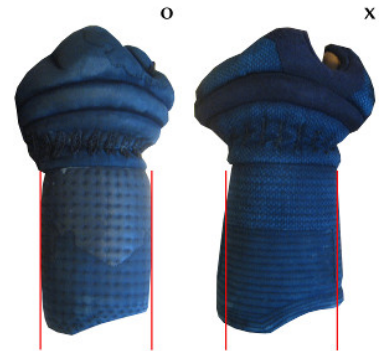


Figure 172: (Left) Properly shaped kote, (Right) a deformed kote. When the kote deform they may offer less protection.



Figure 173: (Top) The kote palms become creased after use, (Bottom) gently smoothing out creases in the kote palm leather before drying.



Samurai in full armour with sword, circa 1860. The parallels between historical armour and the bogu in modern kendo are obvious.

Maai: “Distance & Spacing”

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER DISCUSSES THE various **maai** (間合), or roughly “distance & spacing”, used in **kendo**. **Maai** is fundamental to performing basic strikes and **waza** correctly and so must be understood thoroughly. There are four different **maai** which will be discussed:

issoku itto no maai (一足一刀の間合), p.99 **to-ma** (遠間), p.99
tsuba-zeriai (鍔迫り合い), p.100 **chika-ma** (近間), p.100

Issoku Itto no Maai: The “One Step, One Sword” Distance

Issoku itto no maai refers to the distance at which one can successfully attack their opponent by taking only one step. *Generally* this is the distance at which the two **kendokas shinai** cross at the **saki-gawa**. This is not always true as **issoku itto no maai** will change⁴⁸ from person to person.

To-ma: “Far Distance”

To-ma refers to a distance longer than **issoku itto no maai**. When at **to-ma** you can neither receive or deliver a strike. When you want to strike you must first move into **issoku itto no maai**.

The following excerpt⁴⁹ discusses **to-ma**:

“Beginners should perform keiko from to-ma with skillful ashi-sabaki that includes the backward kicking action. When keiko is performed from to-ma, it cultivates an ability to become less self-conscious as well as develop muscles used in kendo. For beginners to make progress it is particularly important that they do not focus too much on the kote-saki from chika-ma, but perform keiko with large relaxed movements using their whole body.”

More Than Distance

The common translation for **maai** is simply distance, however a better translation of the term is distance & spacing. Distance implies a measured length between two points while spacing has a more generalized, multivariate meaning. **Maai** encompasses both of these ideas.



Figure 174: Generalized issoku itto no maai. Basic issoku itto no maai is in general the distance where the kensen just cross.

⁴⁸ According to Ozawa [64], “true issoku itto no maai varies according to age, sex, strength, ability, build, length of shinai, opportunity to strike, etc. This is the ma which cannot be taught, but rather which we have to learn by ourselves through keiko.”



Figure 175: Generalized to-ma. To-ma is a distance approximately one step (farther) away from issoku itto no maai.

⁴⁹ Ozawa [64]

Chika-ma: "Short Distance"

Chika-ma is shorter than **issoku itto**. This is dangerous as both **kendoka** can easily strike due to the small distance, which tends to make posture and spirit equally small.

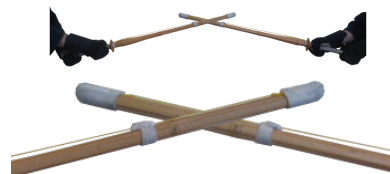


Figure 176: Generalized chika-ma. Chika-ma is a distance closer than issoku itto.

Tsuba-Zeriai: "Joined Tsubas"

Tsuba-zeriai isn't a specific **maai** but is rather a *position*. However as it has to do with distance from your opponent it is discussed here. **Tsuba-zeriai** occurs when **kendoka** move into close range such that their **tsubas** are "joined" together and actively attempt to create⁵⁰ an opening to strike.

⁵⁰ Tsuba-zeriai is a compound word made up of tsuba, (拵) "sword guard"; se(ri), (迫り) "urge on"; and a(i), (合い) "match, union". The term se(ri) makes the "attempt to create an opening to strike" an implicit part of the meaning of tsubazeriai.

Performing tsuba-zeriai. There are a couple of key ideas in performing **tsuba-zeriai**. The first is to keep the **tsubas** at the proper angle as in figure 177; the **shinai** should be crossing at an angle of about 30°–45°, **tsuba** to **tsuba**.

Second, the left hand of you and your opponent should be separated, your right hand should not be against your chest, and your right hand meets the opponent's right hand near the abdomen. This spacing gives you enough room to maneuver and create openings. While you will inevitably move, or be moved, from this position it is important that you attempt to return to it as soon as you can.

When the distance between the left hands or the distance between your body and your right hand collapses, all that one can usually do is push v.s. attempt to strike. Against an experienced opponent keeping the proper **tsuba-zeriai** spacing, pushing them will give *them* opportunities to strike. Lastly, avoid putting too much tension in your arms and hands.

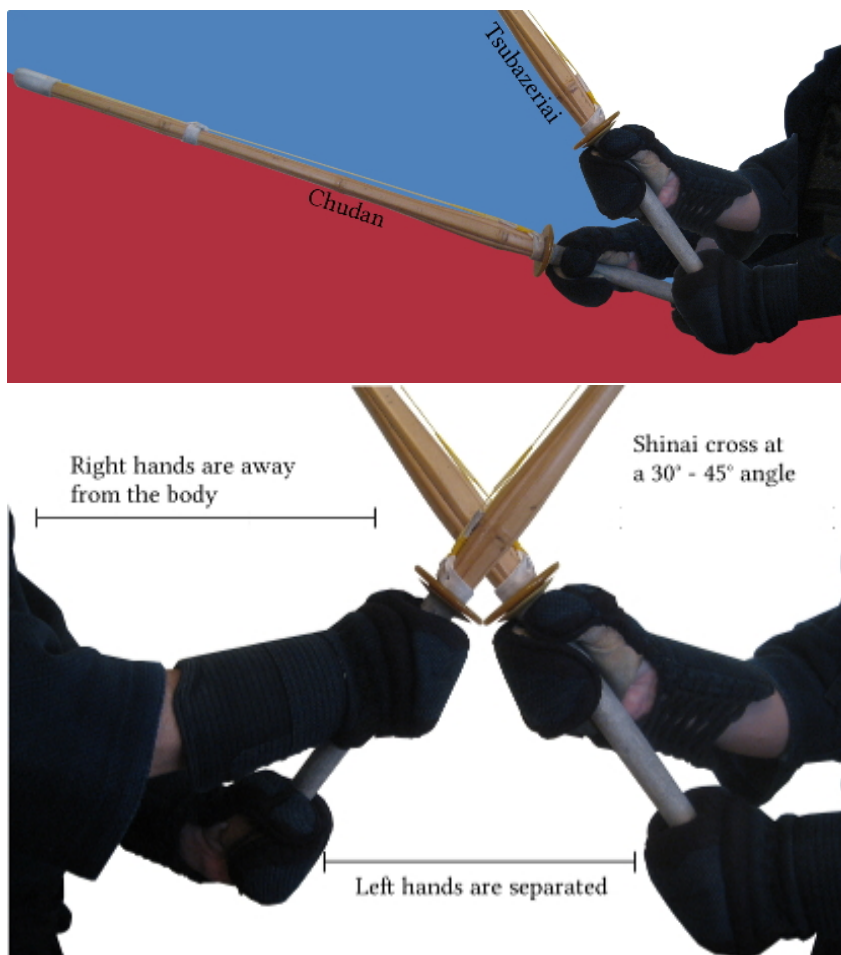


Figure 177: Moving from chudan no kamae to the tsuba-zeriai position.

Suburi & Uchi-Komi: “Elementary Swings & Lunging Strikes”

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER IS CONCERNED with the various methods of performing and practicing a proper strike. The first part of the chapter gives a description and the locations of the valid targets in **kendo** and instructions on how to strike them. This is followed with discussion on moving while striking, coordinating your strike, and controlling the strike. A selection of advanced strikes are listed for completeness.

men, p.103	adding footwork, p.107
kote, p.105	basic ki ken tai ichi (気剣体一致), p.107
do, p.106	strike control: te-no-uchi (手の内), p.108
tsuki (突き), p.107	advanced strikes, p.109

The remainder of the chapter discusses a number of the core exercises a **kendoka** will use to practice their strikes, known as **suburi** (素振り) or “fundamental swing practice”. The number of variants for these exercises are many, but it is safe to assume that the **suburi** listed here are considered standard in most **dojos**. The following is a list of the different types of **suburi** and striking exercises which will be discussed:

jo-ge buri (上下振り), p.113	ichidan suburi (一段素振り), p.115
naname buri (斜め振り), p.114	haya suburi (速素振り), p.116
sandan suburi (三段素振り), p.114	uchi-komi (打ち込み), p.117
nidan suburi (二段素振り), p.115	kiri-kaeshi (切り返し), p.119

Datotsu-Bui: “Targets Areas”

There are four target areas in **kendo** consisting of the head, **men**; the forearm, **kote**; the throat, **tsuki**; and the abdomen, **do**; with a number of variants for each. Figure 178 shows the **datotsu-bui** (打突部位) or “target areas”.

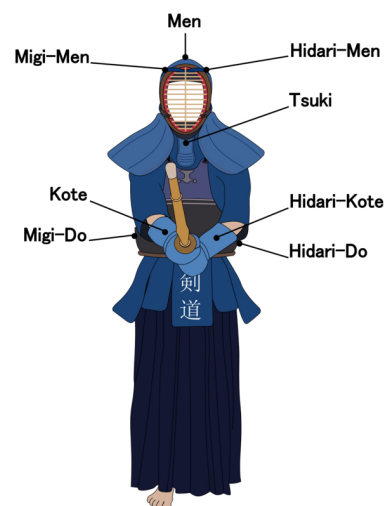


Figure 178: The datotsu-bui (target areas) in kendo.

Shomen: “Centered/Frontal Men”. **Shomen** (正面) is the most fundamental of targets and is the basis for learning other targets. **Shomen** is the direct center of the **men**.

Sayu-Men: “Left & Right Men”. **Sayu-men** (左右面) is a strike to the areas to left or right of **shomen** above the opponents temple. When striking **sayu-men**, the **shinai** travels a path angled anywhere from 30° to 45°.

Yoko-Men: “Sideways/Horizontal Men”. **Yoko-men** (横面) is an advanced horizontal **kata-te** strike to the left or right side of the **men**.

Migi Kote: “Right-side Kote”. **Migi kote**, usually the forward hand on the **shinai** is the standard target. It can be a straight or angled strike depending on position.

Hidari Kote: “Left-side Kote”. **Hidari kote**, usually the rear hand on the **shinai**, p.52, becomes valid if the opponent is in a non-**chudan kamae**.

Migi Do: “Right-side Do”. **Migi do** is an angled strike to the opponent's right **do** and is the standard **do** target. When striking, the **shinai** travels an angled path, 30° to 45°, toward the opponent's **do**.

Gyaku Do: “Reverse Do”. **Hidari do**, or **gyaku** (逆, “reverse”) **do**, is a strike to the opponent's left **do** but is usually not considered a valid target unless there's an obvious, i.e., overtly exposed, opportunity. This usually happens when somebody uses the **shinai** to block **migi do** as in the **san-po-mamori** (三方守り, “three point defense”) position, p.163.

Tsuki: “Thrust”. **Tsuki** is the only thrust attack in **kendo**. **Tsuki** has a stigma of being dangerous making it not uncommon to find **kendoka** uncomfortable using it despite it being a part of **kendo kihon** (基本). There are two general types of **tsuki**: **kata-te tsuki** and **moro-te** (諸手) **tsuki**, **moro-te** being the simpler.

Key Points:

1. These are the only target areas in **kendo** and it is crucial that one learns to strike them accurately. While missing from time to time is unavoidable, one must learn to strike these targets accurately in order to keep your opponent safe. This is a major factor in being granted the privilege to begin sparring with another **kendoka** using a **shinai**, i.e., demonstrating you can strike correctly and *safely*.



Figure 179: Shomen target.



Figure 180: Sayu-men targets.

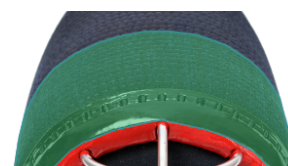


Figure 181: Men strikes must occur on the rawhide portion and/or the textured band of the men-buton as this is the area which offers proper protection.



Figure 182: Kote target (migi).



Figure 183: Migu and hidari do targets.



Figure 184: Tsuki target.

Basic Target Striking

How to Strike Shomen

Striking shomen. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and swing the **bokuto** overhead along your centerline to the point where you can clearly see your opponents **men** from below your left fist. Swing the **bokuto** forward along your centerline and bring it to rest with your right arm extended just below shoulder level, your left fist just below your sternum. As the **bokuto** hits **shomen**, you must hold it with **te-no-uchi**, p.108, and then relax. With strong **kiai** (気合い), call out the target the moment the **bokuto** comes to rest.

Key Points:

1. Raise the left hand fully overhead without tensing your shoulders.
2. Extend your arms naturally, straightening both elbows.
3. Upon striking, the right hand should be just below shoulder height and the left hand at or just below the sternum. Picture striking a duplicate of yourself and cutting well into the target. For **men**, this is usually somewhere around the nose.
4. At the moment of impact, the grip is tightened (**te-no-uchi**) and then *immediately* relaxed. See p.108.
5. Maintain a straight posture, relaxed shoulders, and keep your core engaged. Exhale throughout the entire swing.
6. The “mantra” for beginners is “big, slow, and accurate”. All strikes should be large overhead strikes, done slowly enough that you remain relaxed, accurately aimed, and stopped at the correct position.

Learning to Strike

Striking can be broken up into separate components, and each component is a precursor to learning the next step. Eventually all of these steps are put together as a whole and one then performs an actual strike. In this text, learning to strike is broken up in the following way:

1. Allowable target areas.
2. Swinging at the targets: “big, slow, smooth, and accurate.”
3. Striking while moving with basic footwork.
4. Controlling the strike: **te-no-uchi**.
5. Coordination between your body, sword, and spirit: **ki ken tai ichi**.
6. Basic exercises for swing practice: **suburi**.
7. Striking while moving with **fumi-komi**.
8. Follow-through on a strike: **zan-shin**.
9. Completing **zanshin**: turning to face the opponent.



Figure 185: Striking shomen.

How to Strike Sayu-Men

Note: For the remainder of this text the direction indicated for left or right sided strikes refers to your opponent's left or right as in figure 178, p.101.

Striking sayu-men. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and swing the **bokuto** overhead, along your centerline, keeping your shoulders relaxed. Turning your right hand to the left (right), swing the **bokuto** at an angle of 30° to 45° from center toward your opponents right (left) **men**. With **kiai**, strike the right (left) **men** holding the **bokuto** with **te-no-uchi**, p.108.

Key Points:

1. As with **shomen** picture striking a duplicate of yourself and cutting well into the target; for **sayu-men** the strike should hit above the temple, but cut down to about nose level.
2. Extend the arms forward naturally, straightening both elbows; don't hyper-extend the joint.
3. The primary up-down motion of the strike is your left hand; the right hand acts as a "steering wheel", not an "accelerator".
4. When striking **sayu-men** your right hand directs the angle of the strike, freely moving to the left or right of your centerline as needed. The left will rotate to the left or right, directed by the right hand, however the left hand *does not move off of your centerline*.

Consecutive Strikes

When strikes are repeated consecutively, for example sayu-men, it is called "*renzoku sayu-men*" or "*repeated/continuous left and right men*". *Renzoku sayu-men* is of particular importance due to its use in *kiri-kaeshi*, p.119.

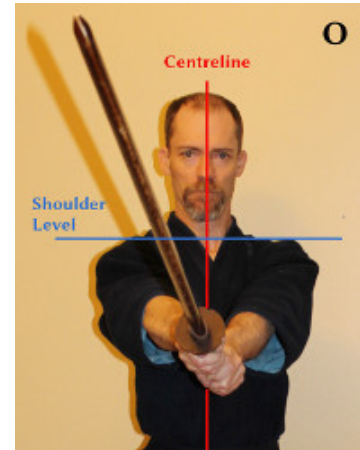


Figure 186: Hidari sayu-men. The left hand swings up and down along the centerline while the right hand controls the angle.



Figure 187: Striking migi sayu-men.

Powering Your Swing: “Right-Hand” v.s. “Left-Hand”

The primary up–down motion of a strike is made with the left hand; right-handed strikes are easily seen with **sayu-men**. Symptoms of this are:

1. The right hand is lifted above the head but not the left; the left hand often ends up at face level.
2. The left hand is “pushed” off of center. Sometimes the right hand will be pulled off center as well.
3. The left hand is not pulled low enough, often stopping at throat level.
4. Because the left hand isn’t lowered enough, and pushed off of the centerline, the left elbow and wrist bend at strange angles. This also causes the shoulders to tense and become distorted.

How to Strike Kote

Striking kote. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and swing the **bokuto** overhead keeping center. Swing forward stopping just above being parallel to the floor. Upon striking use **te-no-uchi**, p.108, and call out the target with strong **kiai**.

Key Points:

1. **Kote** is similar to a **men** strike on the up and downward swing. Don’t twist/turn the **bokuto** or strike **kote** at an angle; strike along the centerline.

Right Hand v.s. Left Hand

Beginners tend to pull and push the bokuto using their right hand, the left being dragged with it. While both hands are involved in **te-no-uchi** and both arms reach forward when striking, the left hand is the primary drive for moving the bokuto while the right hand helps stabilize the swing, steer the bokuto for angled targets, and helps stop the bokuto during **te-no-uchi**.

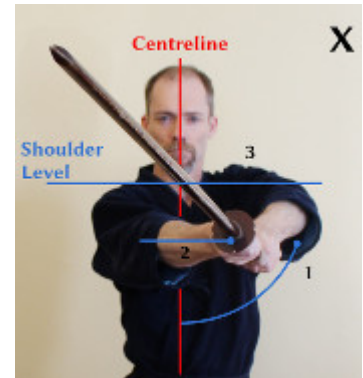


Figure 188: A right-handed hidari sayu-men. (1) The left hand is too high and off center, the left elbow bends awkwardly. (2) The right hand is pulled off center. (3) The left shoulder has tensed upward.



Figure 189: Striking kote.

How to Strike Migi Do

Striking migi do. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and swing the **bokuto** overhead keeping center. Turn your right hand to the left and swing forward, over the shoulder, at an angle of 30° to 45°. With **te-no-uchi**, p.108, strike **do** with strong **kiai**.

Key Points:

1. Swing toward the **do** at an angle of 30°–45°, not 90°. Don't let the **bokuto** drop below your shoulder before swinging forward.
2. Keep the **bokuto** centered during your upswing.

The front of the **do** is not a valid target, see figure 183. Many people end up striking here since they over anticipate the "cut across" motion done during **zanshin**, p.118. The **mono-uchi** must make contact with the left or right side of the **do** first; it makes contact with the front of the **do** while you finish your cut, *not* as you begin it.



Figure 190: Striking migi do.



Figure 191: (Left) Correct path of the blade when striking **do**; the tip moves forward from over the shoulder. (Right) Incorrect path; the tip first drops below the shoulder, then moves forward from the side.

How to Strike Moro-Te Tsuki

Moro-te tsuki. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and holding the **bokuto** with **te-no-uchi**, p.108, extend your arms and thrust toward **tsuki** with strong **kiai**.

Key Points:

1. Don't over extend your arms. Eventually footwork will enable you cover the majority of the distance to the target.
2. Don't raise your hands, “flattening” your **bokuto**, as you thrust.
3. Control the depth of your thrust; too deep a thrust is potentially unsafe for your opponent.

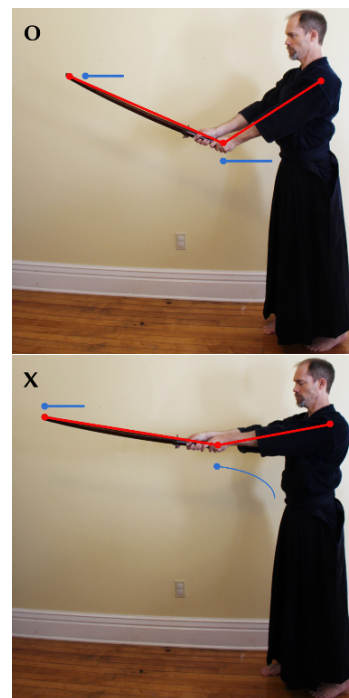


Figure 192: (Top) Tsuki keeps a chudan like angle during the thrust. (Bottom) The left hand improperly rises up during the thrust, flattening the bokuto.

Figure 193: Striking moro-te tsuki.

Adding Footwork & Coordinating the Strike

Once the basic targets are understood it is time to add footwork to the strike. The most basic is **okuri-ashi**.

The difficult part about adding in footwork to one's strike is coordinating the swing and movement of the feet. Coordinating the feet, hands, swing, and **kiai** during a strike is essential to proper striking and is referred to as **ki ken tai ichi**, which is discussed in detail on p.144.

The basic coordination of any strike, using any basic **suri-ashi** style footwork, is that at the moment a strike lands the rear foot finishes its motion; the strike, **kiai**, and finished step must all occur *at the same moment*.

Key Points:

1. Basic strikes use **suri-ashi**, usually **okuri-ashi**, style footwork.
2. The strike must land at the same time that the rear foot finishes moving, and at the same time one voices their **kiai**. It is incorrect for the strike to land before the step finishes or for the step to finish before the strike lands; the two must occur *as one*.

Basic Strike Coordination

One of the most crucial aspects of kendo is that of coordinating the swing of the bokuto with the movement of the feet. The strike should land on the target at the same moment that one makes a basic step and at the same moment that one calls out the name of the target; all three happen together. This is known as **ki ken tai ichi**. For basic strikes, using **okuri-ashi** and stepping forward, the bokuto should land on the target at the same time the rear foot is finishing the step. When stepping backward, the bokuto should land on the target at the moment the front foot is finishing the step. On top of this one must call out the name of the target as the bokuto comes to a stop on a target.

Te-no-Uchi: Controlling the Strike

Te-no-uchi is a term used frequently when discussing proper strikes. It is how one transfers power from the body to the tip of the sword, maintains control, and efficiently stop your swing. **Te-no-uchi** primarily is in the hands and wrists, but also involves the forearms, elbows, and shoulders.

The motion for **te-no-uchi** is often described as “squeezing a towel”; a towel is wrapped around the **tsuka** and, upon striking, is “wrung out” in a twisting motion. This is partly correct: the fingers tighten in a squeezing motion, the wrists arc slightly, and the thumbs turn slightly inward. See figure 194. However the “towel” one must imagine is an extremely delicate; the image of wringing out a wet dish towel is not appropriate. **Te-no-uchi** is a *small, subtle squeezing motion, not a large twisting motion*.

Te-no-uchi involves more than just squeezing with the hands but includes use of the forearms, elbows, and shoulders. At the moment a strike connects the hands squeeze, but the forearms also tense slightly while at the same time straightening the elbows to reach forward. This makes a whip-like motion in the tip, creating power, but it also *roughly* aligns the tip, arms, and shoulders. Immediately after impact, **te-no-uchi** is relaxed and the sword is held in a the usual position to “cut” the target. The squeezing of the hands and tensing of the forearms, followed by relaxation, also act as a “brake” to stop the swing on the target. This makes a strong, accurate, and stable strike.

Te-no-uchi, followed by relaxing into the “cutting position”, figure 195, is a crucial part of emulating a real cut and is a part of **zanshin** (残心), p.118.



Key Points:

1. **Te-no-uchi** is small and subtle; don't over exaggerate it.
2. Focus on the feeling of “flicking” the tip forward.
3. The most crucial aspect is to immediately *relax* upon hitting.

Newton's Third Law

Newton's third law states that “when one body exerts a force on a second body, the second body simultaneously exerts a force equal in magnitude and opposite in direction on the first body.” This means the opponent will “push back” on your shinai with equal and opposite force to your strike. If you cannot support this force, your strike will literally be pushed away, causing it to “slip off” the target. **Te-no-uchi** transfers power to your weapon, acts as a “brake” to stop the strike, and makes you mechanically stable to support the counter force.

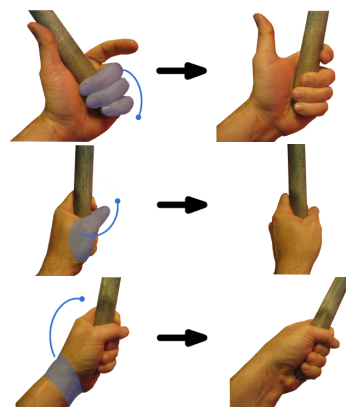


Figure 194: The hand movement for **te-no-uchi**, artificially broken down into three separate components. Highlighted in blue, (Top) the little, ring, and middle fingers squeeze pivoting the shinai forward, (Middle) the thumb squeezes turning slightly inward, (Bottom) the wrists arc forward slightly. In reality all three movements occur simultaneously and create a very subtle “squeezing” and “screw-like” motion of the hand. This motion is done without altering your grip or hand placement on the **tsuka**.

Figure 195: (Left) At the moment of impact the squeezing motion of **te-no-uchi** makes a whip-like motion causing a rough, momentary alignment of the tip, arms, and shoulders. (Right) **Te-no-uchi** is relaxed and the weapon is held at the usual position to “cut” into the target.

Advanced Strikes

This section gives a *very* brief introduction to some of the advanced strikes used in **kendo**.

Chisai Waza: “Small” Strikes

Once a **kendoka** is accustomed to striking with large, overhead swings a different method of striking is soon introduced known as **chisai** (小さい) or “small” strikes.

Small strikes are used as they are a much faster method of striking, the draw-back being small strikes require an excellent grasp of **te-no-uchi** in order to hit with sufficient power.

Kendoka do not usually practice *basic suburi* using small strikes⁵¹; they are generally reserved for striking practice using **fumi-komi**, sparring with an opponent, or used during tournament.

Striking small men. Engage your core, p.15, and with abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and begin your **fumi-komi** step. As you begin to move, push the **bokuto** forward as if you were performing **tsuki** while lifting the hands upward slightly; this pushes the **kensen** forward and up. Once the **kensen** is above the **men**, use your wrists with **te-no-uchi** to strike the target with strong **kiai**. Time the strike such that it is coordinated with your **fumi-komi** footwork correctly.

Key Points:

1. Use the left hand to drive the sword forward, striking through the wrists with **te-no-uchi**; don’t “pull” the **kensen** backward then “push” it forward.

Yoko-Men

Striking yoko-men. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and from **chudan** advance your left foot using **hiraki-ashi**, release your right hand, swinging the **bokuto** overhead with your left hand. Finish your step, pull your right hand to your hip, and swing the **bokuto** in a circular motion to the opponents right **men**.

Key Points:

1. Yoko-men is a strike that is falling out of use. Its roots are in French fencing techniques, brought to Japan in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Common & Rare Strikes

Some strikes are common, while others are rare.

Common

- Small strikes.

Uncommon

- Kata-te tsuki.
- Gyaku do.

Rare

- Yoko-men.
- Kata-te strikes from jodan or nito.

⁵¹ This is not to say that drills and exercises are not done to practice this type of strike.

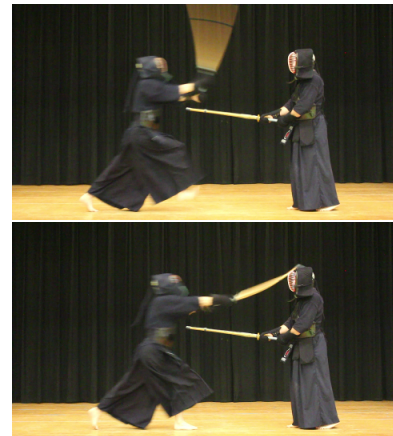


Figure 196: Small men using fumi-komi.

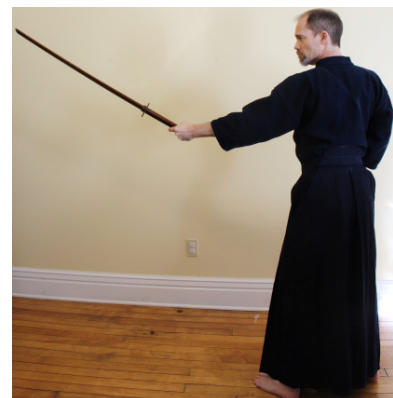


Figure 197: Yoko-men.

Gyaku Do

Striking gyaku do. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and swing the **bokuto** over your right shoulder. Swing the **kensen** down and to your left, at approximately 30°–45°, pivot your hips to the left, and with **te-no-uchi** strike your opponents left **do** with strong **kiai**. **Gyaku do** cuts from **do** level down to about knee level.



Figure 198: Gyaku do.

Key Points:

1. **Gyaku do** is usually only used when the opponent overtly exposes their left **do**. It was traditionally looked upon as a poor target as a Japanese soldier's equipment covered that area of the body, however this has since changed in modern **kendo** with the popularization of a type of blocking known as **san-po-mamori**, p.163, which leaves **gyaku do** exposed.

Kata-Te Tsuki

Striking kata-te tsuki. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and initiate a thrust using both hands. About half way through the thrust remove your right hand and pull it toward your right hip; this adds power and stability to the thrust. As you pull your right hand to your hip, with strong **kiai**, complete the forward thrust with your left hand.

Key Points:

1. One-handed **tsuki** is usually used against a player who uses a **jodan** or **nito kamae** due to the increased thrusting range.
2. Accuracy, control over the thrust, and stability of the body are of the utmost importance with **kata-te tsuki**.



Figure 199: Kata-te tsuki.

Kata-Te Men from Hidari Jodan

Striking kata-te men from jodan.

Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and in one continuous motion (1) straighten the **bokuto** onto your centerline and use the left hand pull it downward, as you use your left wrist to arc the **kensen** forward, (2) at the same time use the right hand to “throw” the **bokuto** forward toward the target, and (3) pull your right hand straight down to your hips and strike **men** with strong **kiai** using **te-no-uchi**.



Figure 200: Hidari jodan kata-te men.

Key Points:

1. There are numerous technical methods and styles for one-handed strikes from **jodan**; this is one of many.

Kata-Te Kote from Hidari Jodan

Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and in one continuous motion (1) straighten the **bokuto** onto your centerline and use the left hand pull the **bokuto** downward, as you use your left wrist to arc the **kensen** forward, (2) at the same time use the right hand to “throw” the **bokuto** well forward toward the target, and (3) pull your right hand straight down to your hips and strike **kote** with strong **kiai** using **te-no-uchi**.



Figure 201: Hidari jodan kata-te kote.

Key Points:

1. There are many different techniques for striking **kata-te kote**. This is the most basic version, straight, using the same striking style as above for **men**.

Kata-Te Men from Nito

Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and using your left arm pull the **bokuto** downward into your centerline while at the same time using your wrist and elbow to snap the **bokuto** forward, striking **men** with strong **kiai** using **te-no-uchi**. As you strike with the **daito**, pull the **shoto** upward to protect your **men**.



Figure 202: Hidari-ashi, gyaku nito shomen.

Key Points:

1. **Nito** requires a fair amount of strength and a firm understanding of **te-no-uchi** in order to manipulate the **bokuto** correctly.
2. Both **bokuto** move in tandem; one moves down, the other moves up.

Kata-Te Kote from Nito

Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and using your left arm pull the **bokuto** downward into your centerline while at the same time using your wrist and elbow to snap the **bokuto** forward, striking **kote** with strong **kiai** using **te-no-uchi**. As you strike with the **daito**, pull the **shoto** upward to protect your **men**.



Figure 203: Hidari-ashi, gyaku nito kote.

Key Points:

1. As with **hidari jodan kata-te kote** there are many methods for striking **kote** dependent on your opponent, their **kamae**, and the style of **nito** being used. This is the most basic variation; straight.

Suburi: “Elementary Swing” Practice

Suburi combines striking a target, or just swinging the **shinai** or **bokuto**, with some form of **ashi-sabaki**. **Suburi** is probably the most common and effective method used to hone one’s ability and understanding of the basics of striking in **kendo**.

Depending on the type or level of the practice, **suburi** can be used to focus on the technical aspects of the swing, others on cardio and endurance, some are for strength building, and some include all of the above. Regardless, the core purpose of **suburi** is to learn correct form while swinging in a relaxed manner and to learn **te-no-uchi**.

The number and type of different kinds of **suburi** is vast to say the least. This section gives only a few of the most common types.

Jo-Ge Buri: “Up-Down Swing”

Jo-ge buri is a very basic⁵² swinging exercise that teaches how to swing in a large, smooth motion, along the centerline.

Jo-ge buri. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and, keeping your shoulders relaxed, swing over your head along your centerline until you touch your lower back while stepping forward using **okuri-ashi**. Swing back up over the head, maintaining center, and swing downward until the **kensen** reaches the level of your knees; finishing your swing the moment you finish your step.



Figure 204: Jo-ge buri.

Importance of Suburi

Suburi is a simple drill which allows one to hone their basics by examining and correcting errors in technique, posture, footwork, muscle tension, and breath control to name only a few. Many kendoka who reach a “plateau”, see p. 159, or are struggling with a certain aspect of their practice will often benefit from focusing on basic suburi.

⁵² Beginners often learn this exercise before learning to swing at targets.

Key Points:

1. Focus on using your left hand to move the **bokuto** up and down.
2. Keep the **bokuto** centered during the entire swing.
3. Keep your arms and shoulders relaxed, keep your core engaged, and breathe using your abdomen. Don’t duck your head during your swing; maintain correct posture.
4. Be sure to use **te-no-uchi** with each strike.

Naname Buri: “Diagonal Swing”

Naname buri is a variation of **jo-ge buri** in which one swings the **bokuto** forward in a circular arc at a 30°–45° angle instead of a straight up-down motion. Some variations use left and right alternating **hiraki-ashi** instead of forward and backward **okuri-ashi**.



Figure 205: Naname buri with hiraki-ashi

Sandan Suburi: “Three Step” Suburi

Sandan suburi. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale from **chudan** and (1) swing overhead, maintaining center and step forward using **okuri-ashi**, (2) strike the intended target with **kiai**. (3) Step back using **okuri-ashi** and assume **chudan**.



Figure 206: Sandan shomen suburi.

Key Points:

1. Raise your **bokuto** overhead before you begin your step forward.
2. Be sure to use **te-no-uchi** and have strong **kiai** with each strike.
3. Assume correct **chudan** as you step back.

Nidan Suburi: “Two Step” Suburi

Nidan suburi. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and from **chudan** and (1) step forward using **okuri-ashi**, swing above your head and strike the intended target with **kiai**. (2) Step back using **okuri-ashi** and assume **chudan**.

Nidan suburi is a very important exercise to as it closely emulates strikes used against an actual opponent.

**Key Points:**

1. Begin your step forward slightly before you swing overhead.
2. Swing up and down as a single motion, not two separate steps.

Figure 207: Nidan shomen suburi.

Ichidan Suburi: “One Step” Suburi

Ichidan suburi. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and swing above your head, step forward using **okuri-ashi** and strike the target. Swing above your head, step backward using **okuri-ashi**, and strike again. Strike each target with strong **kiai**.

**Key Points:**

1. Don't “bounce” between strikes; pause slightly on each hit.

Figure 208: Ichidan shomen suburi.

Haya Suburi: "Fast" Suburi

Haya suburi. Raise the **bokuto** overhead. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and using "hopping" **okuri-ashi**, step forward and strike with strong **kiai**. Step back lifting up to the starting position.

Key Points:

1. Maintain proper **ashi-gamae** and the rhythm of **okuri-ashi**.
2. Briefly pause on each target; finish your strike before raising up.

Haya suburi can be very demanding and it's common for people to conserve energy by altering footwork or not striking fully. It is essential to maintain footwork, extend your arms fully, pause on your target, maintain proper posture, etc...



Figure 209: Three shomen haya suburi strikes.

Uchi-Komi: “Lunging Strike”

Uchi-komi combines **suburi**, **okuri-ashi**, **fumi-komi**, and explicitly adds physical movement for **zanshin** after striking.

Benefits of uchi-komi. Strikes become quicker and more intense, stronger, correct breathing is emphasized, arm movements becomes relaxed, movement becomes more agile, the body becomes more stabilized, proper distance is learned, and use of the **shinai** becomes more dexterous.

Performing uchi-komi. Assume **kamae**. Breathe in deeply through the nose and slowly release your breath out of the mouth. Utter a strong **kiai** and continue to exhale with a feeling of pressure in the abdomen, see p.17. With correct posture and square hips, lunge forward powerfully with **fumi-komi**, p.46, striking the target such that it hits the target as your front foot lands on the floor. At the moment you make contact with the target use your diaphragm to voice a powerful **kiai**. Use regular **okuri-ashi**, p.45, to follow through with your strike, **zanshin**, p.118, cutting through the target.

Key Points:

1. When lunging, don't raise your front foot high off the ground.
2. Maintain a straight back leg, straight posture, and square hips.
3. When using **fumi-komi** your strike must land as your *front foot* hits the floor, not as your rear foot is pulled up (**hikitsuke**).
4. Don't let your hind leg drag behind you, pull it up to you quickly.
5. During **zanshin** maintain strong **kiai**.
6. Use **te-no-uchi** with each strike and focus on coordinating your strike, footwork, **kiai**, and follow-through into a smooth motion.

Uchi-komi is how the majority of strikes are done in during bogu practice, sparring, tournament, etc.

Uchi-Komi Coordination

During a strike using **fumi-komi** the **shinai** connects with the target as the *front foot* lands, not the rear foot. This timing is different from that used with **okuri-ashi** in basic **suburi**, however one still utters their **kiai** through abdominal breathing the moment they strike.

Kiai Prior to Striking

Kendoka are usually encouraged to **kiai** before every strike when doing **uchi-komi**. This initial **kiai** is often “Yah!” or “Ei!”, which traditionally indicated “mental alertness” or “the moment of attack” respectively, Budden [9]. In modern kendo, this **kiai** is used to ready one-self mentally, engage your core through proper breathing, apply pressure on your opponent, etc...

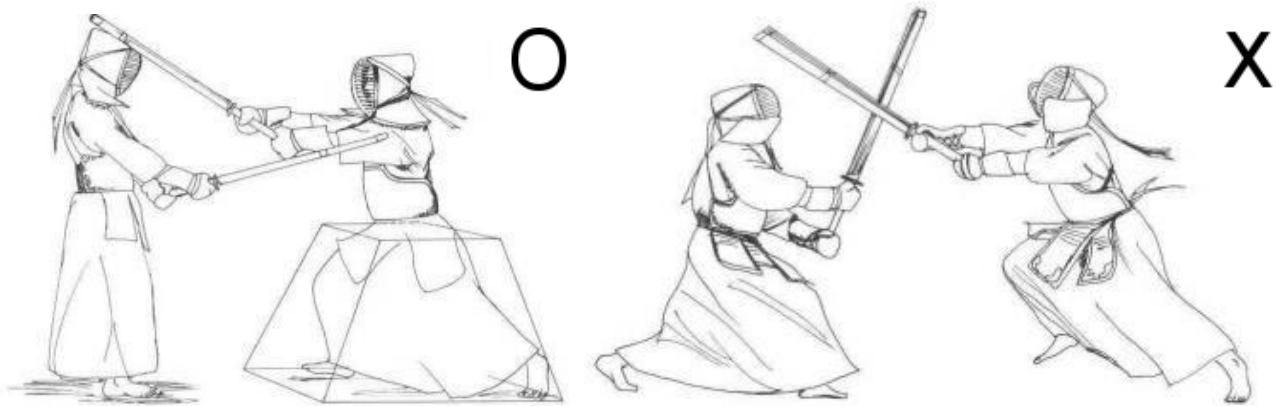


Figure 210: From Craig [15], (Left) proper posture & footwork and (Right) improper posture & footwork during **uchi-komi**.

Physical Zanshin: Basic “Follow-Through” of a Strike

At this point it is necessary to discuss what **zanshin** is during **uchi-komi**. **Zanshin** here refers to the *physical* follow-through; the mental/spiritual one is discussed on pp.139 and 150.

Zanshin is how a **kendoka** emulates a cut and protects themselves after striking. Each target has different forms of follow-through, but all share a common base. In the most basic description, a **kendoka** shows **zanshin** by moving past their opponent and turning around to face them in **kamae**.

Uchi-komi shomen with zanshin. Strike **men** using **fumi-komi**. Upon striking, relax your **te-no-uchi** into the “cutting position” as in figure 195, p.108 and, using **okuri-ashi**, continue moving forward. Maintaining your **kiai**, your gaze on the opponent, and the position of the **shinai**, pass the opponent on either the right or left side. Once sufficiently past, stop and turn to face them in **kamae**. At this point your **kiai** ends.

Key Points:

1. Upon striking hold your **shinai** in the cutting position; don't pull your hands up, **hiki-age** (引き上げ), after hitting.
2. Quickly pass your opponent using **okuri-ashi**.
3. Maintain your gaze on the opponent! Don't turn your back on them.
4. Maintain **kiai** until you are fully turned and back in **kamae**.
5. Have the feeling of “cutting through” your opponent during **zanshin**.

Uchi-komi sayu-men & kote zanshin. The **zanshin** for these targets is similar to **shomen**. In general you pass on the same side the strike landed on, i.e., if you hit a target that is on your left, “go through” toward your left.

Uchi-komi (migi) do zanshin. This can be done two ways: (1) on hitting, pass the opponent on the same side that you strike them on. (2) On hitting, step to your right, pulling the **shinai** across the front of their **do**, passing with them on your left.

Uchi-komi tsuki zanshin. On striking **tsuki**, pull your hands back to **chudan** and step backward to **issoku itto no maai**.

Hiki-waza zanshin. **Hiki-waza** (ひき技), p.132, **zanshin** is done in **migi jodan** for **men** targets and at the “cutting position” for other targets. With **hiki-men** strikes, it is important not to do **hiki-age** until *after* you have cut.

Turning Hits Into Cuts

A major part of striking is emulating a cut; simply hitting a target is not enough. During **uchi-komi** one strikes the target the moment the front foot hits the floor. But it is as we bring up the rear foot that we can emulate a cut, as long as the strike is held on the target in the cutting position. Then, as the rear foot is brought forward, the whole body and sword move forward emulating a slice. It is crucial not to perform **hiki-age**, pulling the sword up from the target, during **zanshin**.

Watching the Opponent

Zanshin means to be continually aware or alert in order to deal with the opponent's attack or potential counter-attack. The simplest way to be aware of your opponent is to never take your eyes off of them; this includes during your follow-through after a strike. As you pass your opponent keep your eyes on them; never blindly turn your back to them.

Kiai During Zanshin

When you strike a target, for example **men**, **kendoka** vocalize their **kiai** by yelling “Men!” at the moment the strike lands. This **kiai** must continue during **zanshin** until you have turned to face your opponent. **Kiai** should be loud and continuous; “*Meeennnn!*” v.s. “*Men! Men! Men!*”

Alternate Zanshin

The movements described here are only the most basic form of **zanshin**. Alternate movements will not be discussed, but it is important to note the definition of **zanshin** by the International Kendo Federation to score an effective strike is the attacker must show “mental and physical readiness for their opponent's potential counter-attack.” This says nothing about physical movements, only that it must follow the principles of the **katana** and be done with correct posture.

Completing Your Cut: Turn to Face Your Opponent

Once you pass your opponent you must turn to face them. Which way depends on how you initially pass the opponent.

If you strike your opponent and pass with them on your right, then you turn by pivoting to your right. Equivalently, if you pass with them on your left then pivot to your left. To turn, pivot on your rear foot, stepping toward the opponent.

As you turn, don't leave your **shinai** in the cutting position. This leaves you open to attack. Here are two methods which help minimize vulnerability while turning.

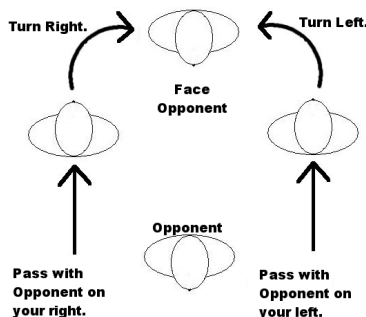


Figure 211: Turning properly.

Method one. From the cutting position, bring your hands down to the **chudan** position and angle the **kensen** upward so the **shinai** is nearly vertical. Look toward your opponent and as you turn, lower your **kensen** down to **chudan** timing it such that you reach **chudan** as you finish your turn.

Method two. From the cutting position, look toward your opponent and angle your **kensen** so that it points behind you and toward them. As you turn, step toward your opponent and have the feeling of pressing your **kensen** toward them, bringing your **shinai** to **chudan** as you finish.

Kiri-Kaeshi: “Returning Cuts”

Kiri-kaeshi is a partnered drill consisting of strikes using both **fumi-komi** & **okuri-ashi**, while the opponent receives, parries, and maintains distance. It is often the first and last exercise done during a practice.

The following excerpt⁵³ discusses **kiri-kaeshi**:

“Beneficial Effects of Kiri-Kaeshi. Improves posture, breathing, the strike becomes strong and reliable, the shoulder joints become flexible, develops the skill of te-no-uchi, facilitates arm movement, posture becomes firm and solid, improves ashi-sabaki, the appropriate ma for executing a strike is made clear, and develops correct use of the cutting edge.

***Kiri-kaeshi** is excellent for restoring confidence⁵⁴ lost in keiko or matches. Beneficial Effects of Receiving Kiri-Kaeshi. Improves posture, facilitates movement, when your partner strikes the cutting edge becomes clear, maai becomes clear, and develops shinai grip in te-no-uchi.”*

Whether you pass on the right or the left will depend on which target you have hit, but also on the reaction and movements of your opponent.

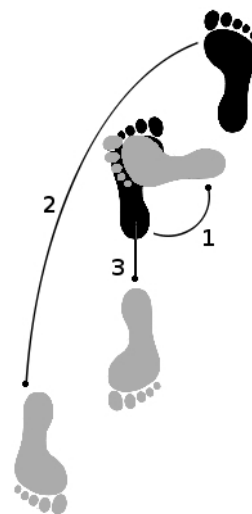


Figure 212: Turning to the left to face the opponent. Pivot on your rear foot and, as you turn, step toward the opponent.

According to Dann [17], Naganuma Shirozaemon is credited for standardizing the practice fundamentals of **kiri-kaeshi**, circa 1716.

⁵³ Ozawa [64]

⁵⁴ This is often why **kiri-kaeshi** is done at the start and the end of practice.

Performing kiri-kaeshi. Engage your core, p.15, and using abdominal breathing, p.17, inhale. Begin to exhale and with **kiai** move from **to-ma**, p.99, to **issoku itto no maai**, p.99. Then, with strong **kiai**, strike your partners **shomen** using **fumi-komi**. As you move forward from striking, perform **tai-atari** (体当り), p.133. Swing your **shinai** overhead in a large swing and with strong **kiai** strike your partners left **men** using **okuri-ashi**. Raise your **shinai** overhead in a large swing and with strong **kiai** strike your partners right **men**. Continue alternating **sayu-men** for a total of four strikes while moving forward then five strikes while moving back, each using **okuri-ashi**. After the fifth backward strike take one more large step back to **issoku itto no maai**. **Kiai** and then repeat the **shomen**, **tai-atari**, four alternating **sayu-men** forward, five backward, and again return to **issoku itto no maai**. **Kiai** and then strike **shomen** again and follow through fully with **zanshin**. Maintain your **kiai** until you turn to face your partner, p.118.



Figure 213: Targets are labeled according to the opponent's left and right making sayu-men strikes in kiri-kaeshi begin on the opponent's left, your right.

Key Points:

1. Raise your **shinai** all the way above your head on each strike.
2. Throughout the exercise maintain straight posture, p.25, square hips, p.16, an engaged core, p.15, and use abdominal breathing, p.17.
3. Keep your shoulders relaxed but extend your arms when striking.
4. Each strike and step ought to finish together.
5. Strike **shomen** with **fumi-komi**, **sayu-men** with **okuri-ashi**.
6. *Advanced:* Breathe in at **to-ma** then on one breath with continuous **kiai**, strike **shomen**, **tai-atari**, strike all nine **sayu-men**, move to **issoku itto**, and strike **shomen**. Breathe in again at the second **tai-atari**, then finish the remainder of **kiri-kaeshi**.

Kiri-Kaeshi: How Fast?

Kiri-kaeshi is done at different speeds dependent on the skill level of the practitioner and the intent of the current practice. If the speed for kiri-kaeshi is not explicitly stated prior to the exercise then it is the *receiver who determines the pace, not the attacker*. The receiver must adjust the pace to a level where the kakari-te is challenged, but still able to do it correctly; this pace will be different for different people making awareness of the receiver crucial.

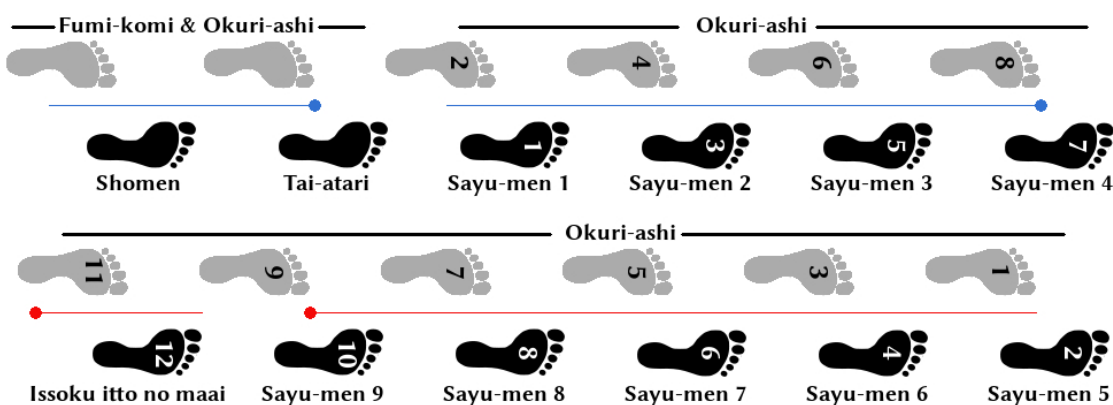


Figure 214: (Top) The attacker uses fumi-komi & okuri-ashi for the shomen and tai-atari, and okuri-ashi for four sayu-men. (Bottom) Okuri-ashi is used for five backward moving sayu-men and to step back to issoku itto no maai.

Receiving *kiri-kaeshi*. Open *sho-men* as your partner moves to *issoku itto*. After striking, they will perform *tai-atari*; lean in providing *slight* resistance then step back to *issoku itto* using *okuri-ashi*. Receive their *sayu-men* starting on your left:

Method one. Allow beginners to strike your *sayu-men* by keeping your *shinai* lowered and to the side.

Method two. Receive their *sayu-men* strikes with your *shinai* as shown in figure 215. This is the most common method.



Figure 215: Receiving the opponents *kiri-kaeshi* with the *shinai*. (Left) Receiving strikes to the left men and (Right) receiving strikes to the right men.

Key Points:

1. Use *okuri-ashi* to receive *tai-atari*, *ayumi-ashi* receiving *sayu-men*.
2. When receiving *sayu-men* with a *shinai* be sure to move it from “shoulder-to-shoulder” to ensure the strike is parried properly.
3. *Motodachi* (元立ち) must time their parry and step to coincide with *kakari-te*’s strikes; coordinate your *ki ken tai ichi* with *kakari-te*’s.
4. Throughout the exercise maintain straight posture, p.25, square hips, p.16, an engaged core, p.15, and use abdominal breathing, p.17.

⁵⁵ The *ayumi-ashi* steps when receiving are: (backward) left, right, left, right, then (forward) right, left, right, left, right. Note that while stepping backward the foot you step with matches the side you are receiving a strike while moving forward they are opposite.

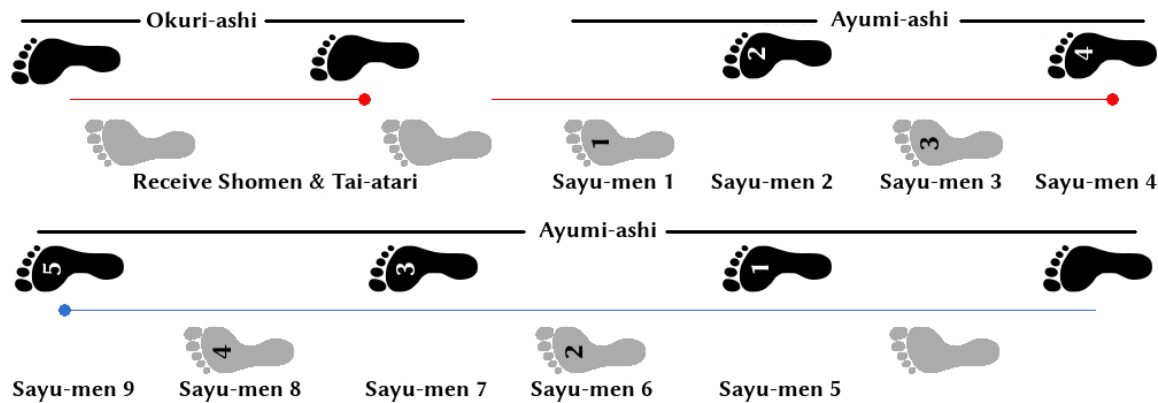


Figure 216: (Top) *Motodachi* moves backward from the *tai-atari* with *okuri-ashi*, *ayumi-ashi* during the *sayu-men* strikes. (Bottom) moving forward with *ayumi-ashi*.

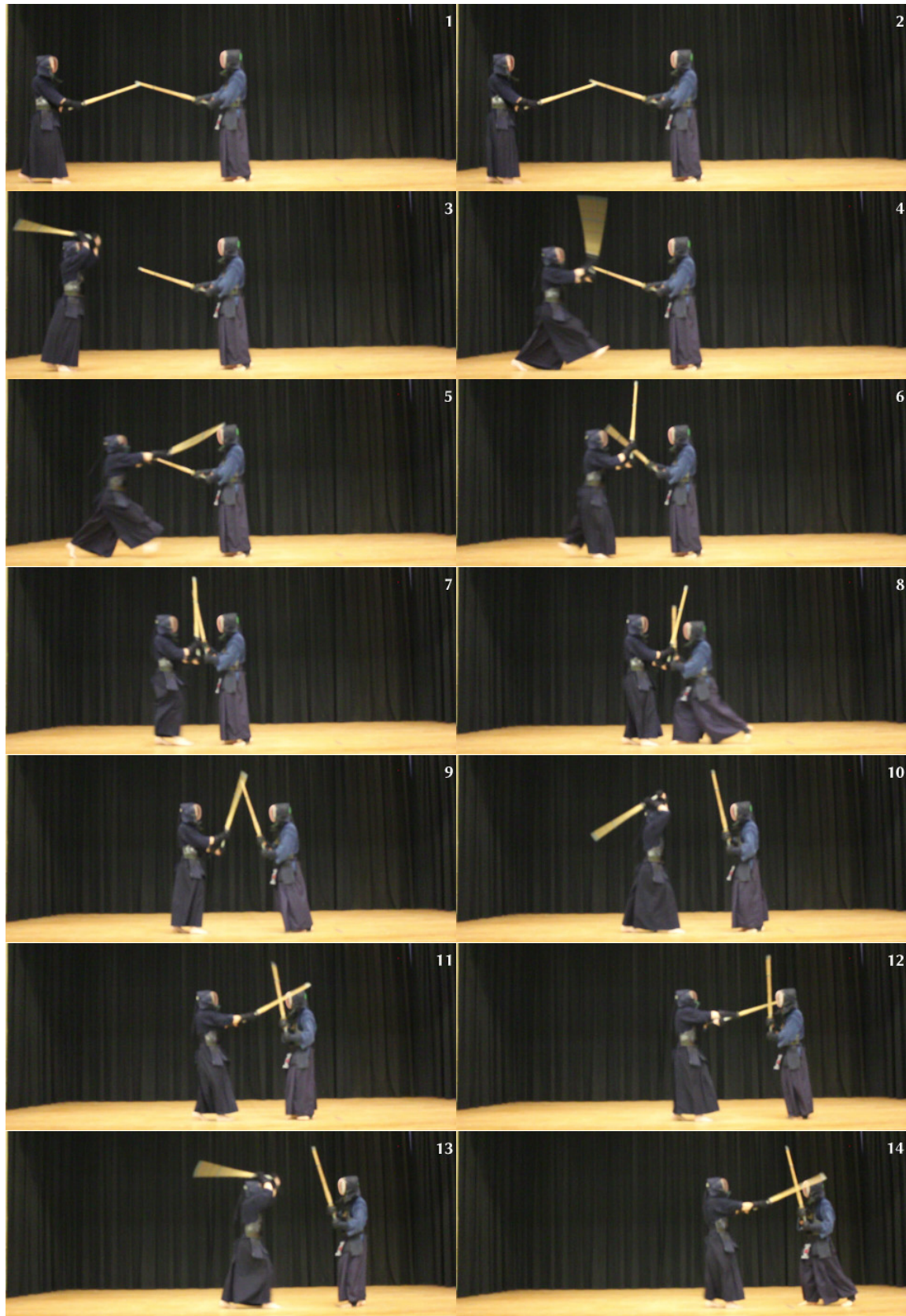


Figure 217: Kiri-kaeshi.



Figure 218: Kiri-kaeshi.



Figure 219: Kiri-kaeshi.

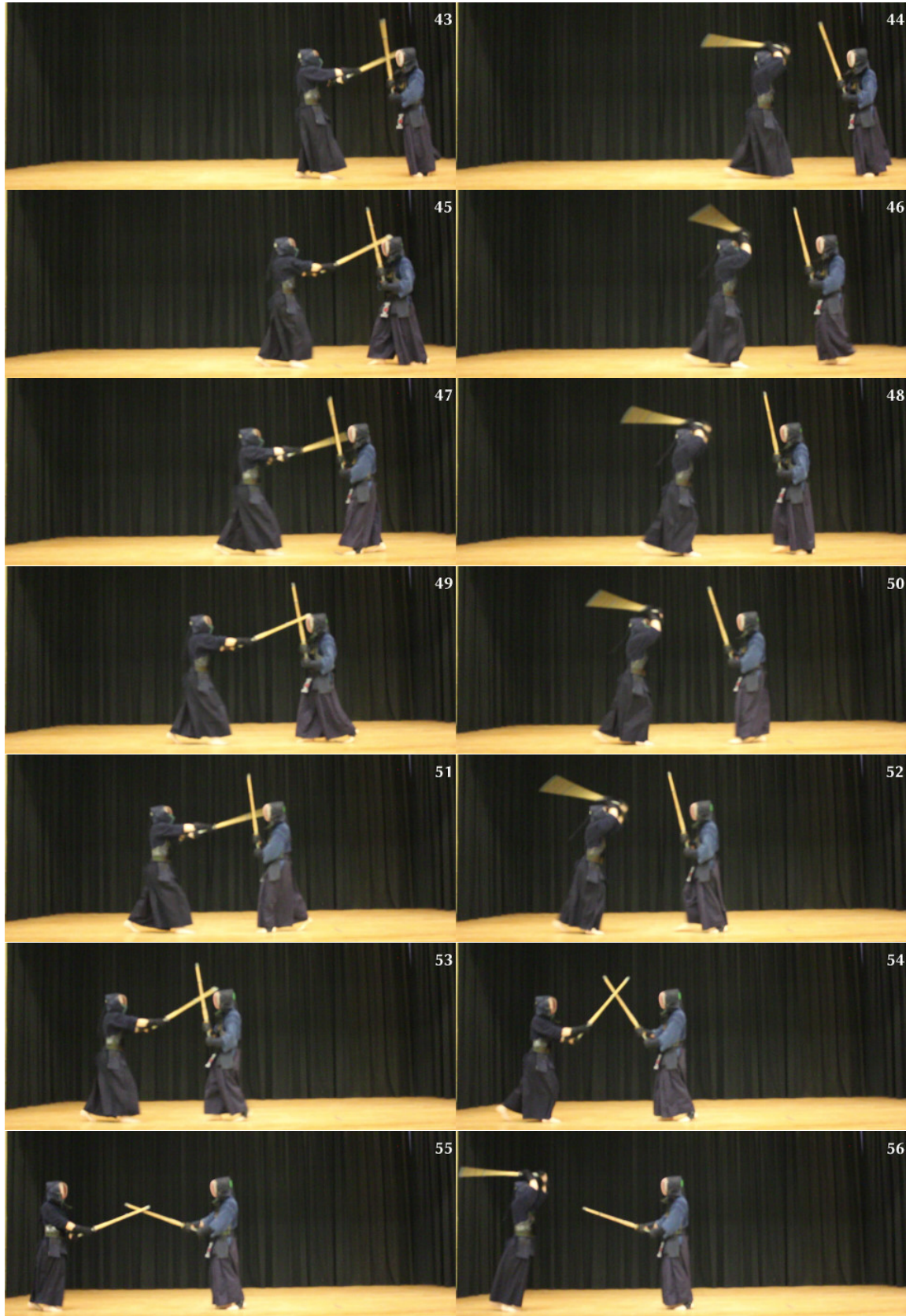


Figure 220: Kiri-kaeshi.

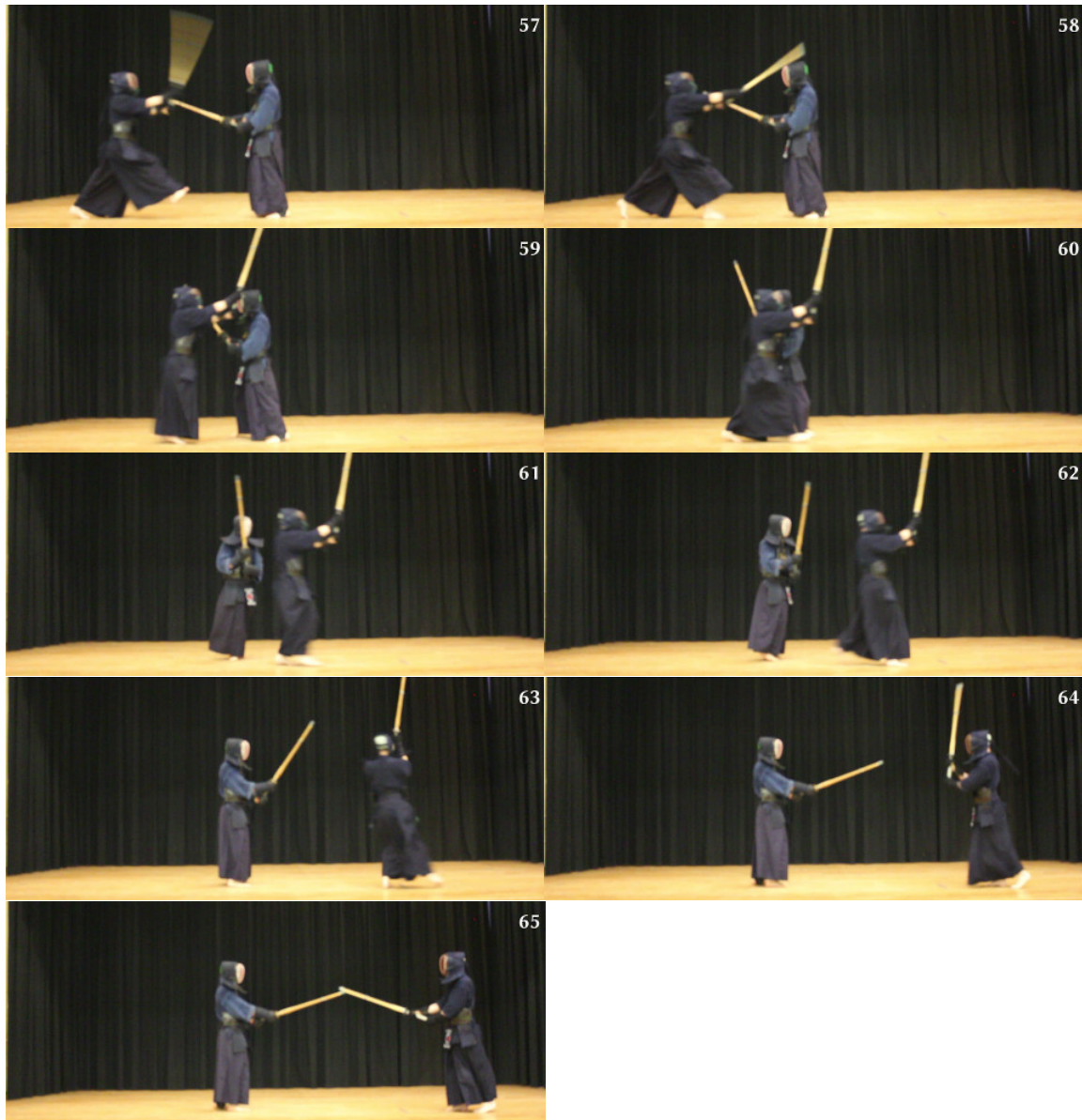


Figure 221: Kiri-kaeshi.

Waza: “Techniques”

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER GIVES BRIEF details on various waza. Waza can be grouped in two categories: **shikake waza** (しかけ技) or **oji waza** (応じ技). Waza from **tsuba-zeriai**, p.100, and **tai-atari** are also briefly discussed.

Big and small strikes were discussed on pp.103–109. While **uchi-komi** and all waza can be done with either type of strike, most of the waza shown here are done using small strikes.

Shikake Waza: “Techniques to Initiate an Attack”

Tobi-Komi: “Burst Into”

Tobi-komi (飛び込み) waza are where one initiates a strike when the opponent shows weak spirit.

The idea of **sutemi** style striking is essential when learning **shikake waza**. This is elaborated on p.151.

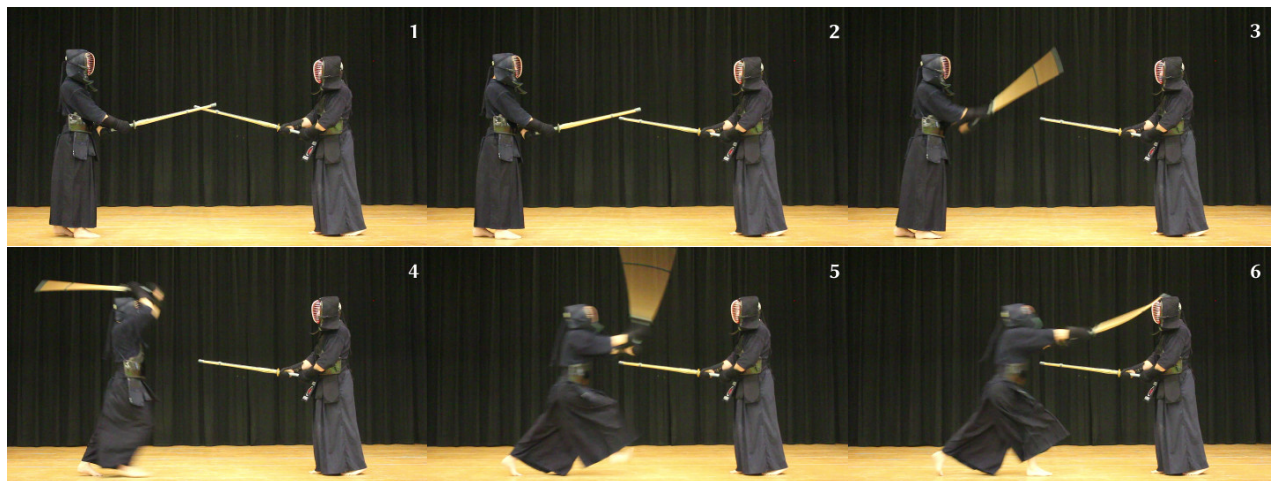


Figure 222: Tobi-komi men.

Key Points:

1. **Tobi-komi waza** are used when an opponent shows weak spirit or when they yield a **suki** (隙) under pressure from your own spirit. Maintain spirit and strike swiftly to capitalize on the opening.

Tobi-komi waza is the most basic but also the most important waza in **ki-hon kendo**. It is crucial to be ready to use this waza immediately should the opportunity arise.

Katsugi: “Shouldering” the Sword

Katsugi (担ぎ技) **waza** is used to “surprise” the opponent, creating an opening by first shouldering the **shinai**. A strong spirit is essential.

The surprise from using **katsugi waza** is usually only effective against an opponent once; don't over use this technique.

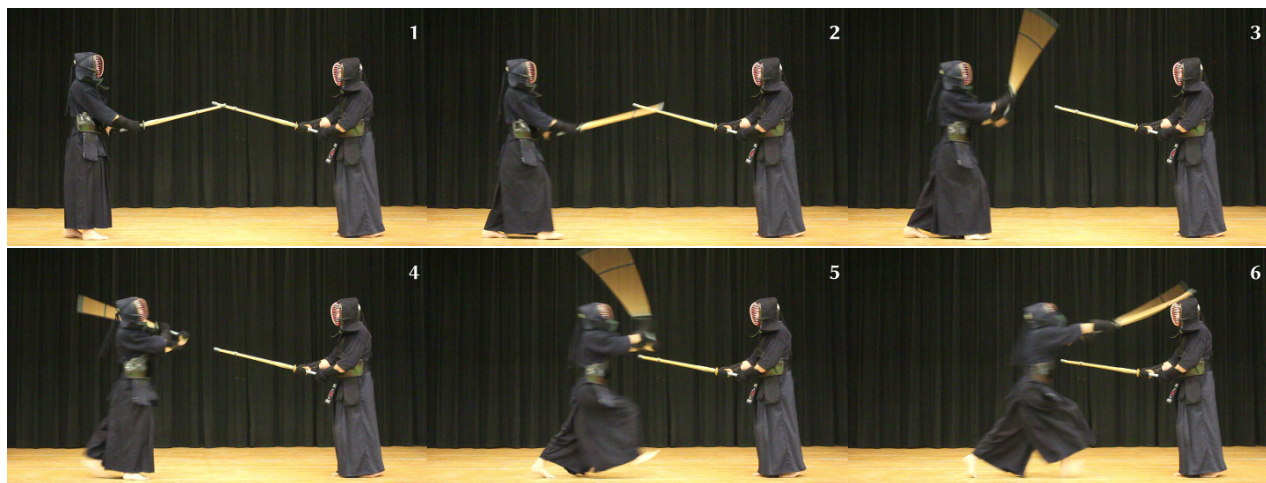


Figure 223: Hidari katsugi men.

Key Points:

1. Use **okuri-ashi** to shoulder the sword, **fumi-komi** to attack.

Nidan/Sandan: “Two Step/Three Step”

There are two ideas for using multiple strikes: (1) attack with a second strike *only* if the first one fails, (2) *intentionally* use a strike to distract or to break the opponent's **kamae**, creating an opening to strike again.

Nidan or sandan waza refers to the number of times a kendoka strikes at the opponent not the number of steps a strike is broken into as with **nidan** or **sandan suburi**, p.114.

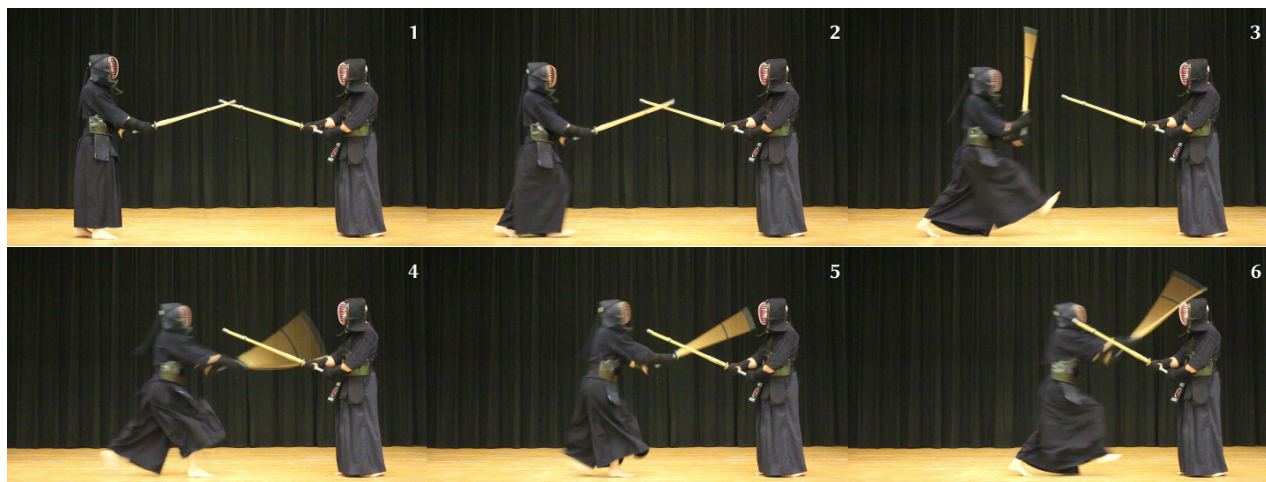


Figure 224: Nidan waza: Kote→men.

Key Points:

1. Return to proper **ashi-gamae** *before* you move the **shinai** for the next strike; don't raise up while you bring up your rear foot

Harai: “Sweeping”

Harai (払い) **waza** physically pushes an opponents **kamae** up, down, left, or right creating an opening to strike.

Harai waza creates an opening by momentarily taking control of their centerline.



Figure 225: Omote harai-otoshi, men

Oji Waza: “Techniques to Respond to an Attack”

The following excerpt ⁵⁶ discusses **oji waza**:

“Rather than wait for your opponents strike, it is important to force one⁵⁷ through aggressive attack.”

Debana: “Coming Out”

Debana (出ばな) **waza** is where one strikes as the opponent begins to initiate. This requires a strong **connection** in order to read intent.

⁵⁶ Ozawa [64]

⁵⁷ Forcing the opponent to strike via your “aggressive attack” does not necessarily mean your physical attack, but can also refer to a spiritual one from applied pressure.

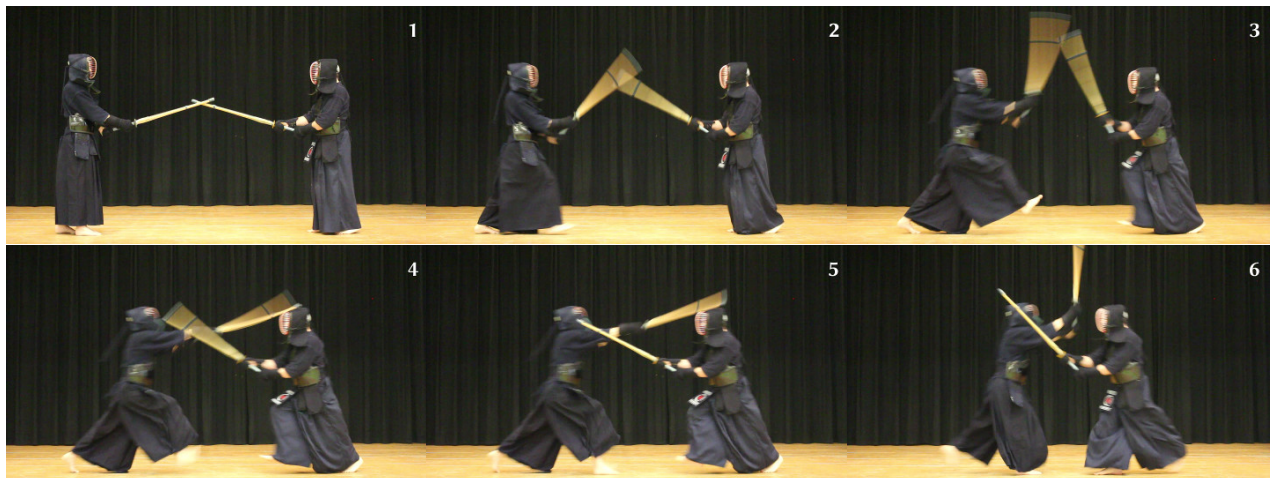


Figure 226: Kote, debana men.

Suriage: “Rising Slide”

Suriage (すり上げ) *waza* deflects the opponents **shinai** via a “rising-slide” motion as they strike creating an opening.

Suriage *waza* can be done using the *ura* or *omote* side of the **shinai**.

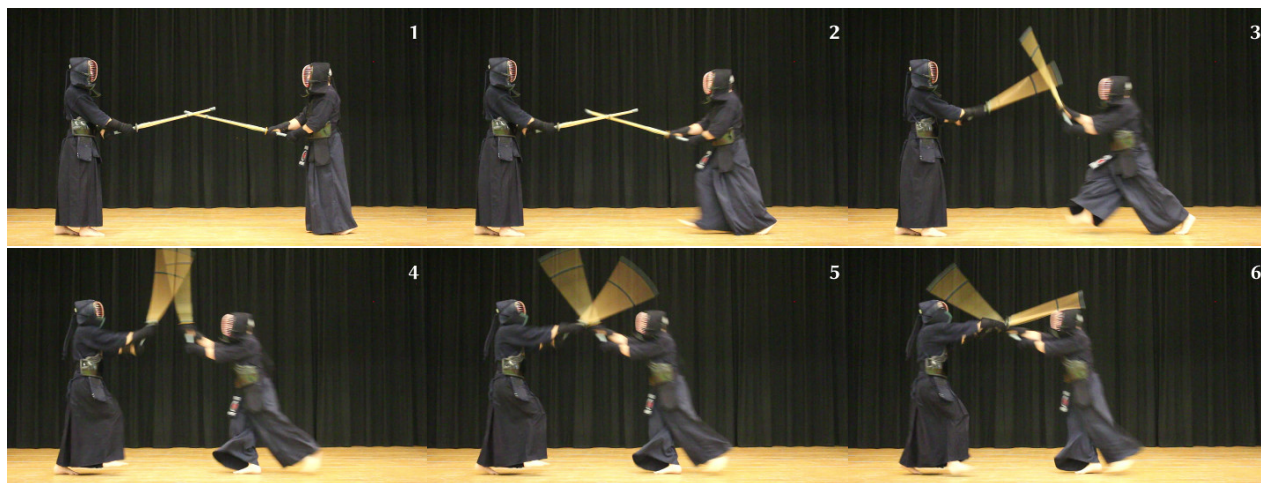


Figure 227: Men, suriage men.

Key Points:

1. Don't *hit* their weapon, push it aside by sliding yours along theirs, your right hand making a “crescent moon” motion.

Using the Shinogi

While the blade of a sword is very sharp, it is also brittle; it would be damaged, or dulled, very quickly if it were used to hit or manipulate the opponent's weapon. The **shinogi** is the thick, raised ridge on the side of a sword making it ideal for deflections and manipulation.

While **shinai** technically do not have **shinogi**, **shinai kendo** stems from the use of real swords and the intent should be to use the **shinai** in a similar fashion. This includes deflecting and manipulating the opponent's weapon as though the **shinai** did have a **shinogi**. This may seem like ideological nitpicking, however use of the **shinai** as though it had a **shinogi** is also very practical; it leads to much more optimal **shinai** movements, minimizing unnecessary movements, making *waza* faster and more efficient.

Key Points:

1. Perform *waza* as though your **shinai** had a **shinogi**; use the **shinogi** to receive, deflect, or manipulate the opponent's weapon not the “blade”.

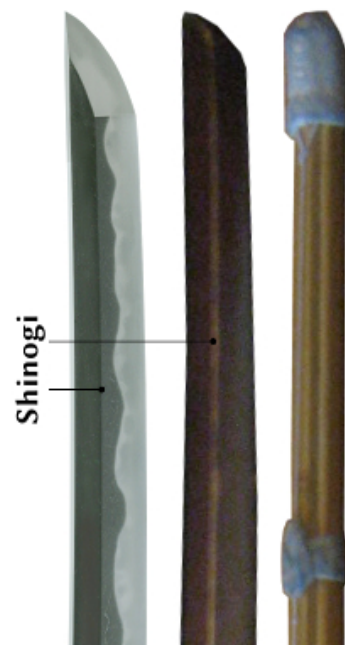


Figure 228: The Shinogi. (Left) The shinogi on a real sword, (Center) the shinogi on a bokuto, (Right) the shinai. While a shinai does not have an actual shinogi, it is important to use it as though it did.

Uchi-Otoshi: “Knocking Down”

With **uchi-otoshi** (打ち落とし) one strikes an incoming attack downward.

Uchi-otoshi will often literally put the opponent's body completely off-balance as you disrupt their strike.



Figure 229: Men, uchi-otoshi men.

Key Points:

1. **Uchi-otoshi** is often used to redirect an attack without counter-attacking, allowing you to regain control⁵⁸ of the encounter.

⁵⁸ Uchi-otoshi, in combination with hiraki-ashi style footwork, p.46, disrupts a strike and moves you to an advantageous position, forcing a disruption in the opponent's pressure.

Kaeshi: “Return”

With **kaeshi** (返し) **waza** block and immediately counter.

Kaeshi waza can be done with either the ura or omote side of the shinai.



Figure 230: Men, kaeshi do.

Key Points:

1. **Kaeshi waza** doesn't fully stop a strike; it's a split second disruption.

Nuki: “Evading”

Nuki (抜き) **waza** are techniques used to dodge and counter attack.



Figure 231: Men, nuki do.

Key Points:

1. Don't dodge, then hit. Strike *while* you are dodging, hitting the opponent *while their strike is still moving*.

Waza from Tsuba-Zeriai

Hikibana (ひきばな) **waza**, or **hiki-waza**, are strikes moving backward instead of forward, most often from **tsuba-zeriai**.

According to Ozawa [64], “it is a mistake to think that hiki-waza can only be performed from tsuba-zeriai. Its benefits can also be reaped when your opponent is obviously lacking confidence...”



Figure 232: Hiki-men from tsuba-zeriai.

Tai-Atari: “Bodycheck”

When **kendoka** are in close range, **tsuba-zeriai** or by closing in during **zanshin**, one can perform **tai-atari** which translates⁵⁹ to “bodycheck”.

Tai-atari is allowed after each strike attempt as the attacker closes in on the opponent or as a method of creating an opening in **tsuba-zeriai**. The **kendoka** must be careful not to confuse **tai-atari** with shoving; **tai-atari** is strategic as *it is used to create an opportunity to strike again*.

The following note⁶⁰ remarks on the (mis)use of **tai-atari**:

“Shiai represents a duel between gentlemen. If a person imagines real swords are being used, an insightful appreciation of kendo can be realized. The rough style of Kendo, such as pushing and shoving your opponent after a hit in order to break zanshin, or charging into an opponent in an attempt to intimidate him/her, is unrealistic in a real duel. There could be none of the shoving mentioned above as the man would be dead! Charging foolishly into an opponents sword will produce the same results. We can continue to perpetuate productive ladies and gentlemen or, we can produce competitive brutes who intentionally hurt people and bend the rules [...] under the pretense of kendo.”

There are two types of **tai-atari**. With the first, collide with the opponent to push them back making an opening to strike again. The second uses the opponent to stop the momentum of your body, disrupting them slightly, making an opening for a **hiki-waza**.

Tai-atari type #1: push the opponent back. This can be performed as you move forward with **zanshin** from a strike, or from **tsuba-zeriai**. Position your hands for **tsuba-zeriai** as in figure 177, p.100 and move in to your opponent. When your body collides with your opponent continue moving forward with your hips and push with your arms. As the opponent is pushed back, continue forward and strike any opening that appears.

Key Points:

1. Your body collides with your opponent *before* you push.
2. Push your opponent with your entire body not just your arms.
3. Pushing the opponent’s hands upward during **tai-atari** can be very dangerous and should be avoided.
4. **Kendo** is not a shoving match. The goal here is to unbalance your opponent creating an opening to immediately attack again, forward or backward. Don’t push just for the sake of pushing; push & attack!

⁵⁹ Jim Breen’s Online Japanese Dictionary [38] translates tai-atari as “body-blow” or “ramming (suicide) attack”.

⁶⁰ Edited from Seminar Notes, Hawaii Kendo Federation [73].

Dangerous Tai-Atari

On its own, either variation of tai-atari is a perfectly safe and perfectly viable waza in kendo. However, this assumes that it is done *correctly*. It is crucial for your opponent’s safety that when performing tai-atari yours and your opponent’s hands must be in the correct tsuba-zeriai position, p.100, near the abdomen. Never perform tai-atari when you are *not* in the proper tsuba-zeriai position with your opponent. Tsuba-zeriai tends to be a dynamic position, with both sets of hands moving around. *Never push if your hands are high up on the opponent’s chest, on their throat, or on their face.* This is *extremely dangerous* and can seriously injure your opponent.

Tai-atari type #2: stopping forward momentum. This is performed while moving forward during *zanshin*. As you move toward your opponent position your hands for *tsuba-zeriai* as in figure 177, p.100. As you make contact with your opponent's hands, your collision will disrupt their control of their hands briefly. With your forward momentum under control, and the opponent's hands disrupted, immediately strike with a *hiki-waza*.

Key Points:

1. This type of **tai-atari** requires more agility and control over your body in order to transition from moving forward into a **hiki-waza**.
2. Your goal here is not to push your opponent backward, but to use them as a springboard to launch a **hiki-waza**.
3. This **tai-atari** disrupts the opponent's hands, not their entire body.

Abuse of Tai-Atari

Would a person mindlessly wrestle someone holding a real katana? Think of what would happen! The goal of modern tai-atari is to create an opening in order to *attempt a strike*. Any other purpose and you are no longer performing meaningful tai-atari but instead have degenerated to shoving, allowable only because of the use of a shinai. In a tournament, if a player uses tai-atari without showing intent to strike, the referees can issue a penalty, International Kendo Federation [35]. This idea stems from the "Concept and Purpose of Kendo", p.8.

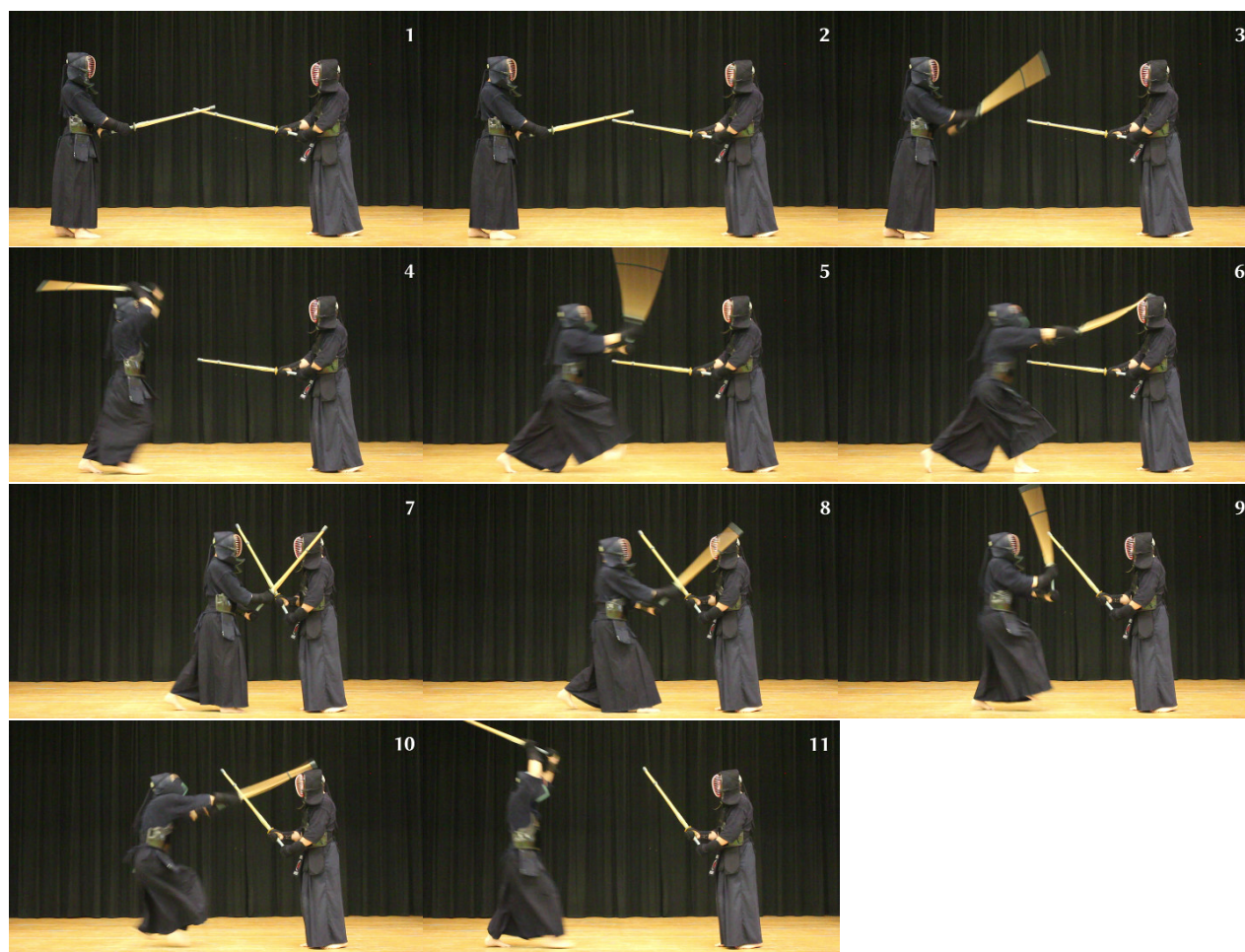


Figure 233: Tai-atari type two: men, tai-atari, hiki-men.

Conceptual Aspects of Kendo

Chapter Preview

ALL JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS referred to as a **do**⁶¹, such as **kendo**, are primarily rooted or are direct descendants of martial arts which were developed during a period in which Zen, Shinto, Taoism, and Confucianism were common spiritual disciplines. As such, those who practiced, taught, and created these martial arts did so in such a way that their methodology coincided with their spirituality or vice versa. This in turn gives each of these arts a rich philosophical background.

Today, while a number of these arts are no longer practiced in their original context, or have been adapted and systematized to suit more modern use, it is the philosophical background and formal traditions that ties us to the original and maintains their status as a martial art.

By maintaining that which keeps **kendo** a martial art, it allows us to practice **kendo** as its name implies; a **do**.

Kiai

The following excerpt ⁶² discusses **kiai**:

“There is no adequate English translation for ki-ai. A Japanese-English dictionary renders the term as “yell, shout, etc., to hypnotize or mesmerize another person with will power.” But this is preposterous. Etymologically the term is a compound, “ki” referring to energy and “ai” referring to integration.

Ki, in the original Chinese (Chi) was believed to be a material element, and conceived of as a source of life which pervades the universe. But ki, when used in the compound ki-ai, and in particular when used in the limited context of Kendo, refers to a verbal outflow of synergistic force derived through body-mind integration.

⁶¹ These arts are more often referred to collectively as budo.

⁶² Kiyota [42]

A Kendo ki-ai is not simply a shout meant to “startle or mesmerize” the opponent. It is the verbal revelation, demonstration, and evidence of a synergistic force issuing from the body-mind integration that produces the most important element in Kendo: decisiveness.

*A decisive hit of the kind demanded in Kendo requires precision, and precision requires a synergistic force. But body-mind integration, not ki-ai, brings about this kind of force. Ki-ai is the **product** of this integration. As such it is the mind (Mushin), not ki-ai, that needs to be nurtured. An effective ki-ai emerges from ones gut. Shouting in a frenzy **is not** a ki-ai.”*

This excerpt⁶³ discusses breathing:

Question: *What is the most important thing of all in martial arts?*

Taisen Deshimaru: *Breathing. What condition are you in below the navel? I don't mean your sexual organs! I mean the hara, three fingers beneath the navel. The way to develop the power of the hara, to assemble all your energy there, is the right breathing.*

Question: *Can you talk to us about Kiai, the special shout used in the martial arts, especially in Karate and Kendo? In my Karate dojo we are made to do it very often, a whole series of violent shouts...*

Taisen Deshimaru: *The powerful vibrations of the kiai paralyze the adversary for a brief instant. It is comparable to the kwatz that Rinzaï Zen masters use to startle and arouse their disciples. In my opinion there is no point to repeating it over and over, once is enough - but once really. Push out your shout with everything in you, starting from the hara, the lower abdomen or intestines - the place the Japanese also call “kikai”, the ocean of energy. To do it right you also have to learn Zen breathing, which is the same as in Budo - the long exhalation, as deep as you can. At the very end of it ones energy is at its greatest. The kiai is that same exhalation, combined with a loud voice; the sound has to spring out naturally from the depths of the body, and for that one has to know how to breathe, which few people do. After za-zen, when I conduct a ceremony and we chant the “Hannya Haramita Shingyo”, the sutra of great wisdom, I do it as a kind of training in breathing; the voice must go to the utter limits of breath. Its good practice for the kiai. The word kiai is composed of “ki”, energy, and “ai”, union, so it means the union of energy. One cry, one instant containing all space-time.*

Kiai and yelling, or *kakegoe*, are connected, but yelling is not necessarily kiai. Kiai is the by-product of a successful body-mind integration.

⁶³ Deshimaru [18]

Kiai in Everyday Life

Kiai is often thought to be something that only pertains to martial arts, in particular the vocal aspect of it. This is not true. Think about squatting down and lifting something up, a heavy box for example. At the very moment you engage your muscles with the intent to lift the box, most people will exhale and vocalize some kind of “grunt” or other sound. *This is kiai!* It is a by-product of the unification between our movement, muscles, and intent to lift the object. This kiai happens naturally and is very different than randomly making noise, making noise because you planned to, or because are told to do it. This is the difference between “yelling” and kiai in kendo.

Loud & Quiet Kiai?

Kiai is not just a facet of kendo, but is used in all martial arts. In some arts, kendo for example, kiai is highly vocalized into a shout. In arts such as iaido (居合道), which is “the art of drawing the Japanese sword”, kiai is silent. The crucial idea is that kiai is not the same as yelling; it is the result of the integrated action and intent of the body and the mind.

Kiai!!! [At this point Deshimaru Roshi utters a terrifying roar⁶⁴, by which the audience is stunned, then bursts out laughing.] But, the kiai I hear in martial arts dojos, or the Hannya Shingyos chanted in Zen dojos, never have as much power as that! People shout or chant to express their own personalities, they make vocal decoration, there is nothing authentic or really fierce about them. No strength. They're just singing or making noise. There is no ki in their kiai, no energy.

Question: Why not?

Taisen Deshimaru: Because they do not know how to breathe. Nobody has taught them. And then it takes a very long time to explain the way a true budo or Zen master would do it. It is not the loudness of the voice that makes the strength of the sound!! The sound must start in the hara, not the throat. Observe how a cat meows or a lion roars: that is real kiai. Practice breathing; but don't try to acquire some kind of magic power through your kiai. In the way of Budo as in the way of Zen you must practice, as I am always saying, without any object or desire for profit. Most people always want to get something, they want to have instead of be.

Maai & Kamae

The following excerpt⁶⁵ discusses **maai**:

"The term distance is a rough translation of *ma-ai*, the root of which is *ma*, 'space'. As such the term 'distance' can be misleading. The term *ma* is used in the Japanese tea ceremony in the sense of the term **ma o toru**, literally 'space evaluation.' Actually, the term refers to the hosts awareness of the relationship between the principal guest and the environment in which the ceremony is observed. Specifically, it refers to furnishing the tea room with a picture scroll, a vase of carefully arranged flowers, ceramic ware of excellent make and design, and other accoutrements tastefully chosen and set out to reflect the personality of the principal guest. Items required for the ceremony, such as cups, kettle, and ladle, are strategically placed to minimize the movements that the host must make in executing the prescribed steps in the ceremony. *Ma*, then, is a term that implies the creative utilization of space-that is the ability to control space.

⁶⁴ According to Hakuin [25] and Leggett [45], Zen monks were frequently tested by their masters to gauge their progress in Zen understanding; the samurai Zen practitioners were not exempt from these tests. Some of the tests (ko-an) were to test ones spiritual energy by a demonstration of a *Katzu* shout, i.e., a Zen version of kiai used to awaken oneself spiritually. One of the more difficult tests required that the katzu be so strong that it render a living creature *unconscious*, usually an insect, bird, or even a small mammal. One of the last known students to pass this test was none other than Yamaoka Tesshu, see p.164.

⁶⁵ Kiyota [42]

The art of flower arrangement, like Kendo, employs three levels of position. Here high, middle, and low levels represent heaven, human, and earth, the human dimension serving as a bridge between heaven and earth and so giving an overall harmony to the composition. This human dimension is, however, not fixed. After all, each individual has his or her own personality, so that there are no limits to creativity. Ultimately, though, the human dimension must merge with nature, with heaven and earth, to bring about total harmony. Hence, when a master of this art speaks of an overall harmony, he or she is not speaking only about the flower arrangement, but also about the shape of the vase appropriate to the flower design, and the entire context that determines the choice of vase and design (e.g., the size and style of the alcove in which the flower arrangement is to be placed, the size and style of the room, and the nature of the occasion for the display).

In Kendo, ma-ai generally refers to the distance between the tips of the two opponents shinai when both are in Chudan no Kamae. Theoretically, the shinai should cross each other about two or three inches below their tips.

However, this basic definition cannot be applied if the opponent takes an alternate kamae than Chudan no Kamae. (e.g., Jodan no Kamae or Gedan no Kamae) In these cases the opponent cannot judge the distance by the shinai tips and so must take into account the opponents degree of alertness and speed as well as the moment and angle of charge. And, of course, when a practitioner faces multiple opponents, the general definition of ma-ai, 'distance', would hardly have any meaning at all. Ma-ai, then, involves more than just the judgment of distance between opponents.

Ma-ai actually refers to space. A Kendoka needs to control space-to develop the ability to size up the situation in which he finds himself and to place himself in a strategically advantageous position.

But although ma-ai literally refers to spacing, it is also associated with the ability to read the time-a fraction of a second-it will take for the Kendoka to leap forward before the opponents charge. The ma-ai between two experienced Kendoka is, therefore, frequently stretched out in order to accommodate the unexpected. This brings us to Kamae.

Kamae indicates the degree of control the Kendoka has over space and time. As such, kamae and ma-ai are correlated: an effective kamae reveals an effective ma-ai control. Kamae, then, refers to stance. But because kamae requires the proper reading of ma-ai and also because ma-ai constantly changes according to the opponents movement, kamae is more than a stylized stance. It requires direct cognitive ability. In this context, then, kamae involves a mental attitude, alertness of a kind derived through intense concentration."

The basic definition of maai being that of distance is inappropriate save for very limited situations. Maai also takes into account speed, strength, your timing, and ability.

Suki & Zanshin

Suki and zanshin, especially the latter, are quite possibly the two concepts that are the most commonly spoken of in kendo. I have included information on the topic from a number of different sources in an attempt to explain these terms, in the philosophical sense, as robustly as possible.

The following excerpt⁶⁶ discusses both suki and zanshin.

⁶⁶ Kiyota [42]

“An effective kamae leaves no opening for the opponent to attack. In the Kendo lexicon, an opening is referred to as suki. A Kendoka with no suki projects an intimidating kamae. The term however has another meaning. There is no suki in an accomplished ballet dancer, that is, no futile, wasteful, or meaningless movement. It is the same with an accomplished Kendoka. Each movement, no matter how minute is distinct and has meaning to the Kendokas overall strategy.

A perfect kamae leaves no suki, and a kamae without suki is evidence that the Kendoka is capable of combat without futile movements. The Kendoka’s potential for subsequent movements is therefore epitomized in his kamae, a kamae without suki, just as the ballerinas potential for subsequent movements is epitomized in her opening stance, a stance without futile movements.

But an effective kamae of a Kendoka represents the crystallization of consummate effort over the course of years, during which the kendoka coped with the issue of ma-ai through intense combat practice.

Although the Kendoka may have perfected kamae through years of practice, there is always the chance that he or she may miss a target. What position should the Kendoka then take? Here the issue of zanshin, sustained alertness, needs to be taken up. Two examples are presented below:

In the first case, the attacker attacks and misses a target. The receiver of the attack would have the advantage. He would be in a position to calmly observe the attackers opening. So after the attack, the attacker must get away from the receivers range of attack, turn quickly, and transform defense into offense instantly. In the second case, although the attacker had missed the first target, normally he would be able to see a second opening in the receivers defense but would not be able to carry through the second attack.

These two examples provide the necessary grounds to examine zanshin, sustained alertness. Inherent in this concept is a determined attitude to never to ‘abandon ship’ (never leave an opening and constantly seek the opponents openings) and to instantly launch a second or third attack by transforming defense into offense. The term ‘instantly’ is crucial because zanshin requires alertness - even after the completion of an attack- of a kind that would enable the attacker to cope with an unexpected situation in a split second. What position should the attacker take if the first attack succeeds?

The idea of zanshin meaning to “follow through” isn’t the full meaning of the term but is only a basic example. In general, the essence of what zanshin means is to remain constantly alert.

He should still maintain zanshin. In actual combat, a samurai was trained to be ready to launch a sutemi attack with the last drop of his energy even if seriously wounded. Moreover, even if the first attack dealt a mortal blow, the samurai assumed that he was surrounded by other opponents on all four sides.

Zanshin, then, is sustained alertness with the aim of assuming strategic victory. It is also an attitude that applies to work: complete a task beyond what is expected, and expect the unexpected."

Sources⁶⁷ quote Zen master Takuan's essays on Zen concepts relating to swordsmanship. These discuss the ideas of **suki** and **zanshin**:

*"**A mind like a spark**'. When you clap your hands a sound comes out immediately, without any interval. The sound does not deliberately come out a while after you clap, it comes right out as you clap.*

If your mind stops on the sword your opponent is swinging at you, a gap⁶⁸ opens up, and in that gap your action falters. If there is no gap between your opponents striking sword and your action, the sword of the adversary will become your sword. A mind like a spark means the state of mind where there is no gap. When a flint is struck, sparks fly at once. This also means there is no interval for the mind to linger.

It is wrong to understand this only in terms of speed⁶⁹. It means you should not let the mind linger on things, that you should not set the mind on anything, even speed.

If attention lingers, your mind is taken over by others. If you act quickly counting on speed, your mind is taken over by this attitude."

*"**Where to set the mind?**' If you set your mind on an opponents actions, you have your mind taken up by those actions. If you set your mind on an opponents sword, you have your mind taken up by the opponents sword. If you set your mind on the thought of killing an opponent, you have your mind taken up by the thought of killing an opponent. If you set your mind on your own sword, you have your mind taken up by your own sword. If you set your mind on your determination not to be killed, you have your mind taken up by the determination not to be killed. If you set your mind on peoples postures, you have your mind taken up by peoples postures. The point is that there is nowhere at all to set the mind.*

Some people say, 'If we have the mind go anywhere at all, the mind will be fixated by where it goes, putting us at a disadvantage to adversaries. So put the mind in your gut (hara) and keep it there, while adapting to what adversaries do.'

Of course, this could be, but from the point of view of an advanced stage of (Zen) Buddhism, to keep the mind in the lower abdomen is a low stage. It is the stage of practice, the stage of remembrance of seriousness⁷⁰, the stage referred to as 'seeking the free mind.' It is not the higher stage, it is the mood of seriousness.

⁶⁷ Cleary [14, 13]

⁶⁸ The definition of suki is a "chink in one's armour", but more generally a "space or gap". This can be a gap between points in space, two points in time, and even between one thought and the next.

⁶⁹ Takuan makes it a point to distinguish between "unhindered, immediate reaction" and "fast reaction", i.e., "speed"; two very different concepts.

⁷⁰ Cleary [13] indicates "seriousness" in this context means "single-mindedness and effort" in learning how to "focus ones mind on one point"; a preliminary exercise in Zen practice.

If you force your mind into your gut below your navel and determine to keep it there, your mind is taken up by the determination to keep it there, so your forward action is deficient and you become extraordinarily un-free.”

“[...] If you don’t put your mind anywhere, it will pervade your whole body fully, spreading through your whole being, so that when you need hands it works in your hands, when you need feet it works in your feet, when you need eyes it works in your eyes. Since it is present wherever you need it, it makes functions you need possible. If you fix the mind in one place, it will be taken up by that place and thus deficient in function.

When you put the mind in one place, with the result that it is deficient elsewhere, this is called a warped mind. It is the warp that we disdain. Fixation on things is called becoming warped, and is the disdain of the Zen way.

If you don’t think of where to put it, the mind pervades the whole being. Place the mind nowhere, employ your attention to each situation as it happens, according to what the opponents do.”

The following excerpt⁷¹ explains **zanshin** as follows:

*“**Bringing back the mind**’. The sense of this expression is that when you strike a blow with a sword, if you think to yourself that you have scored, then the mind thinking you have scored stops and stays right there. Since your mind does not come back from the blow you have scored, you become careless and get hit by the adversary’s ‘second sword’⁷². Your initiative turns out to be for naught, and you lose by getting hit with a counter-blow. When you strike a blow, do not keep your mind on where you hit; after striking, bring your mind back to observe the opponents mood⁷³ changes; when one gets hit, one becomes resentful and angry. When angered, an adversary becomes vehement; if you are inattentive, you will get hit. Think of an adversary who has been hit as a raging wild boar. When you are conscious of having struck a blow, you let your mind tarry and are thus inattentive. You should be aware that your opponents energy will emerge when he is hit. Also, an adversary will be careful of a place where he has already been hit, so if you try the same strike again in the same way, you will miss. When you miss, your opponent will counter and hit you. ‘Bringing back the mind’ means bringing your mind back to your body, not letting it tarry at the point where you have struck. The thing is to bring your mind back to observe your opponents condition. For example, when a master of a house, staying at home, sends a servant out on an errand, if the servant stays where he goes and does not return, he will be missing for further service. In the same way, if your mind lingers on things and does not return to its original state, your ability in martial arts will slip. For this reason, the matter of not fixating the mind on one point applies to everything, not only martial arts.”*

⁷¹ Yagyū [101]

⁷² In Yagyū [101], ‘second sword’ refers to a second attack or second action.

⁷³ In Yagyū [101], “will” refers to “mental” intention, while “mood” is the bodily expression of intent. Mood and will do not always match, hence the term “You should have your will restrain your mood, so that it does not hurry.”

Zanshin, very clearly, means much, much more than simply to “follow through” in the physical sense of the term. Learning and understanding the full meaning of **zanshin** is essential to one's progress in **kendo**.

One final piece of information in an attempt to try and bring all of this information together, and to help us understand the full meaning, is to look at the characters for **zanshin**. **Zanshin** is composed of two characters, *zan* (残) which translates as “remainder”, “left over”, or “balance”, and *shin* (心) which translates as “heart”, “mind”, or “spirit”. While the translation given for **zanshin** is “follow-through”, a literal translation from the characters, and in relation to the information given above in this section, would be “remaining mind”, “the mind that is left over”, or “balanced mind”.

Mushin & Sutemi

Throughout this book I have, and will continue, to make references to two important terms; **mushin** (無心) and **sutemi** (捨て身). These are such important concepts to the core philosophical aspects of **kendo**, or in fact any martial art, that they must be discussed in more detail.

Mushin. **Mushin** is composed of two characters: *mu* (無), “nothingness, nil”; *shin* (心), “heart, mind, spirit”, is often translated as “no mind”.

The following excerpt⁷⁴ discusses **mushin**:

⁷⁴ Hyams [32]

*“According to Zen masters, **mushin** is operating when the actor is separate from the act and no thoughts interfere with action because the unconscious act is the most free and uninhibited. When **mushin** functions, the mind moves from one activity to another, flowing like a stream of water and filling every space.”*

“The mind must always be in the state of ‘flowing’, for when it stops anywhere that means the flow is interrupted and it is this interruption that is injurious to the well-being of the mind. In the case of the swordsman, it means death.

When the swordsman stands against his opponent, he is not to think of the opponent, nor of himself, nor of his enemy’s sword movements. He just stands there with his sword which, forgetful of all technique, is ready only to follow the dictates of the unconscious. The man has effaced himself as the wielder of the sword. When he strikes, it is not the man but the sword in the hand of the unconscious that strikes.”

This state of mind, that of “acting through the unconscious”, is the state of mind that all martial artists strive for. It is obtained only through diligent practice, until one can essentially react naturally v.s. having to think about what to do and when to do it. Intellectually trying to act without thinking, is not **mushin** as we are consciously placing a goal or objective in our mind. It is reaction through our unconscious thoughts, our natural action, that signifies **mushin**.

Sutemi. **Sutemi** is made of two characters: su(te) (捨て), “*abandon, sacrifice*”; mi (身), “*person, body, self*”, and is often translated to “*body abandoning*” but perhaps a more western translation is that of “*all or nothing*”.

When one attacks with the feeling of **sutemi**, one has the mind set of “all or nothing” or that “with this strike, I will either kill or be killed”. **Sutemi** acknowledges the fact that there is an ultimate finality stemming from this moment and that there will be no second chances, and no other possible outcomes.

To practice striking with a true feeling of **sutemi**, we must place all of our energy and spirit into the strike alone. Consideration for ourself, our protection, our opponent, whether or not we miss, whether or not we are counter-attacked, etc. is irrelevant. Thus to strike with **sutemi**, we must disregard our natural tendency to protect ourself. There should be no thoughts of “what if my opponent does this...?”, “how will I stop them from doing that...?”, and so on; we simply attack with the full sum of our spirit.

By using our full spirit with each attack in a **sutemi**-style way we act with but one focus: our strike. By eliminating all other concerns, our techniques will be more effective because our minds will be less hindered with doubts, or as it is explained in Zen ideology we can free our mind of attachments. This makes decisions and hence our actions more “in the moment” or “natural”.

But this takes us back to the beginning as this is the essence of **mushin**. As we train, we learn to perform our techniques while having to think about them less and less as they become more natural. This in turn helps us practice **sutemi** as our strikes can be done with full spirit without the need to overtly focus on the technique itself.

In a very over-simplified way, **sutemi** helps us learn **mushin** and **mushin** helps us to attack with **sutemi**. By practicing one we learn the other, developing our understanding of each in a circular manner.

Acting Unconsciously?

The concept of acting with the unconscious mind does not refer to some mystical state of being, nor does it mean to act “without thinking” or to act randomly. It also does not mean acting through some kind of innate reflex. Instead, it refers to acting naturally; action without “over-thinking” or actions based on previous bias. Each action is determined naturally, spontaneously, in the present moment. For very simplified examples, we do not think about how to walk up a flight of stairs while talking to somebody, or how to turn our head in response to somebody calling our name as we carry out a conversation with another person. We simply do it without conscious thought or effort while remaining completely calm during the process. This is what it means to act through the unconscious mind, in the present, and is the essence of **mushin**.

Ki Ken Tai Ichi

Ki ken tai ichi is the essence behind being able to perform a strike properly both physically and spiritually. **Ki:** (気) “spirit/energy”, **ken:** (剣) “sword”, **tai:** (体) “body”, **ichi:** (一致) “(done) as one”.

A direct translation of the above terms is “*spirit, sword, body as one*”. The usual interpretation for beginners is “*in order to land an effective strike against your opponent you must ‘yell’ the name of the target the moment your shinai lands and as your foot hits the floor.*”

However, we can read a lot deeper into this phrase.

Ki. **Ki** refers to our spirit/energy, which can have both mental and physical components. One obvious form of this is our **kiai**, the vocal expression of our mental and physical energy; the energy of our “fighting spirit”. If we are able to project this energy forward we will express **seme** (攻め), the “pressure” we apply to our opponent. **Ki** then must be present not only during a strike, but at all times.

Ken. **Ken** refers to our weapon, but not simply to the act of swinging it to strike. In **kendo**, one's weapon is the primary source of offense and defense, and is rooted in our **kamae**. A strong **kamae** creates **suki** in the opponent, and removes them from ourselves. Thus **ken** refers to our weapon before, during, and after each strike.

Tai. **Tai** refers to our body, but not to just our foot hitting the floor. It refers to all aspects of the body: posture, breathing, footwork, balance, position, grip, etc... all of which must be in correct form.

Ki ken tai ichi should not be considered simply as something we “turn on” as we strike but rather that only by *first* obtaining **ki ken tai ichi** will we then be able to perform a proper strike. All of the above factors (and more!) must be included in our interpretation. Once done, then we can understand just how important this simple statement really is.

The beginner's explanation of **ki ken tai ichi** is just a fraction of the full meaning.

The Ki Ken Tai Umbrella

Ki ken tai ichi, while it seems simple on the surface, encompasses a lot of subtle detail which is why it is so central to **kendo**. There are other terms in **kendo** which describe a unison of action, such as **shin ki ryoku ichi** (心気力一致) and **shin gi tai ichi** (心技体一致). **Shin ki ryoku ichi** indicates that one's heart (**shin**) able to predict the opponent's action through **mushin**, guides the dynamic mental state of one's spirit (**ki**), which in turn dictates one's action via appropriate **waza** (**ryoku**), all three aspects acting in unison. **Shin gi tai ichi** refers to transitioning from intent in the mind (**shin**) being smoothly expressed through the ability (**gi**) of one's body (**tai**), i.e., thought being put into effective action. However these all fall under the umbrella of **ki ken tai ichi**. **Ki ken tai ichi** is elaborated on somewhat on [p.149](#).

San-Satsu-Ho, Mitsu no Sen, & the Four Sicknesses

San-Satsu-Ho: “The Three Laws”

The **san-satsu-ho** (三冊法) are guidelines on defeating an opponent.

Ken o korosu. (剣を殺す) “Kill their sword”. Control the opponents **ka-mae** and their attacks such that they become ineffective. The sword is the source of the opponents ability to attack as well as their method of defense. **Ken o korosu**, and your opponent can’t attack nor can they defend.

Ki o korosu. (気を殺す) “Kill their spirit”. Mentally/spiritually dominate your opponent, such that they begin to doubt themselves and hesitate in their actions. Doubt and hesitation create **suki** in your opponent creating flaws in their offense and defense. **Ki o korosu** and your opponent is defeated before you even attack them.

Waza o korosu. (技を殺す) “Kill their techniques”. Disrupt your opponent’s techniques such that they become ineffective. In the most general sense this means if your opponent tries to use “kill their sword” or “kill their spirit” against you, you must make these attempts fail. Or, as a specific example, disrupt the opponent’s attempts at using their **tokui waza** (得意技) or “specialty/strongest” technique(s).

Mitsu no Sen: “The Three Initiatives”

The **mitsu no sen** (三つの先) are the three (advantageous) opportunities of attack. In very general and non-specific terms, this can be explained as follows:

Sen no sen. (先の先) This term translates to “taking initiative against the initiative of the opponent”. **Sen no sen** is when one makes an attack as the opponent is initiating an attack or movement.

Go sen no sen. (後先の先) This translates to “taking initiative after the opponent takes initiative”. This is when one responds to the opponents attack with a counter; the attack is launched, recognized, then responded to.

Sen sen no sen. (先々の先) This term can be interpreted as “initiative against an opponent attempting to use sen no sen against you”. Somewhat similar to **go sen no sen** in that one responds to the opponent’s attack, however instead of recognizing the attack after it is launched, one has prior knowledge of the coming attack by drawing it out from the opponent, i.e., via **seme**, and counter-attacking using that knowledge.

There is no one specific formula or method on how to use the san-satsu-ho. They are generalized methods through which one can expose or create **suki** in the opponent. The number of ways one can apply these ideas to an opponent is vast to say the least.

The Three Initiatives

The mitsu no sen are an important concept in kendo. There are a variety of explanations, and even different names, explaining what they are. Musashi [58] categorized the mitsu no sen as **ken no sen** (懸の先), “advance initiative”; **tai no sen** (待の先), “waiting initiative”; and **tai tai no sen** (体々の先), “simultaneous initiative”. These correspond directly to the more standard **sen no sen**, **go sen no sen**, and **sen sen no sen**.

Shi-Kai: "The Four Sicknesses/Admonitions"

The **shi-kai** (四戒) are the four "afflictions" which cloud the mind.

Ku. (恐怖, "fear") Fear of the opponent, fear of being scored on, or fear of the unknown. Fear leads to hesitation, doubt, loss of opportunity, and prevents one from reacting naturally and spontaneously.

Gi. (疑, "doubt") Doubt in oneself or in ones techniques leads to lowered self-confidence and a lessening of the spirit.

Kyu. (驚, "surprise") Surprise is due to a momentary loss of ones **connection** between oneself and the opponent. Surprise momentarily inhibits ones ability to think and act freely.

Waku. (惑, "confusion") Confusion indicates the complete loss of a **connection** between oneself and the opponent, or the loss of a **connection** between one's intent and one's physical action(s).

The four sicknesses are connected to the san-satsu-ho, however this is beyond the scope of this text. One need only consider the san-satsu-ho and their effect on an opponent to see the connection.

The Fundamental Theorem of Kendo?

Kendo is composed of an immense number of techniques and concepts centered on the combative scenario of Japanese swordplay. Many of these concepts are intertwined with one another.

Even concepts which seem to be of completely different mindsets have inherent relations. One specific example is **shikake** and **oji waza** or "attacking" and "counterattacking" techniques. While these are related in the obvious sense that they are both ways to hit a target their relation is much deeper than this.

Using this example as a starting point, the intent is to show how many common concepts in **kendo** can be generalized from their "beginner" definitions to ones which give rise to a much wider scope and attempt to broaden our understanding of these concepts. The result of this generalization will be to show how **shikake** and **oji waza** are related to one another so deeply that they can in fact be considered the same thing. Through this relation, a simplification of **kendo** appears.

Basic Definitions

The following are basic definitions for the various notions discussed throughout. These basic definitions will be built upon in the following sections.

Suki. “(1) *Gap, space*, (2) *break, interval*, (3) *chink (in ones armour), chance, opportunity*”. In **kendo** **suki** is used to refer to an opening in the opponents (or your own) defenses. This opening can either be physical, for example an exposed target area, or mental such as a momentary loss of concentration, focus, or **connection** with the opponent.

Shikake waza. **Shikake waza** are techniques in which one initiates an attack. Examples of **shikake waza** would be **tobi-komi waza**, **harai waza**, **katsugi waza**, etc... The general idea is that the **kendoka** creates or takes advantage of an existing **suki** by attacking with strong spirit.

Oji waza. **Oji waza** are techniques in which one responds to an attack initiated by the opponent. Examples of **oji waza** would be **nuki waza**, **suriage waza**, **uchi-otoshi waza**, etc...

Connection. This refers to the mental and physical connection one establishes with the opponent. A very rudimentary example of this connection is the one established through basic **metsuke**⁷⁵ (目付け) or “point of observation”. In this example, the point of observation is the eyes of the opponent. Once this rudimentary **connection** is established one begins to perceive the opponents physical movements and attacks through peripheral vision. A true **connection** allows one to perceive the opponent’s intentions before they happen.

⁷⁵ The full term is “*enzan no metsuke*” (遠山の目付け) or “looking at a distant mountain”. The concept of this is that one looks at something as a whole v.s. looking at a specific detail at the expense of others. A western equivalent is “can’t see the forest for the trees.”

Sente. (先手) “*First move, initiative*”, closely related to **sen**. The idea of **sen** is that one is “ready to act”. A more concise explanation is that one never allows a **suki** to be passed up.

Sutemi. “*Body abandoning*”. **Sutemi** can be interpreted as “all or nothing”. This stems from the idea that in actual combat each strike must be performed with the mentality that to “kill, be killed, or both” are the only possible outcomes. The slightest hesitation or doubt would only result in your own death.

Kamae. “*Stance or position*”. The immediate notion of **kamae** in **kendo** refers to the stance one assumes with the **shinai** or **bokuto**, e.g., **chudan**, **jodan**, **gedan**, etc...

Kiai. “Energy integration/union”. For beginners this refers to the shouts⁷⁶ used when attacking; the verbal expression of our “fighting spirit”.

⁷⁶ Kakegoe is the term for shouting. While they are related in kendo, kiai and kakegoe are most definitely not the same thing.

Ki ken tai ichi. “Spirit/energy, sword, body as one”. This is one of the most commonly referenced ideas in **kendo**, and is often introduced very early to a **kendoka**. The most basic explanation of **ki ken tai ichi** is that in order to strike effectively one must strike the target at the same time as the foot lands with strong **kiai** all in a smooth motion.

Zanshin. “Mind that is left-over/remaining”. **Zanshin** is most commonly introduced as “follow-through” (after a strike) in **kendo**. The beginner’s explanation of **zanshin** is that after one strikes “you must move past your opponent and return to **kamae**.”

Seme. “To attack, or to assault”. **Seme** is often translated as “pressure” in **kendo**, but in the sense of a mental or physical pressure applied (to the opponent) as a result of ones imminent attack as *perceived by the opponent*.

Mitsu no sen. “The three sens”. A somewhat more advanced topic in **kendo**, this is the three opportunities at which point one can attack the opponent and have an advantage. The **mitsu no sen** are (1) **sen no sen**, (2) **go sen no sen**, and (3) **sen sen no sen** or essentially “attacking as your opponent initiates”, “attacking after your opponent initiates”, and “initiating an attack to draw your opponents attack, then attacking the **suki** made by their action” respectively.

San-satsu-ho. “The three laws”. These are three methods through which one can defeat their opponent: **ken o korosu**, **ki o korosu**, and **waza o korosu** or “kill their sword”, “kill their spirit”, and “kill their techniques” respectively.

The four sicknesses. These are four afflictions of the mind which have the effect of disrupting ones ability to express/perform **sen**, **sutemi** (attacks), **ki ken tai ichi**, **zanshin**, or to disrupt ones **kamae** or **connection**. The **four sicknesses** are fear, doubt, surprise, and confusion.

Extending our Definitions

Focus will be placed on expanding the previous basic definitions with more details, and more importantly, giving a generalization of their scope.

Ki Ken Tai Ichi Revisited

Ki ken tai ichi is the easiest place to start in our expansion. The basic definition given is often assumed to be the entirety of what **ki ken tai ichi** implies.

The basic definition of **ki ken tai ichi** given above, p.148, interprets the components as: **ki** implies **kiai**, your verbal expression of your “fighting spirit”, **ken** implies the sword striking a target, and **tai** implies your (front) foot landing during **fumi-komi**, all of which must happen simultaneously in a smooth motion. But what about when we aren’t striking? Is **ki ken tai ichi** something that we primarily ignore and then “turn on” when we strike? Examining each of the components of **ki ken tai ichi**, expanding on their meaning, will help show that the basic definition is really only the tip of the iceberg.

Ki. **Ki** translates as “spirit” and “energy” whereas the basic explanation given above implies **ki** is a “forceful yell” at the moment of striking. While **kiai** in **kendo** relates to yelling, yelling is not the same as **kiai**, nor is it the same as **ki**.

Kiai, literally translated, is “Energy (**ki**) union/integration (**ai**)” and is the natural by-product of the mind and body working together⁷⁷. An example of “real” **kiai** is the automatic grunt people utter the moment they lift something heavy. We don’t think of making this sound, it just happens naturally. This is simply the effect of our mental intent to lift the object combining with our body, motion, and muscles acting on that intent. This grunt is often a far cry from a “forceful yell” but it is real **kiai**. **Ki** then cannot only refer to **kiai**, even when limited to the yell at the moment of striking, as **kiai** refers to a *coordination* of energy whereas **ki** refers to the energy itself.

The mental component of our energy could be thought of as a composition of two previous ideas: **sen** and **sutemi**. In this context **ki** refers to an abstract notion; the energy or focus from a particular mindset. For **sen** its readiness to attack. For **sutemi** its determination to carry through with our intent regardless of outcome.

In each of the above (**kiai**, **sen**, and **sutemi**) **ki** is a component. However each of these aspects are essential not just during our strikes but *before, during, and after*. Given these broader interpretations perhaps a better translation for **ki**, with regards to a more generalized notion of **ki ken tai ichi**, would be that it refers to one’s spiritual and/or mental “*intent*”.

⁷⁷ Kiyota [42]

Ken. **Ken** translates as sword, but in the context of the basic explanation of **ki ken tai ichi** given, it specifically pertains to the sword striking the target. However our sword serves more than just as a means of striking a target. What about before our strike, i.e., our **kamae**?

The sword serves as a means of offense and as defense in that an active **kamae** can create **suki** in our opponent as well as prevent them from appearing in our own defenses. What about immediately after the strike, i.e., during **zanshin**? An effective strike itself has many components, but in the context of “after the hit” the sword must be held in the proper position and at a correct angle. Aside from emulating a cut, this helps to maintain our posture and balance and also helps to protect ourselves from counter-attack.

Tai. **Tai** translates as body, but in the context above **tai** was limited to footwork. If we extend **tai** to the more general sense, i.e. the body before, during, and after a strike, **tai** refers to movement, posture, balance, grip, breathing, and any other number of body movements.

Given these generalized notions of **ki**, **ken**, and **tai**, **ki ken tai ichi** can be extended to situations before, during, and after a strike. This allows us to address our original question of whether or not **ki ken tai ichi** was something that is simply turned on only when we wish to strike. The answer ought to be clear: “no”. **Ki ken tai ichi** must be present at all times or we couldn't begin, land, or finish a strike in an effective or meaningful way.

Zanshin Revisited

Zanshin literally translates as “remaining mind” or “the mind that is left over”, but is commonly given the meaning of “follow-through” as indicated in our basic definitions. But this basic interpretation pertains to physical actions, whereas the literal translation of **zanshin** pertains to the mind. It makes sense that since **kendo** has both mental and physical components a stronger definition of **zanshin** encompasses both of these.

This is alluded to in the FIK (International Kendo Federation) definition of proper **zanshin** with regards to **yuko-datotsu** as “*follow-through and a readiness against counter-attack*”. This implies that after a strike, as well as the usual physical follow-through, one is also able to be prepared for the opponents possible counter attack. In essence a return to “readiness” mentally and physically. This has a very obvious connection to the notion of **sen**. From this we can see that physical **zanshin** brings us safely back to our ready position, **kamae**, whereas the mental component of **zanshin** enables us to maintain **sen**.

Zanshin & Yuko Datotsu

According to International Kendo Federation [35], “Yuko datotsu is defined as an accurate strike or thrust made onto the datotsu-bui of the opponent's kendo-gu with shinai at its datotsu-bu in high spirits and correct posture, being followed by zanshin.” Zanshin is specifically defined as “the state of alertness both mental and physical, against the opponent's counterattack.” Comparing this to the usual beginner definition of zanshin, that of “moving past the opponent” as on p.118, it is clear the FIK definition of zanshin alludes to something much more.

However, what about motions or actions other than striking? We can in fact extend **zanshin** to a more general sense, as before, where it is present before, during, and after a strike. From our definitions **suki** can be both physical and mental openings; a gap in ones defenses or in ones concentration. Thus in order to maintain ones mental and physical readiness at all times one must exhibit a constant **zanshin**; a return to readiness after *each and every action*. This encompasses large actions such as moving, pushing, dodging, striking, parrying, etc... to small actions such as observing your opponent, looking for openings, adjusting your **kamae**, confirming your strike validity, etc... to even minute actions such as breathing, blinking, hearing your teammates call your name during **shiai**, etc...

This extended notion of **zanshin**, constantly returning ourselves to readiness, gives a much more all-encompassing definition. While it ought to be clear that the basic definition of “follow-through” is most certainly an aspect of **zanshin**, it is not the full definition. In this general context a better interpretation would be that one demonstrates a constant “return to readiness” or a “sustained alertness”.

Sen and Suteми

Another relatively simple relation that is not necessarily ever pointed out during practice is the relation between **sen** and **suteми** (attacks).

Specifically, there needs to be expression of one in order to express the other in a somewhat circular relation. That is they are both learned and practiced at the same time with one naturally strengthening the other. In order to attack without hesitation or doubt, as indicated in the definition of **suteми**, one must be in a constant state of “readiness to act” as defined by **sen**. And in order to be “ready to act” as defined by **sen**, one must possess the ability to attack without concern for outcome as defined by **suteми**.

By examining this relation, we uncover one of the core components of **kihon** (fundamental/basics) **kendo**. When one practices **kihon**, apart from practice of basic **waza**, **maai** (distance & spacing), etc..., the common instruction given is always the simple notion of “attack, attack, attack!”, especially beginners. And why is this so important for **kihon**? The answer is simple: *by eliminating the choices one has during **kihon** practice exclusively to **shikake waza**, it naturally forces the practice of the **sen-suteми** cycle.*

The necessity of fully incorporating this cycle into ones practice, and explaining why it is of fundamental importance, will be shown in the following sections.

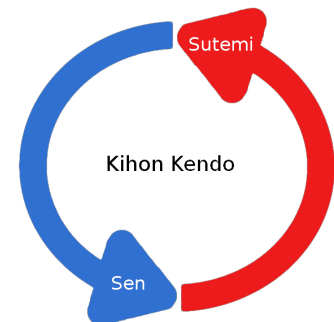


Figure 234: Sen and suteми cyclic relation.

The relation between sen and suteми uncovers one of the core aspects of practicing kendo basics.

Seme

We can now start to pull the various pieces together and begin the next topic: **seme**. **Seme** is relatively simple to define and in fact the definition given at the start of the article is exactly what **seme** is. It is a pressure put on the opponent and while it is most often a perceived pressure versus a physical one, it is not strictly limited to this. The difficult issue, which we are now prepared to tackle, is the question “how do I make **seme**?”

Much like all things in **kendo**, **seme** is something that can only be discovered through years of practice. However the *verbal* answer as to how one makes it isn't all that complex given the discussions above. There are three aspects that we can break **seme** into: (1) “physical” **seme**, (2) “perceived” **seme**, and (3) “spiritual” **seme**. Before we go on, let's recall the definition of **seme**: “to attack, or to assault”. **Seme** is often translated as “pressure” in **kendo** but it is in the sense of a mental or physical pressure as a result of one's imminent attack *as perceived by the opponent*⁷⁸.

It is important to note that there is no *guaranteed* source of **seme**, only *potential* sources. This is the difficulty beginners have with the notion of **seme** and is the reason for its elusiveness. The lack of guaranteed **seme** production is due to the fact that it depends both on oneself *and on the reactions and perceptions of the opponent*.

Physical seme. Physical **seme** pertains to a physical movement which conveys one's intent to attack. The act of moving toward the opponent, the visible initiation of one's attack⁷⁹, and attempts to physically disrupt the opponent's defenses are all examples of which can potentially create **seme** as they are all a possible prelude to attack.

It ought to be obvious that these examples will only produce **seme** if one performs them while expressing **sen** and of course **sutemi**. In fact, **seme** will not be produced until one's expression of **sen**⁸⁰ is established with the opponent. This is the basis for all types of **seme**, however physical **seme** is a direct consequence of the opponent *knowing* you will attack and *seeing you physically begin that process*.

This relates to **kihon kendo**. Establishing one's expression of **sen** means that the opponent knows, without question, that should you perceive a **suki** in their defenses there will be no hesitation on your part in attempting an attack. But the only kind of attack which will fully convince the opponent of this readiness to attack their **suki** is a **sutemi** style attack, making physical **seme** is a *by-product of kihon kendo* in the sense that one practices being ready to attack with **sutemi** style strikes. This is outlined on p.151.

Understanding Seme

Seme is a complex topic. To help explain it, seme is *artificially* broken up into three separate types, each with hurdle that must be overcome:

- Hurdle #1: Sen & sutemi.
- Seme: Physical.
- Hurdle #2: Connection.
- Seme: Perceived.
- Hurdle #3: Perceived seme.
- Seme: Projected/spiritual.

These boundaries are somewhat contrived, but to make these ideas tenable lines have to be drawn somewhere.

⁷⁸ This is the core of what makes seme difficult; it doesn't matter what *you* think you are doing or how *you* think it will be perceived, all that matters is how the opponent *actually* perceives it.

⁷⁹ The saying in kendo, “seme with the front foot, attack with the rear foot”, can be understood by using dynamic weight distribution, p.44, while pressuring the opponent.

⁸⁰ Expression of sen means showing the opponent that you are ready to attack without hesitation. Blocking without an intent to counter, excessively retreating, or anything showing you are not prepared to strike prohibits your expression of sen.

The First Hurdle

The first barrier or hurdle one must overcome when learning to produce seme is that of establishing your expression of sen with the opponent. Physical seme is a direct by-product of kihon kendo through attacking with the feeling of sutemi.

Perceived seme. Perceived **seme** is much more difficult to produce as it depends both on your own ability to produce physical **seme** and on your opponent *perceiving seme* when you are not physically exerting it⁸¹, i.e., your opponent perceives your intent and your ability to attack.

Connection. Before going further, we must clearly define **connection**. To exert perceived **seme**, one must establish and maintain a **connection** with the opponent; this has mental and physical aspects. The mental connection implies perceiving how the opponent will act in situations, their intents, perceiving of their level of focus, **ki ken tai ichi**, and **zanshin**. The physical connection allows one to react to physical movements, maintain distance, adjust **kamae**, etc. A **connection** allows you to match the opponent mentally and physically, keeping a balance until a **suki** is found or created. Maintaining an effective **connection** to the opponent is yet another barrier in understanding **seme**.

As this **seme** is perceived by the opponent it affects them, via the **four sicknesses**, in two ways: their offense and defense. That is they become fearful of your attacks and doubt of their own initiatives due to perceiving your intent to counter-attack.

Clearly, this type of **seme** is rooted in the notion of **sen** in the same way as physical **seme**. However, in order to extend **seme** from physical to perceived we must also express **ki ken tai ichi** and **zanshin**.

Expression of **ki ken tai ichi** implies our intent, **kamae**, posture, and movements are unified with intent to attack, while expression of **zanshin** implies we are constantly able to return to readiness. This eliminates **suki** in ourselves and allows us to pursue them in our opponent. These are the conditions under which the opponent will perceive **seme**.

Projected/spiritual seme. Projected **seme** is an extension of perceived **seme** and is the most difficult to produce. At the same time it is the most powerful in terms of its effect on the opponent. The idea of projected **seme** is that one is able to *pro-actively push their intent into the opponents perception* instead of passively waiting for it to be noticed.

The difference between the two types is linked to the strength of ones **kamae**. Specifically, being able to use **kamae** to *constantly* challenge the opponent. The essence of this is that this type of **seme** is *proactive*; one threatens the opponent when in position to attack, and “*brings the threat toward them*” if not in position⁸². This pro-activity is constant, which is the source of this **seme**’s devastating effects.

⁸¹ Essentially, your opponent becomes pressured by the idea of your *potential* to attack or to counter their strikes.

The Second Hurdle

Establishing and being able to maintain a connection with the opponent is another hurdle one must overcome in order to produce **seme**.

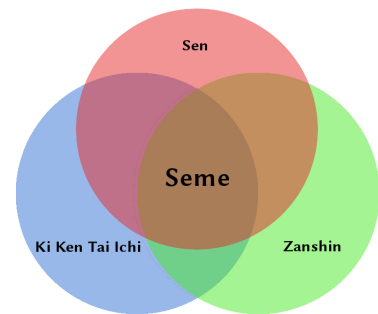


Figure 235: Simultaneous **sen**, **ki ken tai ichi**, and **zanshin** produce **seme**.

The Third Hurdle

Projected **seme** is an extension of perceived **seme**. This makes establishing and maintaining perceived **seme** itself a hurdle that must be overcome.

⁸² For example if they are out of range or retreating move toward them, forcing them to deal with your potential attack whether they are ready or not. In essence, you “control the pace” of the encounter.

While **kamae** is a core aspect of perceived **seme**, it is much more important here as it is the source of our proactive threat. If ones **kamae** is perceived to be weak at any time, then it cannot be perceived as a threat. In order to project **seme**, the threat of attack must be constant; any **suki** in this offense can break this perception.

Strong **kamae** can be described as being *active*. Instead of **kamae** being a static position of the sword, it has active mental and physical components; ones intent is displayed as well as *pro-actively threatening and adapting to the opponent*. Given this understanding we can sum up our results as:

Ki ken tai ichi, sen, and zanshin expressed properly have the effect of producing **seme** through ones **kamae**.

Mitsu no Sen, San-Satsu-Ho, & the Four Sicknesses Revisited

The meaning of the **san-satsu-ho** are clear from their descriptions. By disrupting the opponents **kamae**, spirit, and **waza** we can create **suki**. Each are carried out through our **kamae**, **seme**, and expression of **sen**, **ki ken tai ichi**, and **zanshin**.

The **four sicknesses** are effects produced through **seme** and are sources of **suki**. The primary result being disruption of ones **connection**, **sen**, **ki ken tai ichi**, and **zanshin**. The **san-satsu-ho** and **four sicknesses** are related in that the use of the **san-satsu-ho** can produce one or all of the **four sicknesses**. Should the opponent suffer from one of the **four sicknesses** one can more effectively perform the **san-satsu-ho**. The core idea is that they both stem from an application of **seme**.

The **mitsu no sen** are three opportunities where one can strike the opponent. However, given our discussion of **seme**, the **mitsu no sen** can now be interpreted as three types of **suki** made *through the application of seme*. Defining the **mitsu no sen** in this context gives:

Sen no Sen. Apply **seme**, inducing the opponent to strike with a basic **sen-sutemi** attack. Strike the opponent just as they are initiating their strike.

Go Sen no Sen. Apply **seme**. The opponent attacks *believing they will counter* with **sen no sen**. Their attack is recognized and responded to via a counter attack (**oji waza**).

Sen Sen no Sen. Apply **seme** and draw out a specific response from the opponent, due to them believing they can counter with **sen no sen**. Respond with an **oji waza** using the prior knowledge of the coming attack.

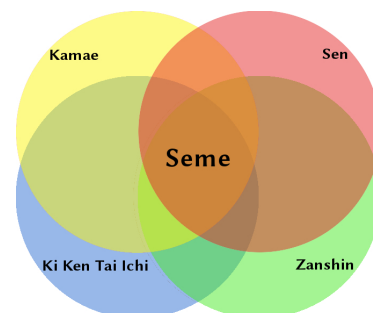


Figure 236: Simultaneous **sen**, **ki ken tai ichi**, **zanshin**, and an active **kamae** enables projected **seme**.

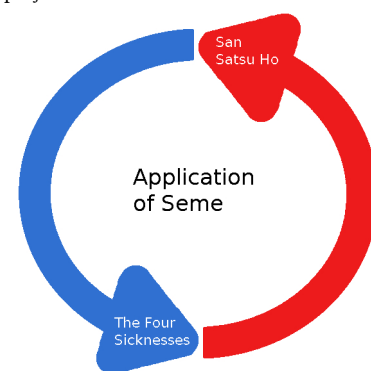


Figure 237: Application of **seme**.

Kata	Uchidachi	Shidachi
1	Sen no sen	Sen sen no sen
2	Sen no sen	Sen sen no sen
3	Sen no sen	Sen sen no sen
4	Sen no sen	Go sen no sen
5	Sen no sen	Sen sen no sen
6	Sen no sen	Go sen no sen
7	Sen no sen	Go sen no sen

Table 2: The **mitsu no sen** are exemplified in the **nihon kendo kata**. Uchidachi attempts **sen no sen** throughout while the **shidachi** performs **sen sen no sen** in **kata 1, 2, 3, and 5** and **go sen no sen** in **kata 4, 6, and 7**.

Back to the Basics

If the opponent doesn't respond to your **seme** with a strike, and instead retreats, blocks, freezes, etc.. instead of countering according to the **mitsu no sen**, initiate a basic **sen-sutemi** style attack of your own. Don't forget the basic opportunities!

Unification of Shikake Waza & Oji Waza

These **waza** often induce separate mindsets with beginners; with **shikake waza**, p.127, one initiates the strike, with **oji waza**, p.129, one waits to attempt a counterstrike. This may work with beginners but it is unlikely against an experienced opponent. The issue is **seme**.

Seme has the effect of producing **suki** in the opponent in three ways:

1. **Seme** produces a mental **suki** in the opponent by a loss of confidence, focus, concentration, or a break in **zanshin**.
2. Production of a physical **suki** in that the opponent reacts or moves out of fear of impending attack, i.e., attempted block, parry, dodge, or some other movement.
3. Production of a physical **suki** due to the opponent being pressured into initiating an attack.

The first two allow attack via **shikake waza** however in the last an opportunity for **oji waza** exists. Both opportunities are created through **seme**. In this context there are not separate mindsets of attack and defense or preparing for **shikake** or **oji waza**. *Both shikake waza and oji waza opportunities arise from our intent to strike.* Which **waza** is used and which target is attacked is *determined purely by the reaction of the opponent.*

It is through our **seme** that our attack on the opponent begins. In conjunction with our **kamae** we are constantly applying pressure, i.e., to *proactively* induce **suki**. In this context we are always the aggressor and always initiate the attack. It simply becomes a matter of how we perform the strike.

Through the application of **seme**, **shikake** and **oji waza** lose the separation of offense and defense and are unified into attacking **waza**. Their distinction is now only through which *type* of **suki** we land a strike on the opponent. The following quotation from “*The Jungle Book*”⁸³ encompasses this idea:

“If you move I strike. If you do not move I strike.”

Through this unification we obtain a simplification in **kendo** in that there is only one method of attack. The defeat of the opponent comes in creating the **suki**, the **waza** and the strike are determined by the type of **suki**. This simplification is summed up by the following quote⁸⁴ (taken somewhat out of context):

“In the beginners mind there are so many possibilities, but in the experts there are so few.”

Attack or Defense

Beginners often have two distinct mentalities they will adopt during **keiko**: offensive and defensive. Meaning that they will either decide to be aggressive and attack or they will wait for the opponent to attack and attempt a counter attack; they cannot do both. This choice is usually made well in advance of the actual striking opportunity and often without taking the opponent’s behavior into consideration. Essentially this corresponds to choosing between exclusive use of **shikake waza** or exclusive use of **oji waza** respectively. It is through the application of **seme** that this predetermined “either/or” mentality is eliminated. **Shikake waza** and **oji waza** both become attacking **waza**, only the type of opening changes. The type of opening is a result of **seme** applied to the opponent.

⁸³ Kipling [41]

⁸⁴ Suzuki [84]

A Role Model of Modern Kendo

To close this chapter I will quote one of **kendo**'s many modern and exemplary figures: Sensei Moriji Mochida. Mochida **sensei** was one of five **kendoka** to be awarded the rank of tenth **dan** (段) after the second World War⁸⁵. Practicing regularly well into his eighties, he was thought to have embodied the conceptual aspects of **kendo** as equally as the physical.

“There are many people who practice kendo that believe that they have completed their practice of the kendo fundamentals during the beginner stage and only attempt to relate to them theoretically thereafter. However, this is a big misconception to the pursuit of true kendo.

Until you are 50 years old, you must endeavor to practice the fundamentals of kendo and make it a part of you.

It has taken me 50 years to learn the fundamentals of kendo by body. It was not until I became 50 years old that I started my true kendo training. This is because I practiced kendo with all my heart and spirit.

When one becomes 60 years old, the legs are not as strong as they once were. It is the spirit that overcomes this weakness. It is through a strong spirit that one can overcome the inevitability of the body becoming physically weaker.

When I became 70 years old, the entire body became weaker. I found that the next step is to practice the concept of not moving ones spirit (immovable spirit) when practicing kendo. When one is able to achieve the state of an immovable spirit, your opponents spirit and will manifest itself to you. I tried to achieve a calm and immovable spirit at this stage in my life.

When I became 80 years old, I achieved the state of the immovable spirit. However, there are times when a random thought will enter my mind. I am striving to eliminate these random thoughts at this state in my life.”

⁸⁵ According to McCall [53], in 2000 the All Japan Kendo Federation changed their rank structure and removed the possibility of granting any further ninth or tenth dan ranks. The five tenth dan ranks awarded after WW2 were: Nakano Sosuke (1885–1963), Ogawa Kinnosuke (1884–1962), Mochida Moriji (1885–1974), Saimura Goro (1887–1969), and Oasa Yuji (1887–1974).

The idea of having an “immovable spirit” (不動心, fudoshin) is a prevalent idea in kendo. In fact, the kanji for this is often written on *tenugui* as a reminder of a *kendoka*'s ultimate goal.



Figure 238: Sensei Moriji Mochida, Hanshi, tenth dan (1885–1974).

Keiko: “Practice”

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER GIVES A description of the various types of partnered drills and exercises **kendoka** perform during **dojo** practice, referred to generally as **keiko** (稽古). The initial parts of the chapter are devoted to explaining important ideas for **keiko**, specifically the proper attitude, goals, and methods needed to maximize the effectiveness of your practice sessions. The later sections give descriptions of the specific kinds of exercises one will encounter, namely:

uchi-komi geiko (打ち込み稽古), p.161 **ai-kakari geiko** (相掛稽古), p.162
kakari geiko (掛稽古), p.161 **shiai geiko** (試合稽古), p.162

Effective Keiko

Keiko, while many people use this word to refer to sparring with an opponent, means “practice” or “study”. If one examines the kanji used for **keiko**, it is composed of *kei* (稽) which translates as “think” or “consider” and *ko* (古), which means “old” or “aged”. Performing **keiko** could then be interpreted as considering the things you have done before or of the things done by others before you, in the context of trying to improve upon your knowledge. Using this definition **keiko** then refers to any type of training done, mentally or physically, in order to try and improve oneself. Regardless of how you choose to interpret **keiko**, one thing is for certain; it pertains to *practice*.

Practice is the only way in which you can become more skilled in **kendo**. That being said, there is no right way or wrong way in which to perform **keiko**, rather there are effective ways in which to practice as well as methods to the contrary. Your progress is directly linked to the amount and quality of practice⁸⁶ you do.

Deliberate Practice

There are many ways in which one learns, however modern evidence shows that just doing something is not enough; one must be engaged, mentally and physically, in methodical practice. How well one improves with practice depends on many factors: how one approaches practice, the activity itself, the person, frequency of practice, and the type and availability of feedback. In kendo it is important to be fully engaged mentally and physically in the exercises and drills done, i.e., don’t simply do them on “auto-pilot”. Set goals, focus on specific areas, and use feedback to alter your approach to training.

The Deliberate Practice Process

1. Repetitive performance.
2. Rigorous skills assessment.
3. Specific feedback.
4. Better skills performance.

Skills Required by the Learner

1. Planning/organization.
2. Concentration/dedication.
3. Repetition/revision.
4. Study style/self reflection.

See Clark and Mayer [11], Ericsson, Krampe, and Tesch-Romer [21], and Duvivier et al. [20].

⁸⁶ Practice here refers to two types: physical practice, i.e., doing the exercises, and practice by observing/watching. The latter is known as *mitori-geiko* or “learning by watching”.

Avoid practicing alone. **Kendo** has so many subtleties that it is impossible to truly progress without the input of others, such as a **sensei**, a **senpai**, your peers, etc... Secondly, progress in **kendo** is dependent upon having an opponent, and while you can practice and become proficient in **suburi**⁸⁷ on your own, being good at **suburi** does not make you good at **kendo**. You need an active opponent to teach you about **maai**, proper **kamae**, **zanshin**, **seme**, timing, etc...

Energy. Practice every strike, drill, and exercise with full energy. Practicing for long amounts of time is unnecessary if you put the proper amount of effort into your **keiko**. It is easy to “hold back” during practice with the idea of saving your energy for a strong opponent, or for a particularly difficult drill. One practice strike, done with full effort is better than any number of half-hearted strikes. *Only you can make yourself put in the required effort.*

Focus. Have the proper state of mind when in the **dojo**. Leave all of your extraneous thoughts and emotions outside of the **dojo**. Focus on what you are doing and put all of your concentration into that.

Large strikes. Use large strikes as much as possible in the early stages. If you focus on small strikes your **kendo** becomes “small”.

Seek help. Seek help from those who are better than you. Learn to identify your own weaknesses in an honest and humble way and seek the help of somebody who doesn't have the same ones. This could be a **sensei**, a **senpai**, your peers, etc... They all have something to teach you; don't waste this invaluable resource!

Awareness. Practice each exercise with full attention, focus, and energy. It is very easy to allow yourself to become “robotic” while doing drill repetitions. Be mindful of your effort, concentration, and approach to each exercise. You must also be mindful of what you are actually doing during your practice. Proprioception⁸⁸ refers to our awareness of our body and muscles, and their position and movement in three dimensions. It is easy to lose track of this unless you actively attempt to be aware of it. What we are *actually* doing and how we are moving is often quite different from what you *think* you are doing.

Basics. Practice the basics regularly, regardless of rank or skill.

⁸⁷ Suburi here refers to both swing practice as well as more complex forms such as uchi-komi, kiri-kaeshi, etc...

A one hour practice versus a two or even three hour practice is sufficient *if* you practice with full effort and spirit. As stated in Lowry [50]: *ichi-go, ichi-e* or one encounter, one chance. Treat each swing as if it is your last chance to practice; make it count!

⁸⁸ **Proprioception** (noun), **Proprioceptive** (adj.): “Relating to stimuli that are produced and perceived within an organism, especially those connected with the position and movement of the body.”

Progress & the Pattern of Learning

Progress in **kendo** will advance at different rates dependent on the individual, but there is a common pattern followed by everyone.

The Pattern of Learning

Kendoka improve by following a certain cycle. This cycle is shown, very roughly, in figure 239. The first phase is the “basics phase”.

Step #1 : Footwork. The first thing **kendoka** learn is footwork: how to stand, how to move, position of the feet, how to balance their weight, etc...

Step #2 : Kamae. Once footwork is learned, basic **chudan kamae** is next. Proper grip, proper position, tension in the hands and fingers, etc...

Step #3 : Strikes. After **kamae** and footwork the **kendoka** begins to learn the basic strikes. This starts with basic **suburi**, then striking actual targets, finally progressing to striking targets using **fumi-komi** and more complex drills such as **kiri-kaeshi**. Soon the **kendoka** reaches a transition point in which they are ready to practice in **bogu**.

Step #4 : Waza. The **kendoka** now begins to learn various **waza** as applications of basic strikes; they are now learning to fence.

Step #5 : Keiko. The **kendoka** engages in regular sparring with an opponent and attempts to apply what they have learned.

Step #6 : Re-examination of Basics. This completes the cycle and we are taken back to step #1 where the **kendoka** must re-examine their ability in each of the steps.

From Donohue [19], “according to Musashi ‘practicing a thousand days is said to be a discipline, and practicing ten thousand days is said to be refining.’ One must practice continuously and make lots of mistakes so that one can be corrected and be ever on the lookout for ways to refine ones art.”

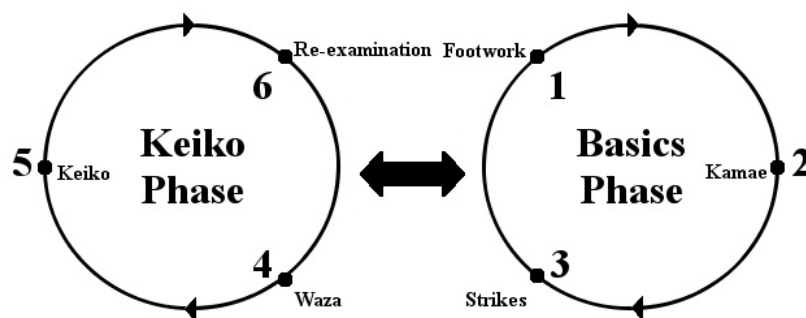


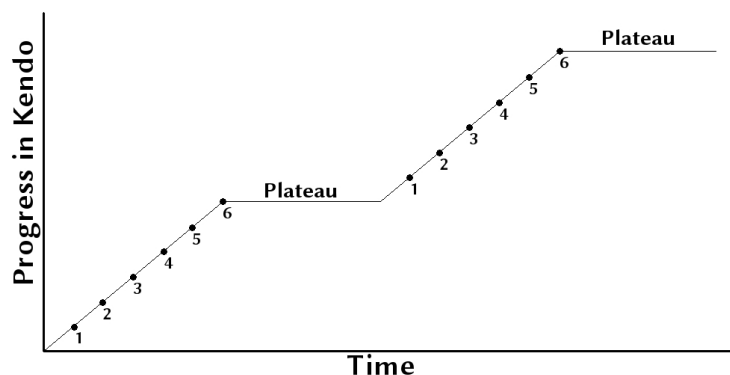
Figure 239: Steps in the learning cycle of kendo.

Progress in Kendo

Knowing the pattern of learning we need to be able to identify which stage we are at. There is no easy way to do this, save for experience, except for the last stage: step #6, re-examination of basics.

When a **kendoka** has reached this stage they almost always feel as though they have reached some type of plateau where they are “doing everything wrong” or “not getting any better”.

What has happened is they have improved enough to see their own errors *without trying to look for them*. They see themselves doing something but can't seem to stop; a frustrating stage to be in. Secondly they are attempting to push themselves to a new level of ability but are unable to; the same flaws they see in their technique are preventing their advance. It is at this point where **kendoka** ought to re-examine their basics. Once this begins they will find that they begin to improve. Each plateau has no set amount of time, but with focused practice you *will* get better.



Physical & Mental Aspects in Keiko

There is one further point which needs to be made regarding progress in **kendo** and that is the physical and mental aspects of **kendo**.

Kendoka ought to focus on the physical aspects of **keiko** early in their learning, essentially attacking, attacking, attacking. Before focusing on the mental aspects, **seme**, **mitsu no sen**, and the **san-satsu-ho** for example, one must develop a fearlessness of attacking and a fearlessness of being attacked. This cannot be accomplished by waiting, blocking, or trying difficult techniques. It can only be done by attacking at every opportunity and performing **keiko** without concern for “points” or being scored on. This is the basis for developing **sen** and **sutemi** style striking. At later stages the mental aspects of **keiko** become more prevalent.

All **kendoka**, in all dojos, will eventually experience this feeling of “being in a slump.” Don’t allow yourself to become frustrated. Carefully re-examine your basics, and with diligent practice you will get better.

Figure 240: Progress in kendo.

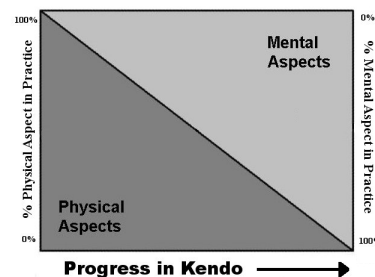


Figure 241: From Ozawa [64], physical and mental aspects change as one progresses.

Uchi-Komi Geiko: “Lunging Strike Practice”

Basic **uchi-komi geiko**, or **motodachi geiko**, is when **kendoka** practice **uchi-komi**, p.117, together; one attacks, the other receives.

Performing Basic Uchi-Komi Geiko

Attacking. Assume **chudan no kamae**. Start at the **to-ma** distance from your opponent. Step in to **issoku itto no maai** with strong **kiai** and then strike the appropriate target. Show **zanshin**.

Key Points:

1. Start from **to-ma**, but strike from **issoku itto no maai**.
2. Concentrate on performing your strike with strong **kiai** and proper **ashi-sabaki**; **fumi-komi** for the strike, **okuri-ashi** for **zanshin**.
3. Be sure to turn around to face your opponent in the correct direction, p.118; maintain your **kiai** until you face your opponent.

Receiving. Ensure that your partner always begins from the correct **maai** and do not blindly open a target unless their initial **kiai** is sufficient⁸⁹. As your partner strikes and moves in, step out of the way so that they become accustomed to moving forward in a straight line. If your partner tires help restore their spirit with **kiai** of your own.

Key Points:

1. Ensure your partner is at the proper **maai** before they strike.
2. Encouraging your partner with your own **kiai** will help them continue their practice even though they grow tired. *This is essential.*
3. Receiving **uchi-komi** is not a chance for you to rest; focus on what you can practice as **motodachi**.

Kakari Geiko: “Attack Practice”

Kakari geiko is an intense and more advanced form of striking similar to **uchi-komi geiko**. The major difference being that the attacker continuously *initiates* attacks and attempts to *create* openings almost independent of the receiver. The duration is anywhere from 15 to 30 seconds, due to its intensity, but is often repeated a number of times.

The description below assumes the attacker continually strikes targets exposed by their partner.

Fearlessness in Keiko

It is essential that one develops a fearlessness in attacking and especially a fearlessness of being attacked. Without establishing this, your keiko will be ineffective simply due to the fact that your ability to strike will be hindered by your fear of being struck. During keiko you will both hit your opponent and be hit by your opponent repeatedly. Many people feel that being out-hit by their opponent is a sign of poor skill. This is irrelevant. What is important is that you focus on practicing with strong spirit and proper form without concern for being hit, who is better than who, or how many hits you landed. This is not the goal of kendo.

⁸⁹ This requirement is often adjusted depending on the level of the attacker. Beginners should be encouraged to **kiai** strongly before being given an opening, but limiting the number of times they can practice an attack while waiting for a **kiai** they may not be able to produce is not productive.

Both **kakari geiko** and **ai-kakari geiko** are excellent exercises in the physical sense, i.e., **waza**, footwork, posture, etc... But, equally important, they are exercises to hone **sutemi** style striking and **zanshin**. They also serve as a means for the **kendoka** to *experiment* with different attack methods to overcome their opponents defenses. While they may seem similar, **kakari geiko** is *not* **uchi-komi geiko**; the intent behind the two drills is distinct and this is an important concept to understand.

Performing Basic Kakari Geiko

Attacking. With strong **kiai**, create an opening and attack without hesitation. Show **zanshin** with each strike. Do not simply stand at striking distance *waiting* for an opportunity; use **shikake waza** to create openings or if **motodachi** attacks, use **oji waza**. Focus on always moving toward your opponent with a strong spirit. Attack quickly but with control.

Key Points:

1. Try as many different **waza** as you can.
2. Never wait for an opportunity to attack; create them!
3. **Kiai** and **zanshin**⁹⁰ are very important during **kakari geiko**.
4. Don't be intimidated by your opponents **kamae**. Move in and strike.

Receiving kakari geiko. Receiving **kakari geiko** is similar to that of **uchi-komi geiko**, see p.161, save that (1) openings are not necessarily *given* forcing **kakari-te** (掛手) to *make* them, (2) more advanced strikes are often used, such as **waza** from **tsuba-zeriai**, requiring **motodachi** to stand firm and not step aside, and (3) **motodachi** may occasionally attack **kakari-te**.

Ai-Kakari Geiko: "Mutual Attack Practice"

Ai-kakari geiko is where both **kendoka** attack each other through **kakari geiko** simultaneously. It is important to focus on attacking, not on blocking or waiting for an opportunity.

This allows one to strike an aggressive, moving opponent instead of a stationary target, examine the timing and proper **maai** for various **waza**, and the opportunity to understand the meaning and application of **zanshin**.

Shiai Geiko: "Tournament Practice"

Shiai is when **kendoka** attempt to strike one another with the intent of scoring points. **Shiai geiko** is often different from standard **dojo keiko** due to the added pressure of wanting to win and not being scored on; **kendoka** can succumb to their natural instincts and begin to block or assume skewed postures. These may work initially but will eventually be countered; if this is substituted for learning strong **kihon** and building a strong spirit, one's **kendo** will soon become deficient, hindering overall progress. It is important to try and maintain good form even while under the pressure brought on by **shiai**.

The **zanshin** during **kakari geiko** is shortened, i.e., physically following through a shorter distance, in order to lessen the delay between attacks. However, each strike must still be done with full spirit and focus for **kakari geiko** to be an effective exercise.

⁹⁰ **Zanshin** must be present with each strike but not necessarily the long follow through used in **uchi-komi** as on p.118. The **zanshin** required in **kakari geiko** places the emphasis on "being continually alert" in order to make a series of seamless attacks.

An Exercise in Zanshin

Kakari-te must attempt to create opportunities to repeatedly attack in **kakari geiko** and they must have **zanshin** in order to do this seamlessly, without delay. If an opening is actually given by **motodachi**, they are often not the large openings given during **uchi-komi**. Should the **motodachi** make an attack, this creates an opening for the **kakari-te** to use **oji waza**. However **motodachi**'s attacks are not usually announced beforehand, making the success of **kakari-te**'s counter dependent on their ability to be alert and adapt to **motodachi**; **kakari geiko** is an exercise in **zanshin**.

Defensive Keiko & Blocking

Shiai geiko⁹¹ tends to cause people to do what they believe is faster, and more “safe”.

Kendo is offense based⁹² fencing, through the *mitsu no sen*, *sen*, *seme*, and *sutemi* style attacks. Compare this to western fencing which is based on defensive actions, i.e. the *riposte*⁹³. Even though defensive *waza* are present, opportunities are created through offensive pressure; blocking solely to prevent being hit is not a part of this.



The following excerpt⁹⁴ discusses blocking:

“Japanese fencing has no blocking or defending techniques. Against an attack, we evade, cut through their blade (kiri-otoshi), or deflect and strike (uke-nagashi). These cannot be categorized as blocking as these actions are done with the objective of cutting or thrusting the enemy. All these techniques are used to place yourself in an advantageous position. For example, when you are doing kiri-otoshi the goal should be to cut the enemies body, and the instant you perform uke-nagashi you must turn your blade and strike him. While doing this you must not even allow the tiniest opportunity for the enemy to attack you.

It’s useless simply to just stop or block the enemies attack. In deflecting or receiving a blade you must instantly turn it into an attack. Simply blocking/stopping the enemies attack is not beneficial.

Therefore, the merit of kendo is using “sen sen no sen” to take the lead and attack with strong resolution and overwhelming power, all the time without leaving any opening for the enemy to attack you. This will lead to a superb victory. If you stop to think for a while, this method is not simply about flying blindly into an attack; rather it’s about spending a long time working out when the right time is to attack, learning about what works when and what doesn’t ... only after you do this can you gain (true) victory.”

⁹¹ According to Hisashi [27]: “...an over anxious desire to win or escape defeat will - more often than not - lead one to disaster.”

⁹² According to Musashi [58]: “Even though there are things like parrying, blocking, hitting, or touching your opponent’s sword, you must understand that they are all for the purpose of cutting down the adversary.”

Figure 242: San-po-mamori. Men, kote, and migi do are “blocked” simultaneously.

⁹³ In sabre or foil fencing there is a priority system which dictates which fencer has the right-of-way to score an attack. To initiate the fencer must first threaten a target with the tip of their sword, granting them priority, then attack. The opponent may not strike until after parrying the incoming attack, making a riposte. This is opposite to kendo where both attack and defensive *waza* opportunities are created through offensive pressure, are allowed at any time, and the first player to land a proper strike scores a point.

⁹⁴ Tateo [86]

Why Are You Blocking?

Everyone has blocked; it’s human nature. The question is whether or not your practice is focused toward removing the reasons behind *choosing to block* or toward *training to block* to keeps from getting hit? If you have time to block, you have time to strike or perform a counter *but only if* you have *sen*, *seme*, *zanshin*, *ki ken tai ichi*, etc... and a connection to your opponent. This is *very* difficult, hence the prevalence of blocking; it’s extremely easy to do and in shiai you can delay getting scored on, possibly long enough for you to manage to strike your opponent. Developing the readiness to *not need to block* is far more important than artificially disguising your weak points through blocking.

A Historical Influence on Modern Keiko

It seems appropriate to introduce at least one of the historical figures who had influenced the roots of modern **kendo**. Out of the many prominent figures, I have chosen to introduce Yamaoka Tesshu⁹⁵ (1836-1888).

Yamaoka was a master of the sword, Zen, and calligraphy. It is said that he reached enlightenment at the age of forty-five. When he taught pupils at his **dojo**, he would have all of his beginners practice only the most basic and fundamental techniques all day, every day, for a minimum of three years. Many of his peers commented that this was very “monotonous training” and was nothing more than “simply chopping wood.”

From his Zen teachings, Yamaoka believed that the goal of all practitioners was to reach a state of void or **mushin**⁹⁶ and that Zen recognition and the sword were intertwined with one another according to the following excerpt⁹⁷:

“ ‘Mind, Body, Technique’ correspond to ‘Plane, Carpenter, Pillar’. If one thinks the carpenter does all the planing, what use is the plane? If one thinks that the plane does all the planing, what use is the pillar? Mind, body, and technique function in a similar way to that of plane, carpenter, pillar; if that interdependence is not understood, one will not produce a good pillar regardless of how long one practices with the carpenter’s plane.”

Yamaoka believed forging the spirit to be of the utmost importance. After the beginner phase was complete, students would train for one thousand days, and then be tested by having to fight two hundred opponents in a row without rest save for a small lunch. If they passed, training resumed for another thousand days and at the end they would be tested with six hundred consecutive opponents over three days. After the final training period, the final test was against one thousand four hundred consecutive opponents over seven days!⁹⁸

What was it that kept these students pressing on despite utter physical exhaustion? *Spirit*. While one’s physical strength is finite and decays with age, a person’s inner spirit never loses strength, hence Yamaoka’s diligent efforts placed in its development. While Yamaoka’s methods are not followed *per sé* in modern times, the parallels in modern **kendo** can be seen.

Yamaoka Tesshu died at the age of 52 from stomach cancer.

⁹⁵ Donohue [19] and Stevens [81]

⁹⁶ Yamaoka’s (Zen) realization was “the difference between sword and self and between oneself and one’s opponent are illusory and that the underlying unity of all is the most important thing in swordsmanship.”

⁹⁷ Stevens [80]



Figure 243: Yamaoka Tesshu (1836-1888), founder of Itto Shoden Muto Ryu.

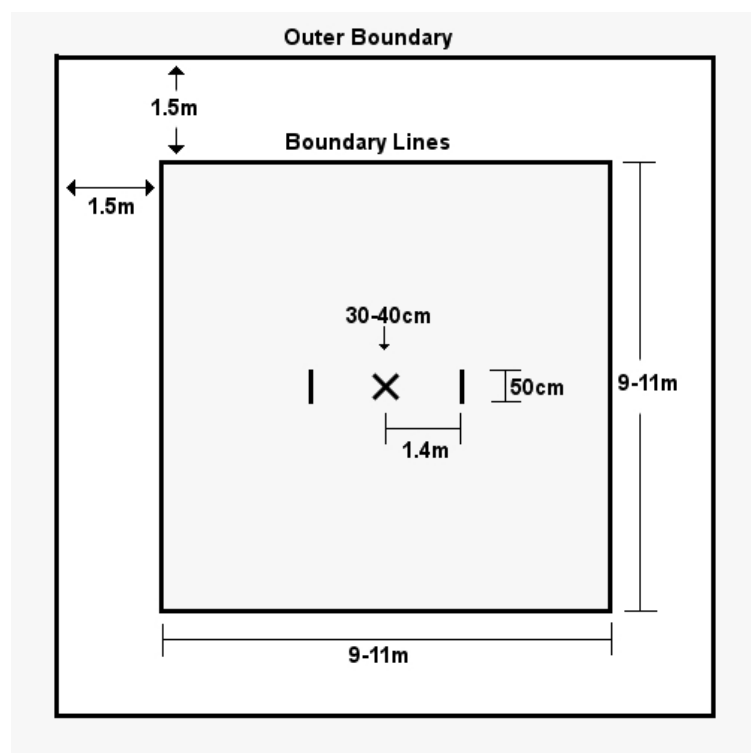
⁹⁸ According to Stevens [81], there are only two records remaining as proof of students passing the grueling third seigan: Kominami Yasutomo and Sano (Tojo) Jisaburo.

Tournament Formalities & Procedures

Chapter Preview

THIS CHAPTER BRIEFLY OUTLINES the layout of a **shiai** court and the appropriate formalities for individual and team competition.

FIK Court Layout



The standard FIK court layout, match duration, number of points per match, encho and duration, use of hantei, as well as similar items for team matches can be overridden by shiai management for a given tournament. The same applies to referee attire, flag colour and size, colour and type of the mejirushi.

Figure 244: Standard FIK court layout and measurements.

Court layout. The **shiai-jo** (試合場), figure 244, is square with sides ranging from 9m-11m. For safety a “clear zone” of 1.5m width is recommended to surround the court. Center court is marked with an “X” with arms 30cm-40cm in length. Player starting positions are marked with straight lines, 50cm long and 1.4m from center.

Shinpan: “Referees”

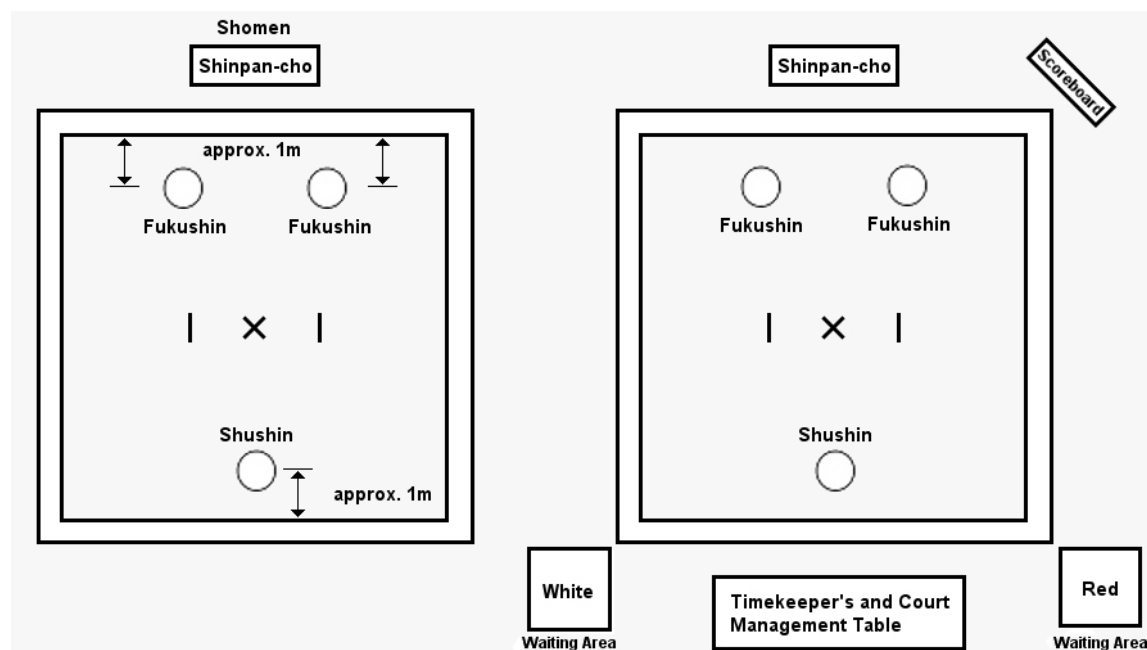


Figure 245: Standard FIK shinpan and court management layout.

Referees. The **shinpan** (審判) consist of the chief referee, **shushin** (主審), and the two sub-referees, **fukushin** (副審). Starting positions are approximately 1m from the court boundary. Each judge holds a red and a white flag in the hand corresponding to the red and the white players side respectively. These are used to indicate decisions regarding scoring or match conduct. See table 3 for a summary of verbal commands and p.170 for a summary of flag signals used in **shiai**.

Players & Court Management

Players. Players are marked with cloth markers on their back, usually red and white, called **mejirushi** (目印) (also termed “tasuki”). Red players begin on the right of the **shushin**, white on the left. Players wait to begin their matches in the designated red or white waiting area.

Court management. The time keeper holds a yellow flag in the shape of a right angle triangle; the short sides are 25cm, the handle measures 35cm. This flag is raised anytime the match clock stops. Court management is responsible for recording the progress of the match on the official scoreboard.

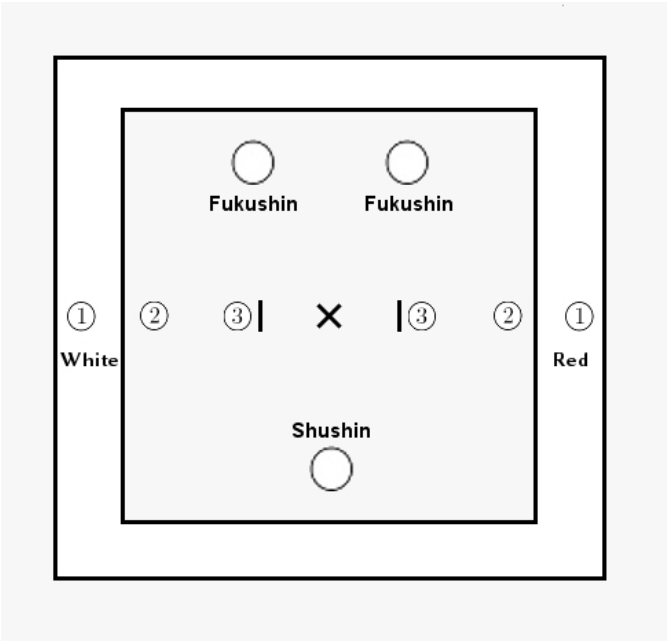


Figure 246: Shinpan-ki, the flags used by referees to communicate during shiai.



Figure 247: Time keeper's flag is raised or lowered whenever the match clock is stopped or started respectively.

Player Formalities & Procedures



Match start. Players stand at ①, move to ②, **rei**, and assume **tai-to**. Players then take three steps to ③, draw their **shinai**, and assume **sonkyo**. When the **shushin** announces **hajime** (始め), players stand and begin.

Match stop. During the match the judges use their flags to signal commands and decisions. When the **shushin** indicates a point is scored the match and clock stops and players return to ③. The **shushin** will then indicate the resumption of the match (if applicable). If a foul is committed, the match and clock are stopped, players return to ③, and the **shushin** will indicate the foul count and award points (if applicable).

If **wakare** (分かれ) is called to end **tsuba-zeriai** the match or match clock is not stopped. **Kendoka** separate to **issoku itto no maai** in **chudan** at their current location. Play resumes when the **shushin** announces **hajime**.

If the match clock expires, the match is stopped and players return to ③. **Shushin** will indicate a winner, draw, decision, or begin **encho** (延長).

Match ends. The match ends when one player scores the required number of points, the match clock expires and one player has more points than the other, or one player scores a point during **encho**. When the **shushin** announces the result of the match players, who are at ③, assume **sonkyo**, **osame-to**, stand, and take five steps back to ②. Players **rei**, step backward to ①, then turn and leave the court.

Figure 248: Player positions for shiai. Players enter the court at position #1, bow at position #2, and begin the match at position #3.



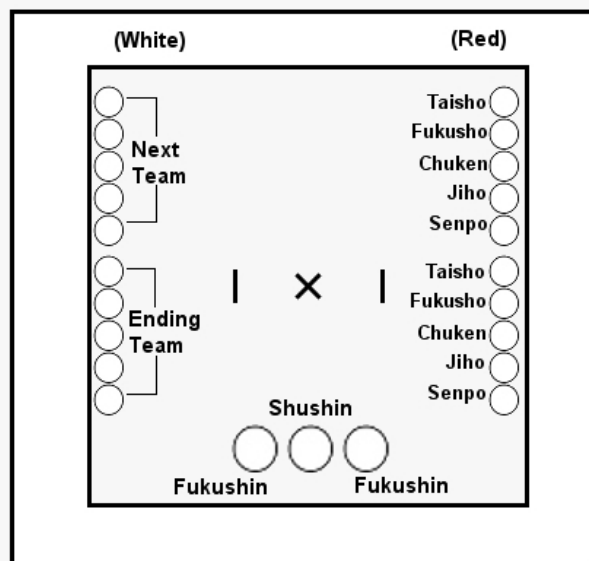
Figure 249: (Left) The **tasuki**, the coloured tie, of the red player is shown. The **tasuki** are attached to the **do himo** on the back of the player. (Right) The **nafuda**, the name tag, as well as the player and division number of the white player is shown. Both are worn on the **tare**.

Verbal Commands Used by Shushin	
Event	Command
Begin	Hajime
Stop	Yame
Second Round	Nihonme
Final round	Shobu
Overtime	Encho
Point scored	Men ari, kote ari, do ari, tsuki ari
Point awarded	Ippon ari
Match point	Shobu ari
Decision	Hantei
First Penalty	Hansoku ikkai
Second Penalty	Hansoku nikai
Conference	Gogi
Separate	Wakare

Table 3: Shinpan verbal commands used during shiai.

Team Matches

Beginning & Ending a Team Shiai



Teams. On a standard team there are five players (in order from first to fifth): **senpo** (先鋒), **jiho** (次鋒), **chuken** (中堅), **fukusho** (副将), and **taisho** (大将). At the beginning of a match, the entire team lines up along with the next team according to figure 250. Teams will **rei** to one another simultaneously. Teams then leave the court, and the **senpo** through **taisho** will conduct their matches in the same manner as individuals, see p.167. After each players' match they will return to the waiting area, **seiza**, and remove their **men** and **kote**. After the **taisho**'s match, the entire team will line up again as at the beginning to **rei** to the opposing team.

Figure 250: Ritsu-rei positions and rotation order in team shiai. During team matches, teams will perform a group bow to each other before and after their matches. For the very first team match only the incoming team will line up while afterward, both the incoming and outgoing teams line up together for the group bow. The team that is finishing lines up closest to where the shinpan are lined up, the incoming team lines up next the outgoing team. The players line up in ascending order from first to fifth, with the first player closest to the shinpan. On the incoming team, the first and second players of each team line up and bow while wearing their **men** and carrying their **shinai**. On the outgoing team, the fifth player from each team will line up wearing their **men** and carrying their **shinai**. Teams will perform their group bow approximately three steps from the starting line at the center of the court.

Bogu & Shinai During Rei

For team matches, teams line-up as a group to bow to one another. The **senpo** and **jiho** of the teams who will play immediately line up and bow *wearing full bogu and holding their shinai*. After all of the current team matches are over, the teams again line up as a group to bow to one another. For this final rei the **taisho** for the teams that just finished playing line up *wearing full bogu and holding their shinai*.

Reading the FIK Scoreboard

The following explains of the outcome (a draw) of the team match recorded using the FIK scoreboard format.

Order	Senpo	Jiho	Chuken	Fukusho	Taisho	Referee	
Team Name	Player's Name	Player's Name	Player's Name	Player's Name	Player's Name	Name of Chief Referee	
Red	(M)			(M)	(M)	First Point	
	1	Encho			(T)	Third Point	
White				X		Name of Subreferee	Name of Subreferee
		(Ht)	○○	(H)	(K)	Second Point	
Team Name	Player's Name	Player's Name	Player's Name	Player's Name	Player's Name		

Figure 251: Recording the outcome of a team shiai.

The method of keeping score, how a scoreboard is marked, or if there is an official match scoreboard at all, is up to the court management for the given shiai.

Match one. The red **senpo** scores with a **men** shown as (M). Match time ends with only one point shown by the 1 at the center.

Match two. The regulation time for the match between the **jiho** ends and an overtime round is started as marked by the Encho at the center. The allotted time for **encho** ends and the winner (white) is decided by **hantei** (判定) as marked by (Ht).

Match three. The white **chuken** is awarded the win by **fusen-gachi** (不戦勝ち), i.e., the red player was removed from the **shiai** due to default or incapacitation. This is marked by the ○○ on the white side.

Match four. Red **fukusho** scores **men** marked by the (M) on the red side. White **fukusho** is awarded one point from two fouls, **hansoku** (反則), by the red player recorded as (H) on the white side. The match is a draw, **hikiwake** (引き分け), marked by an X in the center of the scoreboard.

Match five. Each **taisho** commits one foul marked by the ▲ on each side. Red scores **men** and **tsuki** as marked by the (M) and (T) respectively. White scores **kote** as indicated by the (K).

Summary of Flag Signals Used in Shiai

Tournament referees use flags signals to communicate with one another during a match as well as to coordinate the flow and proceedings of the match with court staff and players. Combined with various vocal commands this makes for a very clear and non-intrusive method of communication.

The following is a summary⁹⁹ of the most common flag signals.

⁹⁹ Holt [30] and International Kendo Federation [35]



Figure 252: Common flag signals used by shinpan. From left to right: (Top) neutral, red ippon, white ippon, yame, gogi, (Center) red hansoku, white hansoku, double hansoku, (red) hansoku ikkai, (red) hansoku nikai, (Bottom) wakare, disagree, did not see, and hikiwake.

Appendices

Appendix A: Men & Women in the Practice of Kendo

IN MARTIAL ARTS SUCH as **kendo**, both men and women practice together on an equal basis. There are however some differences between men and women, pertaining to practice, which should be discussed.

The following excerpt¹⁰⁰ discusses men & women practicing martial arts:

100 Lovret [47]

“The single biggest mistake made by male students is insufficient attention to detail. When you are copying a senior don’t just try to emulate their overall appearance; pay careful attention to the most minute points.

Few men have the patience for such careful study. Men tend to have a genetic urge to charge ahead, fight, and win. This is all right if all you want to do is win. If, however, you want to master a martial art you are going to have to slow down and pay attention to what you are doing. Unfortunately, this is something all too many men find to be nearly impossible and the result is strong but very sloppy techniques.

If inattention to detail and excessive energy is the greatest weakness for men, attention to detail but with insufficient energy is the problem for women. If you think this is a sexist remark, pay close attention the next time you watch the finish of a foot race. The men usually vomit or collapse, the women calmly look around for something cool to drink.

*A woman is designed, both psychologically and physiologically, for **long term endurance**. Men are designed for **short term bursts of energy**”.*

While there are always exceptions, on average men and women have, as discussed above, different strengths and weaknesses stemming from our physique, anatomy, and psychological make-ups; this we cannot disregard. These differences give each of us advantages in some areas and disadvantages in others. In order to succeed in martial arts we must acknowledge these differences so we can practice to overcome our weaknesses and make optimal use of our individual strengths¹⁰¹.

101 In an anecdote from Hyams [32], Bruce Lee tells the author that, in the context of learning martial arts, “You’ll never learn anything new unless you are ready to accept yourself with your limitations. You must accept the fact that you are capable in some directions and limited in others.”

Appendix B: FIK Shinai Regulations

Canadian Kendo Federation Shinai Specifications

Effective May 1, 2002

Itto Shinai Specifications				Sakigawa Specifications	
Age (yrs)	Sex	Length ^a	Weight ^b	Length	Width
12-15 yrs	M	$\leq 114cm$	$\geq 440g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 25mm$
	F	$\leq 114cm$	$\geq 400g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 24mm$
15-18 yrs	M	$\leq 117cm$	$\geq 480g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 26mm$
	F	$\leq 117cm$	$\geq 420g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 25mm$
18+ yrs	M	$\leq 120cm$	$\geq 510g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 26mm$
	F	$\leq 120cm$	$\geq 440g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 25mm$

Table 4: Itto shinai specifications.

Nito Shinai Specifications				Sakigawa Specifications	
Shinai	Sex	Length	Weight	Length	Width
Daito	M	$\leq 114cm$	$\geq 440g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 25mm$
	F	$\leq 114cm$	$\geq 400g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 24mm$
Shoto	M	$\leq 62cm$	$280g \leq W \leq 300g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 24mm$
	F	$\leq 62cm$	$250g \leq W \leq 280g$	$\geq 50mm$	$\geq 24mm$

Table 5: Nito shinai specifications.

a – Measured from tip-to-tip. b – Excludes tsuba and tsuba-dome.



The Tsuba must be round, made of leather or synthetic material only, and have a diameter $\leq 90mm$.

Figure 253: (Left) Leather and (Center) synthetic tsuba, (Right) saki-gawa.

Appendix C: Kendo Grading Requirements

CKF Grading Requirements, Effective Jan. 2013

Rank	Min. Practice Periods	Min. Age
1 Kyu	N/A	N/A
1 (Sho) dan	Three months after granting of first kyu	14 years and over
2 (Ni) dan	One year after granting of first dan	16 years and over
3 (San) dan	Two years after granting of second dan	18 years and over
4 (Yon) dan	Three years after granting of third dan	21 years and over
5 (Go) dan	Four years after granting of fourth dan	25 years and over
6 (Roku) dan	Five years after granting of fifth dan	30 years and over
7 (Nana) dan	Six years after granting of sixth dan	36 years and over
8 (Hachi) dan	Ten years after granting of seventh dan	48 years and over
Rank Applied For: Kendo no Kata & Kihon Bokuto Waza Requirements		
First kyu	Kihon bokuto waza 1–9	
First dan	Tachi kata 1–3	
Second dan	Tachi kata 1–5	
Third dan	Tachi kata 1–7	
Fourth dan & up	Tachi kata 1–7 & kodachi kata 1–3	

Table 6: The CKF age, kata requirements, & interim training period for each rank.

Written exam. The following are questions used for the 2017 written exam required by the Canadian Kendo Federation.

Shodan

Answer all of the following:

1. Briefly describe the concept of **ki ken tai ichi**.
2. What is the origin of the meditation (**mokuso**) before practice: Shintoism, Confucianism, or Zen Buddhism? What is the purpose of **mokuso** in modern kendo?
3. List and briefly explain three (3) benefits of **kiai** (**kakegoe**).
4. List and briefly describe three (3) types of kendo footwork. What is the purpose of each type of footwork?
5. Briefly describe the importance of **zanshin**.

Nidan

Answer any three (3) of the following:

1. List and briefly describe the five (5) basic **kamae**.
2. Briefly describe the three (3) basic **maai**.
3. Briefly describe four (4) types of kendo footwork.
4. Which part of the **shinai** is used to hit: **datotsubu** or **datotsubui**? Why are we required to use this part of the **shinai** to score?
5. Name and briefly describe four (4) prohibited acts (**hansoku**) in **shiai**. What is the reason these acts are penalized?
6. List and describe three (3) important safety considerations regarding **shinai** maintenance.

Sandan

Answer any three (3) of the following:

1. List and briefly describe five (5) of the elements which constitute **yuko-datotsu**.
2. Briefly describe four (4) types of **suburi**.
3. Describe **fumi-komi**. What is the purpose of **fumi-komi**?
4. Describe **seme**. What is accomplished through **seme**?
5. What is the origin of **shinzen ni rei** before practice: Shintoism, Confucianism, or Zen Buddhism? What is the purpose of **shinzen ni rei** in modern kendo?
6. List and briefly describe three (3) categories of counter-attack techniques (**oji waza**). Include a specific example of each category.

Yondan

Answer any three (3) of the following:

1. Describe the benefits of **kendo no kata** and its importance for **shinai keiko**.
2. What distinguishes kendo from being a sport?
3. Why do you value **rei-gi** (good manners)?
4. Provide explanations of all of the following concepts and their value in kendo:
 - (a) **sutemi**
 - (b) **te-no-uchi**
 - (c) **hasuji**
 - (d) **enzan no metsuke**
 - (e) **shugyo**
5. What is your understanding of **zanshin**?
6. List and explain five (5) important points when judging as **shinpan**.

Godan

Please select one question from each section to answer.

1. Kendo pedagogy and budo concepts
Answer one of the following six questions:
 - (a) Explain five (5) important points when teaching kendo to beginners.
 - (b) Explain the concept of **senpai-kohai** and its importance to kendo.
 - (c) Explain the concept of **shu-ha-ri**.
 - (d) Describe how budo can serve as a “modern ethical system”.
 - (e) Describe how kendo can serve as a means of self-improvement.
 - (f) How can kendo be an “instrument of peace in the world”?
2. Tournament Kendo
Answer one of the following questions:
 - (a) Explain your ideas about the “best opportunity to strike”.
 - (b) Explain the difference between: **sen-no-sen** and **go-no-sen**.
 - (c) Explain the responsibilities of shushin during the following shiai conditions: **tsuba-zeriai**, **gogi**, and **fusen-gachi**.
 - (d) Explain your ideas about kendo as an Olympic sport.
3. Kendo no kata and kihon
Answer one of the following four questions:
 - (a) Explain briefly the three (3) concepts: **iri-mi**, **kuraizume**, and **kigurai**.
 - (b) Explain the motion of the blade in: **uke nagasu** and **surinagasu**.
 - (c) Explain the important elements of **te-no-uchi**.
 - (d) List and explain five (5) elements that are common to all kendo kamae.

Appendix D: Measurements for Bogu

EACH PERSON’S ARMOUR IS made to fit that individuals body type. Depending on the quality of **bogu** you get, the **bogu** may be designed to match your body measurements exactly (“custom made”) or the nearest available approximation will be used (“ready-made”).

The following measurements are what is normally required for purchasing **bogu**, both custom and ready-made.

- A: The circumference around the head at the forehead.
- B: The circumference around the head from the chin to the crown, in front of the ears.
- C: Distance from chin to the eyes.

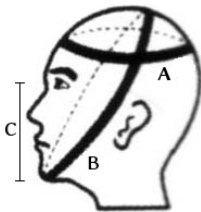


Figure 254: Measurements for the men.

- A: The length around the palm measured at the “webbing” of the thumb.
- B: The length from the wrist to the top of the middle finger.

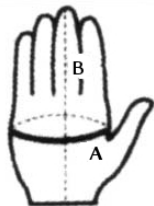


Figure 255: Measurements for the kote.

- A: The width of the **do**. This length is equal to the width across ones waist, not around, plus approximately ten centimeters.

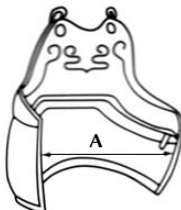


Figure 256: Measurements for the do.

Secondary Measurements
Total height
Body weight
Waist circumference
Chest circumference
Face type: long or round

Table 7: Secondary measurements.

Appendix E: Counting, Enumeration, & Pronunciation

Counting		Enumerations		Basic Pronunciation	
English	Japanese	English	Japanese	Standard Vowels	Pronunciation
One	Ichi	First	Ipponme	a	“ah”
Two	Ni	Second	Nihonme	i	“ee” (short)
Three	San	Third	Sanbonme	u	“ooh” (short)
Four	Shi	Fourth	Yonhonme	e	“eh”
Five	Go	Fifth	Gohonme	o	“oh”
Six	Roku	Sixth	Ropponme	Vowel Combinations	Pronunciation
Seven	Shichi	Seventh	Nanahonme		“eye”
Eight	Hachi	Eighth	Happonme		“eye”
Nine	Kyu	Ninth	Kyuhonme		“ay”
Ten	Ju	Tenth	Juponme		“ee” (long)

Table 8: Counting, Enumerations, & Pronunciation.

Pronunciation. Pronunciation of Japanese terms is relatively easy once you understand the basic phonetics of the language.

- In general, consonants are pronounced the same as they would be in the English language, with a few exceptions.

Some consonant sounds are altered, usually if they occur after a vowel sound. The most common of these, in the context of **kendo** is the change of a “K” sound to a “G”, e.g., **keiko** becomes **geiko** or **kamae** becomes **gamae**. Specifically, one would say **kakari geiko** v.s. **kakari keiko** as the “K” in **keiko** occurs after the “I” in **kakari**. Other examples of alterations are “Tsu” becoming “Zu”, e.g., **ire-zuki** v.s. **ire-tsuki**, and “Se” becoming “Ze” as in **tsuba-zeriai**.

- Vowels are similar, but slightly different than in English, see Table 8.
- There is not as much, if any, emphasis on syllables as there is in the English language. For example, using the word **kata**, an English speaker would generally place an emphasis on the first syllable, pronouncing it as “KA-ta”, whereas in Japanese it would be more monotonic and pronounced “ka-ta”.
- There are very few exceptions to the way Japanese terms are pronounced. In fact, being familiar with just the most basic of pronunciation rules for consonants and vowels will allow you to pronounce most, if not all, terms in this text.

On-Yomi & Kun-Yomi

There are two ways to pronounce kanji in the Japanese language; the Chinese pronunciation (On-yomi) and the Japanese pronunciation (Kun-yomi). This leads to some terms being pronounced one way in one context and another way in a different context. This is the origin of the terms *Shi* & *Yon* for the number four and the terms *Shichi* & *Nana* for the number seven; they are different pronunciations for the same word.

Glossary

Dojo Courtesies

Domo Arigato Gozaimashita :
(どうもありがとうございます) “*Thank you*” (very polite context).

Onegai-Shimasu : (御願います) “*If you please*” (practice with/teach me).

Dojo Commands

Hajime : (始め) “*Begin/start*”.

Kamae-To : (構え刀) “*Assume your stance*”.

Men (wo) Tore : (面を取れ) “*Take off your men*”.

Men (wo) Tsuke : (面を付け) “*Put on your men*”.

Mokuso : (黙想) “*Meditation*”.

Osame-To : (納め刀) “*Put away your weapon*”.

Otagai ni Rei : (お互いに礼) “*Bow to your peers*”.

Shomen ni Rei : (正面に礼) “*Bow to the shomen*”.

Seiza : (正座) Assume **seiza**, the formal sitting position.

Seiretsu : (整列) “*Line up*”.

Sensei ni Rei : (先生に礼) “*Bow to the sensei*”.

Sonkyo : (蹲踞) Assume **sonkyo**, the formal crouching position.

Tai-To : (帯刀) Bring your **shinai** to the ready position at your hip.

Yame : (止め) “*Stop*”.

Yasume : (休め) “*Break/rest period*”.

Shiai Terms & Commands

Chuken : (中堅) Third player on a team match.

Encho : (延長) Overtime period. **Encho** is “sudden death”, i.e. the first point wins. There is usually no time limit during **Encho**.

Fukusho : (副将) Fourth player on a team match.

Fukushin : (副審) Sub-referee during shiai.

Fusen-Gachi : (不戦勝ち) Win through default/disqualification.

Gogi : (合議) Judges conference. Players **osame-to**, step back to the outer edge of the court and assume **sonkyo** until the **gogi** is over.

Hajime : (始め) Begin a match.

Hansoku : (反則) Penalty. Match stops, and players return to their starting positions. Judges will announce the offense.

Hansoku Ikkai : (反則一回) 1st penalty.

Hansoku Nikai : (反則二回) 2nd penalty. A second penalty results in one point being awarded to the opponent.

Hantei : (判定) Judges decision.

Hikiwake : (引き分け) Match is a tie. (applicable to team matches)

Jiho : (次鋒) Second player on a team match.

Jikan Desu : (時間です) Time keepers call to indicate “time-up”. Players return to starting positions.

Mejirushi : (目印) Colored flag worn on backs of the players. Also termed a “tasuki”.

Nihonme : (二本目) Begin round two.

Senpo : (先鋒) First player on a team match.

Shinpan : (審判) A judge or referee in a tournament.

Shinpan-Cho : (審判長) The referee director of the tournament (head referee).

Shinpan-Shunin : (審判主任) The court specific referee director.

Shobu : (勝負) Begin final round (of a match).

Shobu-Ari : (勝負あり) Match point. Players assume **sonkyo**, **osame-to**, and exit the court area.

Shushin : (主審) The lead judge in a court during shiai.

Taisho : (大将) Fifth player on a team match.

Tasuki : Another name for the **mejirushi**.

Wakare : (分かれ) Command to separate players back to **issoku itto no maai**, but maintaining relative positions in the court.

Yame : (止め) Stop the match. Players return to starting positions.

General & Common Terms

A

Age-To : (上げ刀) A **kata-te** variant of **jodan no kamae**.

Ai : (1) (prefix) (相) “*Mutual, balanced, joint*”. (2) (suffix) (合い) “*Union, integration, match (together)*”.

Ai-te : (相手) “*Opponent*”.

Ai-Kakari Geiko : (相掛稽古) “*Mutual attack practice*”. Two **kendoka do kakari geiko** together.

Ai-Uchi : (相打ち) “*Mutual strike*”. Commonly interpreted as a “simultaneous strike(s)”.

Ashi : (足) “*Foot*” or “*leg*”.

Ashi-Gamae : (足構え) “Foot Position”. This term is used to refer to the position of ones feet.

Ashi-Sabaki : (足捌き) (lit.) “Foot/leg handle or deal with”. A term used to refer to “footwork” of any type.

Ayumi-Ashi : (歩み足) “Walking foot”. This style of footwork refers to the normal walking motion where the right and left feet pass each other in an obvious “right-left-right” succession.

B

Bogu : (防具) **Kendo** armour. See also **men**, **kote**, **do**, and **tare**.

Bokuto : (木刀) “Wooden sword”. In **kendo** the **bokuto** is most often used to practice **kata**. Also sometimes referred to as a **bokken** (木剣).

Bokuto Waza : (木刀技) A series of forms created to practice **kendo** fundamentals with the **bokuto**. They are also a means through which the **kendoka** can understand the link between **shinai kendo** and a **katana**.

Bushi : (武士) “War or military gentleman”. A samurai or, more commonly translated as, warrior.

Bushido : (武士道) “The way of the samurai”. A code of ethics, morals, and conduct designed for the samurai.

C

Chi no Kamae : (地の構え) The “**kamae** of earth”. See **gedan no kamae**.

Chika-ma : (近間) A distance (from your opponent) that is shorter than **issoku itto no maai**.

Chisai : (小さい) “Small”.

Chisai Waza : (小さい技) “Small techniques”. A term used to refer to small strikes.

Chudan no Kamae : (中段の構え) “Mid level” **kamae**. **Chudan** is known as the “**kamae** of water” due to its adaptability for offensive and defensive **waza**. **Chudan** is the fundamental **kamae** in **kendo**.

Chudan Hanmi no Kamae : (中段半身の構え) A variant of **chudan no kamae** while using the **kodachi** in the **nihon kendo no kata**. See also **hanmi no kamae**.

Connection : A mental and physical connection with the opponent. The mental connection implies one must have a perception as to how the opponent will act to a given situation, their intents, as well

as perception of their level of focus, **ki ken tai ichi**, and **zanshin**. The physical connection allows one to react to physical movements, maintain distance, adjust **kamae**, etc... A connection allows you to mirror the opponent mentally and physically, keeping a balance until a **suki** is found or created by oneself or ones opponent.

D

Daito : (大刀) The long **shinai** used in **nito no kamae**.

Dan : (段) “Step” or “level”.

Dan-I : (段位) This refers specifically to the set of **dan** ranks in **kendo**, commonly interpreted as “black belt”. **Dan** ranks range from first to eighth.

Datotsu : (打突) A “strike” or “thrust”.

Datotsu-Bu : (打突部) The portion of the **shinai** strikes are made with; the **mono-uchi**.

Datotsu-Bui : (打突部位) Portion of the **bogu** where one may strike.

De : (出) “Coming out”, i.e., something is being initiated or started.

Dead : A term used to describe ones weapon when its ability for offensive and defensive techniques has been eliminated. Usually the result of improper grip or striking technique, or if one has had their strike effectively parried via some type of defensive **waza**. Ones weapon also becomes **dead** if they do not have proper **zanshin**.

Dead Hands : Similar to your weapon becoming **dead**, however in this case it is caused by your hands or forearms being too close together during or after striking. Specifically the spacing required between your forearm and the **tsuka** for proper **kamae** is lost and the wrists are fully arced forward. When one has **dead hands** the left hand will be level with, or above, the right wrist during a strike.

Debana Waza : (出ばな技) Techniques used to strike as an attack is being initiated or “just coming out”.

Do : (1) (道) “Do”, as in **kendo**: “the way”, i.e. a “way” of enlightenment, or of bettering oneself. (2) (胴) “Do”, as in **bogu**: the abdomen target/protector.

Do-Chikawa : (胴乳皮) Leather loops on the **do-kawa** used to attach the **do-himo**.

Do-Himo : (胴紐) The cords used to tie the **do**.

Do-Mune : (胴胸) The upper chest portion of the **do**.

Do-Kawa : (胴皮) The lower portion of the **do**; the striking area.

Dojo : (道場) “Practice hall”. The place where one practices **kendo**.

E

Enzan no Metsuke : (遠山の目付け) “Fixing your eyes on a distant mountain”. See **metsuke**.

F

Four Sicknesses : The four sicknesses (**shi-kai**), or admonitions, in **kendo** are **ku** (恐怖) “fear”, **gi** (疑) “doubt”, **kyu** (驚) “surprise”, and **waku** (惑) “confusion”.

Fumi-Komi : (踏み込み) The shortened, and almost exclusively used, term for **fumi-komi ashi** meaning “lunging footwork”. With **fumi-komi** one uses a large, lunging **okuri-ashi** style footwork. This type of footwork is one of the exceptions where a **kendoka** will partially forgo using **suri-ashi** as the leading foot will momentarily leave the ground near the end of the **fumi-komi** step. This type of footwork is well known in **kendo** as the one that makes the “stomping” sound as the **kendoka**’s foot claps the floor.

G

Gedan no Kamae : (下段の構え) The “low level” **kamae**. **Gedan** is known as the “**kamae** of earth”. **Gedan** is considered a physically defensive **kamae** however a strong and aggressive spirit is required for it to be successful.

Gedan Hanmi no Kamae : (下段半身の構え) A variation of **gedan no kamae** when using the **kodachi** in the **kendo no kata**. See also **hanmi no kamae**.

Geiko : (稽古) See **keiko**.

Gi : (着) The traditional practice top worn in **kendo**. Also known as a **kendo-gi**, **do-gi**, or **keiko-gi**.

Go Sen no Sen : See **mitsu no sen**.

Gyaku : (逆) “Reversed” or “opposite”.

Gyo : (行) See **shin-gyo-so**.

H

Ha : (刃) The edged portion (blade) of a Japanese sword.

Hakama : (袴) The traditional practice pants in **kendo**.

Hanmi : (半身) “Half body”.

Hanmi Kamae : (半身構え) “Half body stance”. Referring to ones torso when assuming a **hanmi kamae** as it is turned or twisted such that only half of it is exposed to the opponent. A **hanmi kamae** is a defensive position used to minimize exposure, i.e., targets, to the opponent.

Hara : (腹) The “intestines” or “gut”. Located three fingers width below the navel.

Harai : (払い) From the verb Harau: to “sweep away” or “brush off”.

Harai Waza : (払い技) “Sweeping aside” waza. A waza where one pushes the opponents weapon aside, breaking their **kamae**, to create a **suki**.

Hasaki : (刃先) A sword’s “cutting edge”.

Hasso no Kamae : (八相の構え) **Hasso** is known as “the **kamae** of wood” or the “eight position stance” and is a variant of **jodan no kamae**.

Haya Suburi : (速素振り) “Quick” or “swift” **suburi**. Commonly referred to as jumping **suburi**, this exercise is a standard warm up and endurance drill in all **dojos**.

Hei-ho : (兵法) “Strategy, tactics, art of war”.

Heijoshin : (平常心) “Common or everyday mind”. In **kendo** a basic definition of this is keeping one’s mind in a normal state, unaffected by things around you; your mindset during regular or common situations.

Hi no Kamae : (火の構え) The “**kamae** of fire”. See **jodan no kamae**.

Hidari : (左) “Left” (direction).

Hidari Shizentai : See **shizentai**.

Hidari-Te : (左手) “Left-handed”.

Hiki-Age : (引き上げ) “Pulling up”. **Hiki-age** in **kendo** refers to somebody pulling up their hands upon hitting a target, e.g., after striking **uchi-komi shomen** the **kendoka** lifts their hands overhead as if in **migi jodan** during their **zanshin**. This is considered improper as the **shinai** is no longer is the correct position to make a “cut”. A very subtle exception for **hiki-age** is with **hiki-waza**. The **zanshin** for men when doing **hiki-waza** purposely brings the **shinai** up into the **migi jodan** position during **zanshin**. However, it is crucial that this **hiki-age** is done *after* the **kendoka** has made their cut, i.e., the **kendoka** strikes men and moves backward with the **shinai** in the proper “cutting position” *first*, then assumes **jodan** as they continue their **zanshin**.

Hiki-Waza : (ひき技) Techniques where one strikes while moving backward. Also termed “**Hikibana Waza**”.

Hikibana Waza : (ひきばな技) See **hiki-waza**.

Himo : (紐) “String”, “cord”, or “strap”.

Hiraki : (開き) From the verb **hiraku** meaning “to open” or “unfold”.

Hiraki-Ashi : (開き足) “Opening Foot”. This type of footwork is a circular side step to the left or right.

Hira-uchi : (平打ち) To strike with the flat of the **shinai**.

Hodoku : (解く) A Japanese verb meaning “to loosen”. This term is used to refer to the breaking of **kamae** at the end of each **kata** or **bokuto waza**.

I

Ichidan Suburi : (一段素振り) “One step” **suburi**.

In-Yo : (陰陽) The Japanese reading of the Chinese concept of **yin-yang**.

Ire-Zuki : See **nayashi ire-zuki**.

Iri-Mi : (入り身) (lit.) “Entering body/person/blade”, usually translated as “Entering directly”. In **kendo** this is the fundamental intent, mindset, and motion of one using the **kodachi**. The action of spiritually threatening and physically moving into your opponents **maai** (to attack).

Issoku Itto no Maai : (一足一刀の間合) “The one-step-one-sword distance”. The distance at which one can launch an attack (or evade one) by taking just one step. This is the fundamental **maai** of **kendo**. While there are approximations to what this **maai** is, usually described as the distance where you and your opponents sword tips cross, each individual person will have their own unique **issoku itto no maai** simply due to the fact that each person will have a different “one-step” distance. This distance is found through regular practice and continuously focusing on attacking ones opponent from as far away from them as possible. The maximum distance you can be away from the opponent, while still being able to take one step in and hit effectively, is your **issoku itto no maai**.

J

Ji-Geiko : (自稽古) Free sparring practice. See also **keiko**.

Jin-Bu : (刃部) The “blade edge” of the **shinai**.

Jishu-Geiko : (自主稽古) “Self-study”. Perhaps more appropriately “self motivated study”. To actively learn by watching, reading, contemplating what was taught, etc.

Jodan no Kamae : (上段の構え) The “high level” **kamae**, **jodan** is known as the “**kamae** of fire”. As **jodan** is very spiritually aggressive, the terms **ten no kamae** and **hi no kamae** are its other names specifically used to describe the spirit required. It is said the spiritual component of this **kamae** determines its success much more so than ones physical prowess.

Jo-ge Buri : (上下振り) “Up-down swing”. A very basic form of swing practice used to teach the beginner how to swing in large motions along their centerline. Often used as a warm up to a **kendo** practice.

K

Kaeshi Waza : (返し技) “Return” waza. These are techniques when one receives the opponent’s strike with their **shinai** and then *immediately* counter attack.

Kakari Geiko : (掛稽古) “Attack practice”, i.e., an “all out” sparring practice. This drill is very common in **kendo dojos** as it builds endurance and spirit. **Kendoka** attempt to attack as quickly and as continuously as possible while still maintaining proper form and **zanshin**. With **kakari geiko** the **zanshin** is to be more spiritual than physical.

Kakari-Te : (掛手) “Attacking hand”. In **kendo**, the **kakari-te** is the one who attacks or who is striking during drill practice.

Kamae : (構え) “Stance” or “position”. In the context of **kendo**, when one assumes a **kamae** the term has an obvious physical meaning, but it also has mental or spiritual implications. Meaning, assuming a **kamae** doesn’t mean to just hold your **shinai** or **bokuto** in a certain position but that you must also assume a certain spiritual attitude. Proper physical and spiritual “position” is what makes effective **kamae**.

Kane : (金) “Metal”.

Kakegoe : (掛け声) “Yell” (used to encourage activity). Although having very different meanings, in **kendo** this is often interchangeable with **kiai**.

Kane no Kamae : (金の構え) The “**kamae** of metal”. See **waki-gamae**.

Kata : (形) See **nihon kendo no kata**.

Katana : (刀) “Sword”. Also pronounced as **to**, as in **bokuto**.

Kata-Te : (片手) “One-handed”.

Kata-Te Waza : (片手技) “One hand” techniques.

Katsugi Waza : (担ぎ技) “Shouldering the sword” technique. The purpose of the shouldering motion is to create a *suki* in your opponent while still being in an effective position to attack.

Katsu : (喝) The equivalent of a *kiai* shout used to awaken oneself spiritually (in a Zen sense). Also often referred to as a “kwatz”.

Keiko : (稽古) “Practice”, “training”, or “study”. Replaced with *geiko* depending on context as part of Japanese pronunciation rules, this term is most often used by *kendoka* to imply sparring practice in *bogu*.

Ken o Korosu : (剣を殺す) “Kill their sword”. See *san-satsu-ho*.

Kendo : (剣道) “The way of the sword”.

Kendo-Gu : (剣道具) “Kendo equipment”. This consists of the *hakama* & *gi*, the *bogu*, and the *shinai* or *bokuto*.

Kendoka : (剣道家) A *kendo* student.

Kensen : (剣先) The tip of the *shinai* or *bokuto*.

Kera : (けら) The padded area on the back of the palm of the *kote*.

Ki : (気) “Mind”, “spirit”, or “energy”.

Ki Ken Tai Ichi : (気剣体一致) “Energy or spirit”, “sword”, “body” “(done) as one”. Simultaneous action of the spirit, sword, and body of a *kendoka*. A fundamental principle in *kendo* related to striking properly and effectively.

Ki o Korosu : (気を殺す) “Kill their spirit”. See *san-satsu-ho*.

Kiai : (気合い) “Energy integration”. Expression of one's spirit and intent through the voice.

Kiarasoi : (気争い) “Spirit of mutual combat”. Overcoming an opponent through a vigorous spirit, pushing forward (physically) to break his guard.

Kigurai : (気位) “Noble presence, bearing, pride, dignity”.

Kihaku : (気迫) “Spiritual force”.

Kihon : (基本) “Basic”, “fundamental”.

Kihon Bokuto Waza : (基本木刀技) See *bokuto waza*.

Kikai : (気海) “The sea of energy”.

Kiri-Kaeshi : (切り返し) “Returning cuts”. A coordinated practice of *men*, *tai-atari*, and *sayu-men* with an opponent. This is one of the most important drills in *kendo*. Often done as both the initial and final drill of a *kendoka*'s *bogu* practice.

Kiri-Otoshi : (切り落とし) “Knock down while cutting”. A *waza* for when two strikes occur in a potential *ai-uchi*, one strike pushes the other aside with the *shinogi*, by the act of cutting, and lands on the opponent.

Ko-Dare : (小垂) The small inner flaps on the *tare*.

Kobushi : (拳) “Fist”.

Kodachi : (小太刀) The short sword used in the *nihon kendo no kata*.

Kohai : (後輩) A “junior”. This is a relative term relating to experience in *kendo* and not necessarily one's age.

Kokoro : (心) “Spirit” or “mind”.

Kokoro no Kamae : (心の構え) A “spiritual” or “mental stance”. This refers to a mindset, or attitude.

Komono : (小物) A small piece of leather attached to the *tsuru* used in tying the *tsuru* to the *tsuka-gawa*.

Koshi : (腰) “hips, waist, lower back”. *Koshi* is often translated as simply “hips” however it has a broader meaning than this and perhaps a better translation is the term “core”.

Koshiita : (腰板) “Back or waist plate”. The firm, trapezoid shaped plate on the back of the *hakama*.

Kote : (小手) The “forearm” target. Also the protective glove worn in practice.

Kote-Gashira : (小手頭) The finger portion of the *kote*.

Kuraizume : (位詰め) To seize with superior poise and spirit. In the *kata* this refers to the act of invading your opponents *maai* with the feeling of walking forward in an unstoppable thrust.

Kyu : (級) “Rank”, “class”. In *kendo* this is used as a second ranking system for beginners, i.e., those who are below the *dan* ranks. *Kyu* ranks usually begin at sixth and range to first, however younger *kendoka* may begin at tenth.

M

Ma : (間) “Space”. Used in terms referring to distance or spacing.

Maai : (間合) “Spatial integration”. Usually interpreted as “distance” in *kendo*, proper *maai* takes into account a number of different factors than simply physical distancing. Speed (your own), opponent speed, reaction time, power, distance to opponent, and *kamae* are all factors of *maai*.

Mae : (前) “Front” or “forward” (direction).

Maki : (巻き) (n) “Winding”, (v) “to roll up”, “to hoist” or “lift up”.

Maki-Kaeshi : (巻き返し) The *kaeshi waza* used in the fourth *kendo kata*. The *waza* is done by lifting up the *bokuto* upward from underneath the incoming thrust; the *bokuto* begins on the left hand side of the thrust and ends on the right, at which point the counter strike is made.

Men : (面) Helmet, head target.

Men-Buton : (面ぶとん) The cloth portion of the *men* covering the head.

Men-Chikawa : (面乳皮) The small leather pieces the *men-himo* are (usually) attached to when fixing them onto the *men*. There are two different types of *men-chikawa* used depending on the method used for wearing the *men*, i.e., *kanto* or *kansai* style.

Men-Dare : (面垂) The large flaps of the *men-buton* which come out over the shoulders.

Men-Gane : (面金) The metal grill that covers the face in the *men*.

Men-Himo : (面紐) The strings used to tie the *men*.

Men-Tate-Gane : (面縦金) The large vertical bar of the *men-gane*.

Men-Yoko-Gane : (面横金) The horizontal bars of the *men-gane*.

Metsuke : (目付け) “Point of observation”. The full term is “*enzan no metsuke*” or “fixing your eyes on a distant mountain”. This term, in *kendo*, refers to “where you should look” while engaging an opponent. In essence you liken looking at your opponent to looking at a mountain with the opponents eyes being the peak. If you simply focus on just the peak, you'll not be able to see an entire mountain. Instead, if you look toward the peak the rest of the mountain easily comes into view.

Migi : (右) “Right” (direction).

Migi Shizentai : See *shizentai*.

Migi-Te : (右手) “Right-handed”.

Mitori Geiko : (見取り稽古) “Observational practice”. Quite literally, learning by watching.

Mitsu no Sen : (三つの先) “*The three sens.*” This refers to the three initiatives in which to react to your opponent. The first, **sen sen no sen** (先々の先), refers to having prior knowledge of your opponents intentions and, using this knowledge, draw out their attack capitalizing on it. The second, **sen no sen** (先の先), refers to attacking at the very moment your opponent is about to attack. Third is **go sen no sen** (後先の先). This refers to counter-striking your opponent after they have made their attack. The opponent is countered as in sen sen no sen, but knowledge of the opponents intentions are not known beforehand.

Mizu no Kamae : (水の構え) The “*kamae of water*”. See **chudan no kamae**.

Moku no Kamae : (木の構え) The “*kamae of wood*”. See **hasso no kamae**.

Mono-Uchi : “*Hitting part*”. The upper ¼ length of a **shinai** measured from the **kensen** down. See also **datotsu-bu**. From All Japan Kendo Federation [4], “*the part of the blade of a sword which cuts the best, said to be about 10cm from the tip*”.

Moro-Te : (諸手) “*Two handed*”.

Motodachi : (元立ち) Moto, “*origin or cause*”, tachi, “*standing*”. The **motodachi** is the one who creates or offers an opening for the **kakari-te** to practice some type of **waza**.

Motodachi Geiko : (元立ち稽古) Also termed **uchi-komi geiko**, this is when a **kendoka** strikes targets offered by an opponent.

Mu : (無) A prefix indicating a negation in the Japanese Language.

Mudra : The **mudra** (Sanskrit: मुद्रा, “*gesture*”) are hand positions used to symbolize various Buddhist concepts and meanings. There are a number of such hand positions, however in **kendo** we use but one: the **zenjo-In**, the **mudra** of meditation during the brief period of **mokuso** before and after practice.

Mu-Gamae : (無構え) “*No kamae*” or the “*void kamae*”. This stance expresses a sense of spiritual superiority where an overtly physical **kamae** is unnecessary; one is able to stand ready with their spirit or presence alone.

Mune : (1) (棟) The top (blunt) side of a Japanese sword, also referred to as “*mine*”. (2) (胸) “*Chest*”. The upper chest portion of the **do**; **do-mune**.

Mune-Chikawa : (胸乳皮) Leather loops on the **do-mune** used to attach the **himo**.

Mushin : (無心) “*No mind*”. In very basic terms, **mushin** is acting with natural, calm state of mind, i.e., not distracted by over thinking about what to do or the effects of an action. It is a related concept to **heijoshin**

N

Nafuda : (名札) The name tag worn on a **kendoka**'s **o-dare**. Also known as a **zekken**.

Nakayui : (中結) The leather tie on the **shinai** ¼ the length of the **shinai** from the top.

Naname Buri : (斜め振り) “*Diagonal swing*”. Similar to **jo-ge buri** but with the strikes angled at about 30° to 45°. Also used as a warm up to a practice.

Nayashi : (萎し) From the verb **na(eru)**: *wither, droop; to be lame*..

Nayashi Ire-Zuki : (萎し入れ突き) This is the full name for **shidachi**'s parry in the third **tachi kata**. **Ire-zuki** is when one allows a thrust to be made, literally “to let (the thrust) in”. **Nayashi ire-zuki** then is to allow the a thrust to be made and then to make it weak through parrying.

Nidan Suburi : (二段素振り) “*Two step*” **suburi**.

Nidan Waza : (二段技) “*Two step*” **waza**.

Nihon Kendo no Kata : (日本剣道の形) “*The Japanese kendo forms*”. A set of formal movements and techniques which form the basis of modern **kendo**. Usually referred to as simply **kata**.

Nito : (二刀) The common abbreviation when referring to **nito kamae**.

Nito Kamae : (二刀構え) “*Two sword*” **kamae**. In **kendo** one uses two **shinai**; the **daito** (long sword), and the **shoto** (short sword).

Nuki : (抜き) From the verb **nukeru**: to “*escape*”.

Nuki Waza : (抜き技) **Waza** where you simultaneously dodge a strike and execute a counter attack.

O

O-Dare : (大垂) The large outer flaps on the **tare**.

Obi : (帯) “*Belt*”. The **obi** is a belt that is worn (optionally) with the **hakama** and **gi**. Traditionally the **obi** is the belt that held the samurais sword at their waist.

Oji Waza : (応じ技) Counter-attacking **waza**, i.e., techniques used in response to your opponents actions.

Okuri-Ashi : (送り足) From the verb **okuru** meaning “*to send out*” or “*see off*”. The standard footwork in **kendo** where one steps “right-left” in succession using **suri-ashi**.

Omote : (表) “*Front*”, “*outside*”, or “*visible side*”. In **kendo** this usually refers to the left side of the **shinai** or **bokuto**.

Orishiki Do : (折り敷き胴) “*Kneeling Do*”. This is a **do** strike executed by kneeling v.s. the usual **okuri-ashi zanshin**. It is essentially an unused **waza** in modern **kendo** save for the **nihon kendo no kata**.

R

Rei : (礼) (1) “*Bow*”, or the act of bowing. (2) A term referring to etiquette in general, i.e., **rei-gi** and **rei-ho**.

Rei-Gi : (礼儀) “*Bow/thanks rule/ceremony*”. **Rei-gi** refers to the reasons behind **rei**, i.e., “*why*”, “*who*”, and “*when*” we are to perform the actions of **rei-ho**.

Rei-Ho : (礼法) “*Bow/thanks law/principle*”. The systemization of etiquette and formality.

Renzoku : (連続) “*Continuous, repeating*”.

Riai : (理合) “*Principles behind*”. The condition under which an action or actions are rational, purposeful.

Ritsui-Rei : (立礼) “*Standing*” **rei**.

S

Sage-To : (下げ刀) “*Hanging sword*”. The relaxed standing position with the **shinai** or **bokuto** held at ones side.

Saki-Gawa : (先革) Leather cap on the end of the **shinai**.

Saki-Gomu : (先ゴム) Rubber or plastic insert inside the tip of the **shinai**.

Samurai : (侍) See **bushi**.

Sandan Suburi : (三段素振り) “*Three step*” **suburi**.

San-Satsu-Ho : (三冊法) Three laws for defeating an opponent; kill their sword, kill their spirit, and kill their techniques.

San-Po-Mamori : (三方守り) “*Three point defense*”. This is a defensive position, popularized in **shiai**, used to block attacks from the opponent toward **men**, **kote**, and **migi do** simultaneously. This usually signifies a momentary loss of **sen**, a break in the connection with the opponent, succumbing to one or more of the four sicknesses, or unable to endure the opponent's **seme**. While potentially effective, **san-po-mamori** leaves **gyaku do** open for attack. More importantly it conveys to the opponent very clearly the state of mind of the user.

Sayu-Men : (左右面) An angled strike to the upper left or right **men**.

Seigan no Kamae : (正眼の構え) (lit.) "Correct eye" **kamae**, often translated as "aiming at the eyes". A variant of **chudan no kamae**, **seigan** is normally used in response to **jodan no kamae** as it offers better **kote** protection and facilitates the use of certain **oji waza** against strikes made from **jodan**.

Seiza : (正座) "Correct sitting" (position). The Japanese formal seated position.

Seme : (攻め) (n) An "attack" or "offense". From the verb *semeru* meaning "to attack", "to assault". **Seme** is often interpreted as "pressure". This refers to a spiritual or mental pressure, not an actual physical force. If a **kendoka** can pressure their opponent spiritually, they will be able to produce **suki** in their opponent creating an opportunity to strike. Effective **seme** stems from one's spirit, form, posture, **kamae**, and is the product of many years of diligent practice.

Seme-Ai : (攻め合い) (n) "Union of pressure". **Seme-ai** is the point at which two opponents are actively pressuring one another attempting to find or create an opening to attack.

Seme-Komu : (攻め込む) "Pressuring step". The forward step taken by **shidachi**, as a part of **iri-mi**, during the second **kodachi kata**.

Seme-Kuzushi : (攻め崩し) "Unbalancing or disruptive pressure". **Seme** applied to the opponent that unbalances them, disrupting them either mentally or physically.

Senpai : (先輩) "Senior or older graduate". This is a relative term relating to experience in **kendo** and not necessarily to one's age.

Sen : (先) (n) "First move", is synonymous with the term "sente" (先手) (n), "first move, forestalling, initiative". **Sente** in **kendo** refers specifically to an attack used to seize the initiative against the opponent.

Sen no Sen : See **mitsu no sen**.

Sen Sen no Sen : See **mitsu no sen**.

Sensei : (先生) "Teacher".

Shiai : (試合) "Match, game, bout, contest". A **kendo** match where points are scored.

Shiai-Jo : (試合場) "Match area". The court a **shiai** is held in.

Shidachi : (仕太刀) "The doing sword" or "the serving sword". The **shidachi** assumes the role of the "student" in the **kata**.

Shi-Kai : (四戒) "Four admonitions". See **four sicknesses**.

Shikake Waza : (しかけ技) Techniques to initiate a strike.

Shin : (心) "Mind", "heart", or "spirit". See also **shin-gyo-so**.

Shinpan : (審判) "Referee, judge".

Shin-Gyo-So : (真行草) The three *feelings* which the **shidachi** embodies in the **kodachi kata**. 'Shin', lit. "truth", 'Gyo', lit. "stream", and 'So', lit. "grass". These also correspond to the ideas of three phases or transitions, for example *formal*, *semi-formal*, *informal*. Another example, according to Inoue [34], is referring to shapes or forms where 'Shin' is the true shape, 'So' is the essence of the shape, and 'Gyo' is the transition between the two. These feelings also correspond to **shu-ha-ri**.

Shinai : (竹刀) Bamboo practice sword.

Shin Ki Ryoku Ichi : (心気力一致) "Mind, spirit, and waza as one". The **shin**, a heart or mind able to predict an opponent's action through a state of **mushin**, guides one's **ki** (the dynamic mental state of one's spirit) which in turn dictates one's **ryoku** (physical actions in the form of technique).

Shin Gi Tai Ichi : (心技体一致) "The mind and one's ability as one". This refers to the ability of one to seamlessly put one's ideas or intent into effective physical action.

Shinogi : (鎧) The ridge on the side of a blade and running along its length, usually closer to the **mune** than the blade's edge. The **shinogi** is very strong and is the part of a **katana** used for deflecting or manipulating the opponent's sword. In general, this should also transfer to deflections in modern **kendo** with a **bokuto** or **shinai**.

Shinogi o Kezuru : (鎧を削る) "Shaving the shinogi". This is done in the fourth **tachi kata** after the **uchidachi** and **shidachi** launch a strike and end up in **ai-uchi**. While maintaining a sense of combative tension, each one must fight for center in order to prevent a **suki** on which their opponent can capitalize. This is the essence of **tsuba-zeriai**.

Shisei : (姿勢) "Position" or "stance". This term, while having a similar translation with **kamae**, has a completely different connotation. **Shisei** refers to a physical position only whereas **kamae** has an associated *spiritual* element. For example, *tai-to shisei* or *sage-to shisei* are common *position* terms which are shortened to simply **tai-to** and **sage-to** in **kendo**.

Shishin : (止心) "Stopped mind". This refers to your mind becoming focused or stopped on something making you unable to act freely. Focusing on the opponent's weapon, on making plans to find an opening, the need to protect yourself, not wanting to get hit or counter attacked, etc... are just a small number of common examples. **Shishin** is often linked to the **shi-kai**.

Shizentai : (自然体) The "Natural body". This posture is one where the **kendoka** stands with natural (proper) posture, i.e., standing straight and extending the spine, shoulders back, arms hanging naturally at one's side, feet shoulder width, and the abs engaged via a pelvic tilt. **Migi** and **hidari shizentai** is when the right or left foot is forward respectively and the opposite shoulder is pulled slightly backward. This is not to be confused with a **hanmi kamae**; the body is turned *slightly* in a **migi/hidari shizentai** whereas it is turned much more in a **hanmi kamae**.

Shomen : (正面) (1) The center or front of the **men**. (2) The symbolic head of the **dojo**.

Shoshin : (初心) "Beginners Mind". In **kendo** one is often reminded to "keep your beginners mind". This refers to the idea that, like a beginner, one should always be open and ready to learn, be ready to find faults in their own technique, and most importantly to practice with all of their energy in everything they do. It is a common fault after practicing for some time to believe that one is able to do something without the potential for improvement or correction. It is also common for one to lose the initial vigor that is present for something that is new. Always maintain your **shoshin** and practice accordingly.

Shoto : (小刀) The short **shinai** used in **nito kamae**.

Shu-Ha-Ri : (守破離) 'Shu', lit. "protect", "obey", 'Ha', lit. "detach", "digress", and 'Ri', lit. "leave", "separate". In brief, **shu-ha-ri** is a term used to describe the various stages of learning or progress in many arts. The first stage, 'Shu', has the practitioner obeying the teachers method and ideals in every detail. The second, 'Ha', is when the student has learned enough that they are able to incorporate their own ideas. The third, 'Ri', is when the student is able to leave their teachings behind them as the "specific machinery" is no longer overtly needed; all is natural. The **nihon kendo no kata** embody **shu-ha-ri** in **tachi kata** 1, 2,

3, and in **kodachi kata** 1, 2, 3. See Dann [17] and Inoue [34] for more.

So : (草) See **shin-gyo-so**.

Suburi : (素振り) “Elementary swing”. This is the fundamental drill of a **kendo** practice. Over the years **kendoka** will *easily* perform many, many thousands of practice strikes in their training, perfecting technique through repetition.

Suki : (隙) “Interval”, “gap”, “opportunity”. This term is used to refer to an opening in ones defense, either in your own or in your opponents. It also refers to an opening or gap in ones thoughts or actions, e.g., due to hesitancy or distraction.

Suriage Waza : (すり上げ技) A “Rising slide” waza. These techniques are used to deflect an opponents attack by sliding your own weapon along the opponents making a small, “half-circle” motion as you lift your weapon into the path of the coming strike. This “rising-slide” motion is not to be confused with hitting or knocking your opponents weapon out-of-the-way, as with **uchi-otoshi waza**, as it is a controlled deflection.

Suri-Ashi : (すり足) (lit.) “Sliding foot/leg”. **Kendoka**, regardless of the type of footwork being used, will most often be sliding their feet as they step. There are exceptions but the fundamentals of **kendo** always use sliding footwork. This term is often used to refer to **okuri-ashi** itself, however this text maintains the distinction.

Suri-Komi : (すり込み) (lit.) “Sliding step”. This waza is used during the third **kodachi kata**. The **shidachi** slides his blade along the **uchidachi**’s, controlling it, as he steps into the **uchidachi**’s maai.

Suri-Nagashi : (すり流し) (lit.) “Slide and ward off”. The **nagashi** motion is often likened to allowing water to “pour off” of something. This waza is used during the third **kodachi kata**. The **shidachi** receives the **uchidachi**’s incoming **do** strike using the left **shinogi** and redirects or controls it by sliding the **kodachi** down their **tachi** at the same time.

Suri-Otoshi : (すり落とし) (lit.) “Slide and knock down”. This waza is used during the third **kodachi kata**. **Shidachi** pushes his blade down and leftward, sliding it along **uchidachi**’s, pushing it away.

Sutemi : (捨て身) (lit.) “Sacrifice/abandon person/body/self”, often translated as “body abandoning”. Usually interpreted as “all or

nothing”, this term is referring to a samurai’s “final strike”. Meaning they will be attacking their opponent with the feeling of “all or nothing”; they will either kill the opponent with this strike, or be killed in the attempt.

T

Tachi : (太刀) The long sword used in the **nihon kendo no kata**.

Tai : (体) “Body”.

Tai-Atari : (体当り) “Body blow”, “ramming attack”, or “suicide attack”. A technique used by **kendoka** to create a **suki** in their opponent by closing in on them and upsetting their balance via a push. It is crucial to understand the difference between **tai-atari** and simple pushing or shoving. Definition from Nelson [59] and Jim Breen’s *Online Japanese Dictionary* [38].

Tai-To : (帯刀) “Sword at belt”, i.e., the position where one would wear the sword. In **kendo**, **tai-to** is the position where the **shinai** or **bokuto** is held at a 30°–45° angle at the hip in preparation to “draw” it.

Tai-So : (体操) “Gymnastics” or “calisthenics”, i.e., a warm up.

Tare : (垂) Waist protector.

Tare-Himo : (垂紐) The small belts of the **tare**.

Tare-Obi : (垂帯) The waist portion of the **tare**.

Te-no-Uchikawa : (手の内皮) The palms of the **kote**.

Ten : (天) “Sky”, “heaven” or “point”.

Ten no Kamae : (天の構え) The “kamae of heaven”. See **jodan no kamae**.

Tenugui : (手拭い) “Hand towel”. The cloth towel worn by **kendoka** underneath their **men**.

Te-no-Uchi : (手の内) “Palm, skill”.

Te-no-uchi, often explained as “wringing out a wet towel”, is how a **kendoka** holds their **shinai** at the moment of impact. Proper **te-no-uchi** allows a **kendoka** to execute strong and balanced strikes while maintaining control over the **shinai** during the moment it impacts the target.

Te-no-uchi allows one to, properly and with control, *stop* their **shinai**. Without **te-no-uchi**, the force of the strikers **shinai** will (1) upon impact cause the striker to lose control of the **shinai** ending in a poor and ineffective strike, or (2) the **shinai** will fully connect with the target but the force of the **shinai** will be improperly directed to

the opponent on impact. Aside from being ineffective, this strike will most likely hurt your opponent and must be avoided.

To : (刀) “Sword”. A Japanese sword, **katana**.

Tobi-Komi Waza : (飛び込み技) “Burst into” or “jump into” waza. These waza are where one launches an attack at the opponent with strong spirit the moment the opponents spirit falters.

Tokui Waza : (得意技) “Strong point or specialty technique”. In **kendo** this usually refers to one’s favorite technique or their “go-to” waza; their specialty.

To-Ma : (遠間) A distance (from your opponent) that is longer than **issoku itto no maai**.

Tsuba : (鐔) The sword guard on the handle of a **shinai** or **bokuto**.

Tsuba-Dome : (鐔止め) A rubber stopper that holds **tsuba** in place.

Tsuba-Zeriai : (鐔迫り合い) “Joined sword guards” (from Nelson [59]). The position when two **kendoka** are in close proximity, **tsuba** against **tsuba**, attempting to create an opening to strike.

Tsugi-Ashi : (突ぎ足) “Thrusting foot”. This style of footwork is a variation of **okuri-ashi**, where the **kendoka** brings both feet side-by-side before taking the **okuri-ashi** step. This motion helps to build momentum and is often used to cover very large distances.

Tsuka : (柄) The handle of a **shinai** or **bokuto**.

Tsuka-Gashira : (柄頭) The end of **tsuka**.

Tsuka-Gawa : (柄革) Leather covering the **tsuka** of the **shinai**.

Tsuka-Himo : (柄紐) A leather string or set of loops at the top end of the **tsuka** used to anchor the **tsuru**.

Tsuki : (突き) “Thrust”.

Tsuki-Dare : (突き垂) Throat protector.

Tsuru : (弦) The string on the top side of the **shinai**.

Tsutsu : (筒) “Cylinder, pipe, tube”. The forearm area of the **kote** where one may strike. Also called the **kote-tsutsu**.

U

Uchidachi : (打太刀) “The striking sword” or “the presenting sword”. **Uchidachi** assumes the role of the “teacher” in the **kata**.

Uchi-Komi : (打ち込み) Striking practice using **fumi-komi**.

Uchi-Otoshi Waza : (打ち落とし技) (v) “To knock down”. Techniques for striking the opponents strike down and to the left or right, mid-way through their attack.

Uke-Nagashi : (受け流し) (lit.) “Receive and ward off”. The nagashi motion is often likened to letting water “pour off” of something. This **waza** is used during the first and second **kodachi kata**. The **uchidachi**’s attack is received using the **kodachi** while at the same time redirecting it by making it slide off the **kodachi** via the **shinogi** and **hiraki-ashi**.

Ura : (裏) “Back”, “inside”, or “non-visible side”. In **kendo** this usually refers to the right side of the **shinai** or **bokuto**.

Ushiro : (後) “Backward” (direction).

W

Waki-Gamae : (脇構え) “Side stance”. This is known as the “*kamae of metal*” and is a

variant of **gedan no kamae**.

Waza : (技) “Technique(s)”. In **kendo** this refers specifically to fencing techniques used against an opponent.

Waza o Korosu : (技を殺す) “Kill their Waza”. See **san-satsu-ho**.

Y

Yin-Yang : An idea from Chinese Taoism dealing with opposites and/or duality; duality where one can’t exist without the other. See **in-yo**.

Yoko-Men : (横面) “Sideways or horizontal” **men**. Sideways **kata-te** strike to the right or left side of the **men**.

Yokote : (横手) The area on a Japanese sword where the curved tip ends and the blade proper begins.

Yokote-Kosa : (横手交差) “Intersection of the yokote”. This is the “distance” two

kendoka meet at when they will immediately perform formality based motions, e.g., **hodoku** or **sonkyo**, in the **kendo no kata** and **bokuto waza**.

Yuko-Datotsu : (有効打突) “Effective strike”.

Z

Za-Rei : (座礼) “Seated” **rei** from the **seiza** position.

Zanshin : (残心) “Remaining mind”. In the context of **kendo** this is, simply put, interpreted as sustaining both mental and physical alertness with every action.

Za-Zen : (座禅) “Sitting Zen”. The practice of seated Zen meditation.

Zekken : (ゼッケン) Name tag worn on the **tare**. Also termed a **nafuda**.

Zenjo-In : (禅定印) “Zen meditation hand position”. See **mudra**.

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