

Kendo Training Handbook



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Kendo is a traditional Japanese martial art, as well as Athletic sport. How you think of and practice it will change and develop over the time to practice the art. This guide is a summary of my understandings, and so, as a disclaimer, I cannot guarantee that these are thoughts of everyone, including myself in future times.

Over the years I have practiced Kendo, I have learnt and been taught many ideas, in many ways. I have, from the advice I have received and ideas taught to me, compiled my notes, and have selected those ideas I found most useful myself, and that were a common idea amongst many Sensei. To avoid changing ideas beyond those of Kendo, I have set the basic standard as that described in the All Japan Kendo Federation manuals.

Where differences appear in teaching ideas, I have commented in *Italiques* to give some guidance.

I set the basic elements needed for practice to master basic Kendo, and teach the skills needed to face an opponent, these being the **Kihon-dosa** as described by the **All Japan Kendo Federation**.

Kihon-dōsa.

- 1) **Shisei** (Posture)
- 2) **Kamae** (stance or posture) and **Metsuke** (use of eyes)
- 3) **Kamae-kata** (the way of drawing the bokuto/shinai and **Osame-kata** (the way of putting away bokuto/shinai)
- 4) **Ashi-sabaki** (foot work)
- 5) **Suburi** (Swinging the shinai)
- 6) **Kake-goe** (vocalisation)
- 7) **Ma-ai** (distance between oneself and opponent)
- 8) **Kihon-no-uchi-kata, Tsuki-kata and Uke-kata** (Basic ways of striking, thrusting and receiving strikes.)
- 9) **Kiri-kaeshi** (Continuous striking centre, right-left men)
- 10) **Tai-atari** (colliding with opponent)
- 11) **Tsuba-zerai** (fighting close with the sword guards.)
- 12) **Zanshin** (keeping alert with correct posture after cutting)

I have adjusted the order to fit in with the logical progression of practice and contents of this list to include notes on Reigi-Saho (Etiquette and Manners).

The Content Chapters are listed in the step by step order that is needed to master the basics of Kendo.

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Chapter 1

Reigi – Saho

The Etiquette, Manners and Attitudes below should be shown during Kendo training. Remember, in Kendo the *do* (道) refers to the way or path to enlightenment and as such, the attitudes should also be taken with you into everyday life. No matter what your experience or ability in kendo you can always show good reigi.

Reigi is important because it helps to maintain the relationship between the sword and the shinai. By showing such manners you are showing that you respect the fact you are dealing with a real sword and death is a very real possibility. Kendo is a Japanese art, and if we fail to maintain the Japanese identity of kendo, it will lose its meaning.

Good Etiquette and Manners.

- Always ensure your toenails and fingernails are cut short before training.
- Always air your uniform and your armour after each session: never leave them in the bag between sessions or they will get mouldy and smell horribly.
- Keep your uniform clean and fold it correctly before attending the session.
- Always check your shinai for splinters *before* attending the session.
- Do not wear shoes in the dojo
- Remove all jewellery, including rings and watches before training.
- Turn up early to practice. You shouldn't only just have time to get ready. You should help to prepare the dojo. It is usually the beginners' responsibility to clean the floor before and after every session. With a job or busy lifestyle this can sometimes be hard to achieve but if you make an effort to do this you will eventually understand the benefits. Don't use business or studies for your excuse to miss a session. Management of yourself is still part of your kendo.
- If you are late to practice, enter quietly, warm up and stretch, prepare yourself in seiza and join in from the end of the line.
- Always bow on entering and leaving the dojo.
- If you are warming yourself up before a session you **MUST** stay in the shimoza. The kamiza is for your sensei and the shomen. Never enter it unless you are doing so to prepare the dojo for practice or are carrying sensei's gear for him. Usually the half near to the entrance is the shimoza and the other half is the kamiza.
- When you bring all your equipment into the dojo take up as little space as possible when you leave it at the side, make sure that it doesn't get in the way of the practice or the doors.
- Do not smoke, eat, drink or fool around in the dojo
- Do not lean on a sword or rest a shinai or bokuto point downwards. Don't leave your shinai or bokuto in a way that means they can fall over; they represent your swords which would be of great value. The blade and kensen of your shinai and bokuto should point away from the Kamiza. If the dojo is small, then place your swords on the floor close to the wall.
- Do not step over or kick a shinai on the ground.
- When you are asked to line up, this should be done quickly. **KNOW YOUR PLACE IN THE LINE.** The order in which you line up is the order of your responsibility in the group, not just your rank.

- Make it a habit to sit in seiza quietly at the beginning and the end of session.
- When you sit in seiza DON'T move about unnecessarily. You should sit with correct posture even if it starts to hurt. Controlling your posture and maintaining seiza even when it becomes uncomfortable is part of kendo. If you have a serious issue swap to cross-legged position but do not move again.
- If someone is kneeling in armour, you should pass behind them or, if you have to pass in front of them, bow and extend your right hand in a vertical plane, palm forward.
- Follow the Sensei to whether **Tenugui** is laid over the **Men** or folded inside. If laid out, you should be able to read your tenugui before you put it on.
- When you bow (shomen-ni, senseigata-ni, or otagai-ni) always bow longer than your seniors. Also if you are saying 'onegaishimasu' or 'domo arigato gozaimasu' say it correctly.
- When you put on your equipment (**Men** when we are in seiza, or **Do** after **Kata** practice) try to be the quickest. However, it is worse if you have to retie your equipment. Be quick but put gear on properly. If your **Men-himo** are too long, shorten them; if your **Kote** are untied, then tie them.
- During practice always bow correctly; 15 degree maintaining eye contact.
- During rotation you will have to pass quickly around the back of the sensei - DO NOT slow the whole practice down by being slow.
- Do not interrupt the teacher's instruction, and do not chat to each other during practice. Save questions to when asked or to after final rei.
- If you need to fix your bogu during a session then first ask your partner, move back out of the way and sit in seiza.
- If someone falls over in the dojo, unless it directly involves you you should continue training. Don't stop and crowd around. Sensei will say if you have to stop, and if you are the first aider, be ready.
- Keep practising unless you truly can't continue. It is reigi to keep going to get the most out of sensei, they will appreciate that you kept trying despite it causing you pain. Kendo practice means to train you, in other words, to make you feel pain physically and mentally. Don't run away from this.
- Do not lean or lay down: stand, kneel or sit cross-legged when resting.
- It is reigi to be ready for practice, this means eating and drinking enough that you don't become tired and dehydrated. Drink enough before sessions so you have the energy to continue, and don't let the sensei, the dojo, and yourself down.
- If the weather is very hot, pay extra attention to fluid intake. If you are dehydrated and practising for a long time such in weather, you may get heat stroke.
- If you vomit or your feet bleed your first responsibility is to clean the dojo floor. After the dojo is cleaned you can take off **Men** and clean it, after which you can tend to yourself.
- Do not just stop practicing. If you cannot continue tell your partner, excuse yourself to the sensei, take seiza and remove equipment in such a way as to not get in the way of practice.
- Only break for rest when invited to by sensei. Take that opportunity to drink fluids and check shinai and Bogu.
- Normally drinking will be outside Dojo, or in an assigned area. Bow correctly if leaving the Dojo. Do NOT walk around the Dojo drinking!
- Take your **Men** off correctly: Pull the himo over your head and untie them there. Then take the **Men** off, holding it in front of your face until you have removed the tenugui.
- ALWAYS carry the visiting sensei's equipment for them; you should also fold it for them after the session. If you offer to do this but they don't accept don't give up; offer again.

Attitudes for Kendo

- Always value the basics.
- Practice repeatedly and many times, practice with someone formidable
- Practice with proper attitude.
- Practice with courtesy and respect.
- Un-obsessed with winning, practice with desire to study the principles of kendo.
- Have devotion to Kendo and practice with initiative.
- Practice with determination
- Value graceful, elegant, dignified Kendo.
- Be prepared physically and mentally then practice with eagerness.
- Know your capabilities and practice accordingly
- Learn by experiencing.
- Always consider ways to improve.
- Be mindful of everyday life.
- Be conscious of safety.
- Be conscious of health and hygiene.
- Do not overextend unreasonably.
- For students, consider how studies and Kendo can be balanced.
- Grasp the value of watching; humbly learn merits of others by observing.
- Always do warming up and cooling down exercises.

Dojo

The term **Dojo** comes from Buddhism meaning "place to study," which originally referred to the platform Buddha meditated on.

Commit yourself to sincere training when entering Dojo, appreciate having a place to practice and people to practice with, maintain cleanliness, and take care of your own belongings neatly (eg, shoes, clothes, Bogu)

Know the location of **Kamiza**, the upper seat; this may be a shrine, flag or other symbol. The term **Kamiza** can be written in different Japanese characters which mean "upper seat" or "towards the altar". Beginners line up towards the lower end (**Shimoza**)

Reigi is not just a quick bow entering the Dojo, but is about Respect. Know how to correctly bow, and when, where and who to in the Dojo. They are not empty rituals but an expression of respect for all the other members of the dojo who are offering you a chance to practice kendo.

Here is an extract from the Kendo Reader - written some 70+ years ago:

- When entering and leaving the Dojo make a reverend bow.
- Do not enter the Dojo dressed untidily dressed, if dressed in Japanese style a Hakama should be worn.
- Maintain a respectful attitude and most correct posture.
- Be quiet and conscientious, do not engage in noisy chatter, laughter, clapping or cheering.
- After eating, allow a suitable amount of time to elapse before training.
- If you have taken alcohol do not enter the Dojo, let alone engage in training.
- The sword is ones soul, the bogu ones armour. Handle them with respect according the correct method.
- The Dojo interior must be cleaned morning and evening and kept tidy.

- Do not comment on other styles of swordsmanship or in each other's technique.
- For those who are training in swordsmanship take caution against shortness of temper or selfishness, do not be quarrelsome but always remain serene of heart.

All senior students make sure the Dojo floor is safe and tape / make any holes etc, while juniors sweep the floor clean.

Visiting other Dojo

If you are WEARING your Club's Zekken, and visiting other Dojo, it is expected that you show CORRECT Reigi and set a good example.

Always bow to the most senior Sensei (find out who it is,), and introduce yourself and ask permission to join the class. Always try your hardest, and even if the ideas differ from what you have been taught, listen, try, learn from them - never argue or debate with your seniors.

Some commands may differ – try to follow their way.

About Rei

Rei is a way to pay respect and show acknowledgement. Upon entry to the **Dojo**, enter then **Rei** to the **Kamiza**: this is a way to pay respect to the Dojo and to commit yourself to a sincere practice. Also, when exiting, **Rei** to the **Kamiza**, then exit.

Commands during Training:

Commands at the start will be:

Sei retsu: line up in correct order. Sometime, before this command, you will hear: **Shinai o motte** or **Bokuto o motte** - with Shinai or with Bokuto.

Chakuza: all sit down in Seiza

Shisei o tadashite: straighten back/sit up straight

Mokuso: a brief moment for meditation

Yame: stop mokuso

Shomen ni rei: bow to the flag (Kamiza)

Sensei (gatta) ni rei: bow to the sensei (sensei's)

Otagai ni rei: bow to each other , and ask "please train with me" by saying:
"Onegai shimasu"

(Men o tsuke: seniors put on men and kote. - when required)

At the end of Practice:

Sei retsu: line up in correct order

Chakuza: all sit down in Seiza

(Men o tore: take off kote and men)

Shisei o tadashite: straighten back/sit up straight

Mokuso: a brief moment for meditation

Yame: stop mokuso

Sensei (gatta) ni rei: bow to the sensei (sensei's)[NB:note slightly different order]

Shomen ni rei: bow to the flag (Kamiza)

Otagai ni rei: bow to each other and thank them very much:

"Arigatou gozaimashita"

Acknowledge **Sensei** (teacher), **Senpai** (senior) and each other with **Rei**; this is to show respect and appreciation. To someone senior, bow first and rise last. To each other, bow together simultaneously.

Shizen-tai

This natural posture is the basis of all kendo postures and movements.

- The body should not feel strained
- The face and eyes should face straight forward.
- Stretch the neck upward, and pull the chin back with feeling of stretching top of head to reach the ceiling. (There should be no gap between neck and Kendo-gi.)
- Shoulders are relaxed, with feeling of being held slightly back.
- Arms should hang naturally by your side, with fingers together.
- The hips are held straight, and lower abdomen held taut with feeling of tightening the buttocks.
- Knees should not be bent, but relaxed, i.e. not completely straight legged.
- The feet slightly apart, heels drawn in, you should have your weight evenly applied.

Ritsu-rei

There are two kinds of standing bow. The one to your opponent (**moku-rei**) and secondly, a formal bow, which we use bowing to the Shomen or sensei. The bow can be performed with or without sword (**shinai**). The main difference between them is the angle of the bow, and the eye contact.

When entering or leaving the dojo we perform a formal bow towards the Shomen or senior Sensei.

- Keep their body in **shizen-tai** position. Bend your body from the hip. Do not keep your eyes on them. You have to look down. The angle of your body when you bow is 30 degrees.

When bowing to your opponent perform the standard bow (**moku-rei**).

- Keep their body in **shizen-tai** position. Bend your body from the hip while looking at your opponent. Do not keep your face straight towards you opponent. You want to keep your chin in. The angle of your body is about 15 degrees, since you have to keep your eyes on your opponent.

Your fingers should remain together, hand slightly on the front side of leg. If you hold a Shinai, it should be at **sage-to**, i.e. straight armed by your side. When bowing the angle of the shinai should not change.

Seiza

Seiza is the formal kneeled sitting position.

To assume seiza:

1. Stand in **shizen-tai**.
2. Draw back the left foot.
3. Kneel down with the left knee next to the right foot.
4. Withdraw the right leg to a position next to the left leg.
5. Tuck the toes of both feet under so the tops of the feet are touching the floor and the big toe of the right foot is overlapping the big toe of the left foot.
6. Lower the hips to a fully seated position. Keep the upper body in correct posture with the hands placed naturally on the thighs.

Standing from seiza is the reverse of sitting:

1. First raise your upper body to a kneeling position.
2. Raise your toes so the balls of the feet are touching the floor.
3. Step forward with the right foot, placing the foot next to the left knee.
4. Push the legs straight to a standing position and then bring the left foot together with the right to end in shizen-tai.

Main Points:

- Keep the upper body in correct, upright posture throughout the process of sitting or standing.
- While seated, your eyes should be cast forwards. If listening to Sensei, turn your face towards them, not simply your gaze.
- The large toe of the right foot should be overlapping the large toe of the left foot.
- The knees should be separated by approximately 10cm. (the width one or two fists).

Moku-so

Moku-so is the act of composing one's breath, posture mind and spirit while in the seiza position and is performed to start and end the practice sessions. When perform moku-so, the hands are brought together to form an oval in front of the abdomen. The fingers of the left hand overlap the fingers of the right hand, and the tips of the thumbs are brought together with light pressure. The eyes are closed halfway and deep breathing is performed. The tongue should be resting in the top of mouth, touching the back of the upper teeth.

Main Points:

- The mind should be cleared of thoughts, but kept fully alert. (See below). Senseis say we should focus on our Kendo goals for the practice or to clear our minds by concentrating on breathing, counting the timing of the breathing cycle - this will concentrate you thoughts.
- The eyes should remain slightly open. When the eyes are fully open or closed, the mind tends to remain active, thus making it difficult to correctly perform moku-so.

I quote Zen Master Dogen (1200-1253), who stated in the Shobogenzo texts that we must keep our eyes "not so widely open and not so narrowly closed". Therefore, I relax my eyes naturally, focussed about 1 metre in front of me.

- Breathing:
 1. Breathe in for **3** seconds
 2. Hold your breath for **2** seconds
 3. Breathe out for **10-15** seconds.

How to Breathe:

1. Breathe in:

Breathe in deeply through your nose, filling your lungs in about 3 seconds. As breathing in, the air goes down to a place called *seika-tanden* (about three fingers down from the belly button). Using our stomach or abdomen instead of our chest to inhale, we can take in a lot more air. Do not let your shoulders or chest rise during breathing. Chest breathing is not good for kendo as it will show our opponent when we are breathing in, which it is a good opportunity for our opponent to attack us.

2. Hold your breath:

We do not breathe out the air right after breathing in. We hold the air inside us for a while. It is said that the air should be held in *seika-tanden*, about three fingers down from your belly button. We hold the air in *seika-tanden* for about 2 seconds.

3. Breathe out:

We breathe out through our mouth, slowly, not at once. It takes about 10 - 15 seconds to breathe out the air. When we breathe out, we have to control the breathing. In order to do so, we have to use our abdominal muscles. (NB: Also the position of the tongue can help, relax it when exhaling.) After we breathe out, we can breathe in. Be focused on breathing out.

- **Do not breathe out completely.** Leave a bit of the air inside of you so you will not be out of breath. Try to breathe out for 10 seconds and gradually make it longer.
- **Do not think about emptying your thoughts.** By trying not to think about anything, you are already thinking. So just relax and concentrate on breathing. You may think about what you are going to improve in or have achieved during training.

This is the basic breathing. Some people may say different duration of each action, but the above mentioned duration of each action (inhale, hold, and exhale) seems a common idea. I have also been told that some old schools of swordsmanship taught to count Zen breathing in 7's - 7 second inhale, hold for 7 seconds, exhale over 7 seconds.)

Za-rei:

Za-rei is the bowing from seiza. Like ritsu-rei, za-rei has many levels of formality that are applied to its execution. The following outlines the basics of za-rei.

1. Sitting in correct seiza, bend the upper body forward at the hips. At the same time, slide the hands forward over the thighs.
2. As the bow deepens, merge the hands together, creating a triangle with the index fingers and thumbs.
3. At the deepest point of the bow, the back is parallel with the floor. The hands are flat on the floor with the triangular opening, between the index fingers and thumbs, directly below the nose.
4. After holding the bow for a moment, raise the upper body back to the upright posture. At the same time, slide both hands back to their original position.

Main Points:

- a. When bowing, the back and neck should remain aligned, keeping correct upper body posture.
- b. Allowing the head to bob, especially allowing the chin to come to the chest exposes the nape of the neck to the kamiza and/or shinden. This is very poor form and impolite.
- c. As the upper body bows down, the eyes remain fixed and the gaze follows down to the floor.
- d. The hips should not rise when the upper body bows downward.
- e. Exhale as the bow is performed.

Chapter 2

Kamae, Kamae-kata and Osame-kata

Kamae

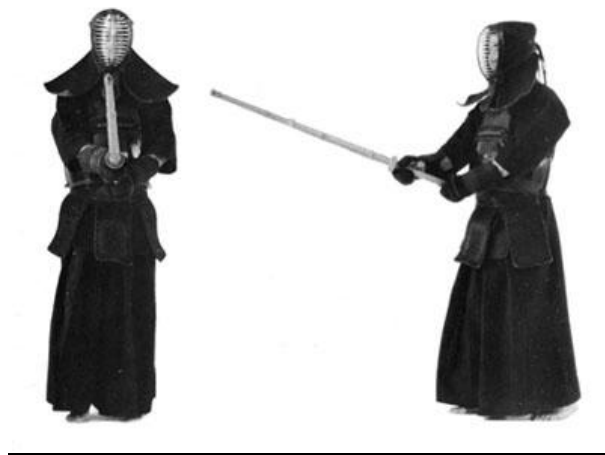
Kamae is the guard, or ready posture employed for attack and defence. However, more than just a physical pose, kamae is also the on-guard posturing of the mind and spirit. These aspects of kamae, the body and mindset, must always be practiced together. Equally important to keep in mind is that kamae begins and ends with proper etiquette. These points are never to be overlooked.

There are three processes of kamae. They are assuming kamae, withdrawing from kamae and Kamae O-toku - kamae at-ease or open kamae.

The legendary swordsman, Miyamoto Musashi (1584–1645) distinguished in his writings five primary guard postures collectively termed *Goho-no-Kamae*. In modern kendo, the goho-no-kamae continues to be the principal guard postures. The goho-no-kamae are *chudan-no-kamae, jodan-no-kamae, gedan-no-kamae, hasso-no-kamae, and waki-gamae*. Of the five, **chudan-no-kamae** (middle guard posture) is the first and most versatile of the guard postures. In modern kendo, chudan-no-kamae is the posture that the other four kamae are instigated from.

Chudan no Kamae (Center Guard Posture)

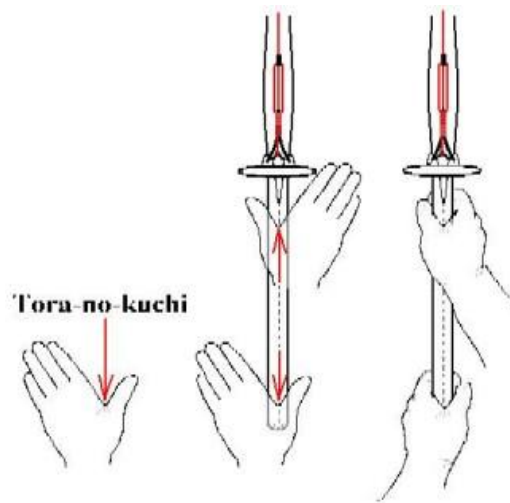
Chudan no Kamae : left grip at the end of **Tsuka** (handle), in front of the navel, right hand near but not touching the **Tsuba** (guard), “V” between the thumb and index finger of both hands over the top of the **Tsuka**, left grip with last three fingers hold the **Shinai**, while right hand with last two fingers lightly support it, **Kensen** towards the opponent's throat, **Tsura** (string) is up, right foot forward, width of a foot between feet, left heel slightly off the floor, left knee straight but not locked.



Hand position

The anatomy of the hand includes the tora-kuchi. The tora-kuchi is the angle at the base of the index finger and thumb. The tora-kuchi and the tsuru or the seams of the tsuk-gawa [leather handle covering] are the keys to positioning the hands in relation to the shinai's circumference. The tsuru indicates the upright side of the shinai in its drawn attitude. In its correct configuration, the tsuru also marks the top centreline of the shinai. The hands should

be positioned on the shinai in such a manner that the top centreline of the shinai runs through the apex of the tora-kuchi of both hands.



The left hand is positioned at the end of the tsuka, clasping the tsuka-gashira midway into the little finger. [NB: Holding Bokuto, the left hand should just reveal the tsuka-gashira]

The forward position of the right hand is generally one-and-a-half fists ahead of the left hand. A common method for establishing the forward position of the right hand is to:

- a. Bend the right arm at the elbow.
- b. Place the hilt of the shinai in the joint of the elbow,
- c. Grasp the shinai with the right hand. Where the hand grasps the shinai is the point of placement for the right hand.
- d. The right hand should almost touch the tsuba of the shinai (more than 2cm of tsuka means it is the wrong length and needs adjusting).

Hand grip

The shinai should be gripped firmly, not tightly, as if holding an egg without crushing the shell. Both hands grip in a similar manner, but the left grip should be firmer than that of the right hand.

To grip the shinai:

- a. Extended the hand as if reaching out to give a handshake greeting.
- b. Position the hilt of the shinai on the inside portion of the heel of the hand.
- c. Grasp the shinai firmly with the little and ring fingers.
- d. Grip the shinai with the middle finger using moderate (not tight or loose) pressure.
- e. The index finger and thumb remain relaxed.
- f. The right hand is positioned appropriately on the shinai, as previously outlined, and grips the shinai in the same manner as the left hand, with slightly less pressure.

Main Points:

1. Throughout the process of strikes and techniques, the hand positioning and grip should never change.
2. The hands should not grip the shinai squarely. A square grip is usually the result of including the index fingers and thumbs in gripping the shinai. Such a grip will restrict the flexibility and movement of the hands.
3. The hilt of the shinai should be held at the very end. The overlapping of the small

finger halfway over the end of the shinai is an acceptable practice. However, never is the shinai to be held with the hilt protruding from the heel of the left hand.

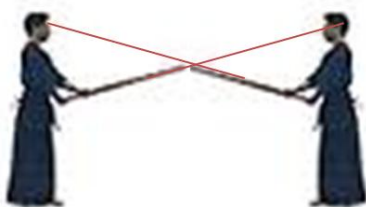
[NB: Holding a **Bokuto**, the left hand should just reveal the **tsuka-gashira**]

4. The right hand should not grasp the shinai directly below the tsuba.

In **chudan-no-kamae** (or **chudan**), the shinai held in the centre-plane of the body with the tip projecting forward to the opponent. Below, details the correct positioning of the hands and shinai in relation to the body and the opponent.

- a. The left hand is extended approximately the width of one fist (10cm) forward of the abdomen.
- b. The first joint of the thumb (at the base of the thumb) is in a direct line in front of the navel.
- c. The shinai is angled forward, tsuru (cord) upwards, projecting the line of the shinai to the opponent's throat, face or left eye. (see note below)
- d. The elbows should not stick out, but be relaxed, with a slight between them and the body - they would just touch your **Do** lightly. Have the feeling of holding an egg in each armpit.

NB: The height of the Kensen can vary in certain instances, but should not be higher than your opponent's throat or lower than his Kote. It must also remain close to the centre, always pointing within opponent's body/throat area. To quote the **All Japan Kendo Federation Dictionary**: "... the extension of the **ken-sen** (tip of the **shinai**) points between the opponent's eyes". However they also add within there "**kihon kata**" text "From **issoku-itto-no-maai** (one-step one-strike interval) the line of the kensen should extend to a point on the face between the eyes or towards the left-eye." However in there Fundamental Kendo manual, and Nippon Kendo Kata text they state that the shinai or bokuto "... is held so that the tip (**kissaki**) points toward the opponent's throat."



The projected line of the shinai is called the "kensen." However, more than just a noun for a positional reference, kensen includes functional principles. The understanding and application of kensen is the key in maneuvering, attacking, and forestalling an opponent. This aspect is presented here as an introduction, only. The concept and the actual application can only be acquired through diligent training.

If the Kensen drops to low, the shinai becomes vulnerable to being struck down, giving the opportunity to strike Men using Hari-otoshi or Kote-Men. If the kensen rises to point above the head, it no longer exerts pressure on opponent, and is also an opportunity to strike kote.

*Keeping the Kensen at a level where the opponent can only see its tip seems to about the correct level. This provides a threat to opponent, requiring the displacement of the shinai to make an opportunity. From this position, pushing hands or body forwards, the shiani tip should strike the **nodo** (throat), as in **tsuki** attack.*

Foot Position:

As noted in the coming section, **Ashi Sabaki**, footwork is the most important aspect in kendo practice. Good footwork begins with correct foot positioning.

In their correct position, the feet are separated by approximately the width of one fist (10cm) with the toes pointed directly forward. The heel of the right foot should be aligned with the big toe of the left foot. The heel of the right foot should be resting lightly on the floor while the heel of the left foot should be elevated to a natural height off of the floor. The body weight is centred between the feet with the strength of mobility focused in the lower part of the legs from the knees downward. The upper body, from the knees upward, remains relaxed. While the left leg should remain straight, the knee must not be locked. The position of the left foot / leg is vital.



There are two common methods used to aid in foot positioning.

a. The first method starts from **shizen-tai** with the heels of the feet together and the toes pointed 30 degrees outward. Pivot on the balls of the feet and rotate the heels outward to point the toes directly forward. Step forward with the right foot to a point where the heel is aligned with the big toe of the left foot.

b. In the second method, the right foot is positioned with the toes pointed directly forward. The heel of the left foot is placed against the heel of the right foot with the toes pointed 90 degrees outward (to the left). From this position, pivot the heel of the left foot outward to point the toes directly forward. The feet should now be in their correct positioning.

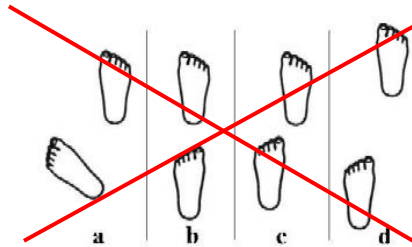
By taking a natural step forward and halting mid-step (so right heel in line with left toes) the left heel will naturally raise, and with the weight evenly (50:50) distributed on both feet, you should naturally take correct posture.

Conditions to avoid:

- a.** The toes should not point outward. Such a stance may seem stable; however, it is unstable when moving backward and **fumikiri** (push of the rear leg) is slow and weak. Toes should point forwards towards your opponent.
- b.** Avoid a stance where the feet are in a line. This is an unstable stance and movement in any direction is difficult.
- c.** Do not position the feet closer together than prescribed. This foot position may have some

benefit in forward and backward movements, but is unstable. It is also weak when receiving an opponent's **tai-atari** (body check)

- d. When the feet are extended too far apart in their forward-back relation, movement in all directions becomes awkward. Additionally, such a stance lowers the body height and allows an opponent to dominate in stature.



Incorrect foot positions

Hip Position:

Hips should be kept square to the front, with the buttocks tucked in. This allows the left leg / foot to be positioned correctly. When pushing or lunging forwards, your body will then keep straight. This also helps the left foot to quickly return to its position behind the right foot. It is essential to provide a stable and balanced platform to allow correct striking.

Eyes- Metsuke.

- **Metsuke** is the positioning of one's eyes. It is the act of observing the opponents whole, while looking into his eyes. Some Kendo sayings used to try explain the feeling are:
- **Enzan no Metsuke** means that you look at your opponent as if you are looking at a far away mountain. That is to look at the opponent as a whole, rather than focusing on one point.
- **Kan-ken-no-metsuke** is the teaching of the importance of having a keen eye which can not only see the opponent's appearance, but can also perceive the opponents abilities, state of mind and intentions. (Read Gorin no Sho by Miyamoto Mushashi for more detail.)

These ideas are all very deep, and require study. To begin with:

- Watch the eyes: opponent looking at the target before striking (Don't get tricked)
- Watch the **Kensen** and wrists (especially right Kote) to spot initiation of technique.
- Watch the shoulders. As they breathe out is a good time to attack them.
- Watch oneself - check your own position for weakness

Assuming Kamae (with Shinai)

- Stand in **shizen-tai** (see previous chapter) with the shinai held in **sage-to**.

Sage-to (also **Tei-to**): the holding of the shinai in a relaxed attitude while standing in shizen-tai. The shinai is held naturally at the side with the hilt angled slightly inward. Viewed from the side, the shinai should be held at a 45-degree angle. The tsuru of the shinai is positioned on the downward side.

- Execute **Moku-rei** (See **Ritsu-rei**). Keep the grasp of the shinai relaxed and do not

change the position or angle of the shinai as the bow is performed. Ask your partner to please train “*Onegai shimasu*”

- Raise the shinai to the **Tai-to** position.

Tai-to: the standing posture with the shinai held in a drawing attitude. From **sage-to**, the shinai is raised to the hip with the hilt of the shinai directly forward of the bellybutton. The pad of the thumb is placed on the tsuba, slightly to the inside (right) from the center of the shinai.

- Draw the Shinai (sword) - “**Nuke-to.**”

Nuke-to: push out your shinai a little forward and start drawing your shinai towards your opponent. At the same time, take a small step forward onto the right foot.

* When drawing the shinai with the right hand, the left hand stays still.

* Flip your sword forward in a large arc to the front, and grab the shinai with the left hand. When you stop here, you are ready to go in the **chudan** position.

- Assume the sonkyo position.

Sonkyo: turn in your left heel, and bend at the knees to lower the hips. Sonkyo is a posture taken to show respect before and after a match or training evolution. When in this squatting posture, correct upper body posture is maintained. The knees are opened outward with the thighs forming a 90-degree angle. The body is balanced on the balls of the feet and the shinai is held in chudan (center guard position).

- Stand and take a step forward with the right foot to bring the feet into proper guard position.

Kamae-kata: Assuming Kamae with partner (Shinai practice)

1. Face each other in the **sage-to** posture at a separation of nine steps.
2. Execute **ritsu-rei**.
3. Bring the shinai to the **Tai-to** position.
4. Take three steps forward starting with the right foot.
5. Draw the shinai, “**nuke-to**“, on the third step and assume the **sonkyo** position.
6. Stand and take a step forward with the right foot to bring the feet into proper guard position.

Osamae-kata -Withdrawing from kamae

Replacing the Shinai (sword) is the reverse sequence:

1. From the chudan-no-kamae posture.
2. Turn in your left heel, and bend the knees and lower the hips to assume the sonkyo position.
3. Withdraw the shinai -“**Osamae-to**” to the **Tai-to** position and then straighten the legs to stand.

Osamae-to: reverse nuke-to action.

4. Step back starting with the left foot.
5. Lower the shinai to the **sage-to** position.
6. Perform Moku-rei, and thank your partner “**arigatou gozaimasu**”

Main Points:

- Proper upper body posture should always be maintained.
- When drawing the shinai, grasp the tsuka from the underside so the tsuru will come to rest on the topside of the shinai after the shinai is drawn. Conversely, when withdrawing the shinai the shinai should be rotated to bring the tsuru to rest on the downward side.
- When taking sonkyo with a partner, careful consideration should be given to the distance to the center starting point - upon taking three steps and drawing the shinai, the shinai tip should be within the center area of the court or training floor.
- When in the sonkyo position with a partner, the tips of the shinai should be separated by two to ten centimeters.

Kamae O-toku (normal instruction "Yasume" in Shinai kendo)

Assume a relaxed or at-ease posture with the shinai drawn. From chudan-no-kamae, turn the shinai downward to point the kasaki to just outside the opponent's left knee. The kasaki should be at a level five or six centimeters below the knee. The edge of the shinai (side opposite the tsuru) should be angled downward and to the inside at approximately 45 degrees.

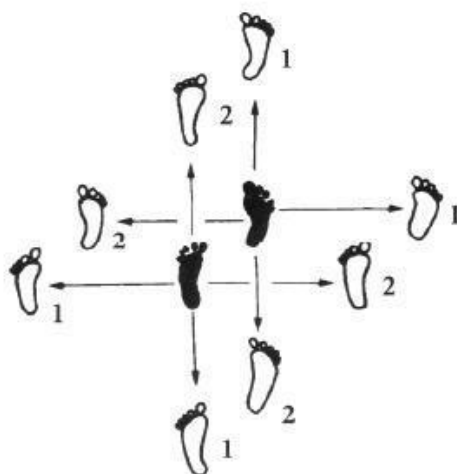
Chapter 3

Ashi-sabaki

Ashi-sabaki is the collective term for all kendo footwork techniques. Ashi-sabaki is the single most important physical aspect of kendo; it is the foundation of all kendo skills. Without good footwork (without a strong foundation), it is difficult, if not impossible to build the structures of kendo technique. There are four primary footwork techniques: Okuri-ashi, Hiraki-ashi, Ayumi-ashi, and Tsugi-ashi. (The first 3 are used most frequently.)

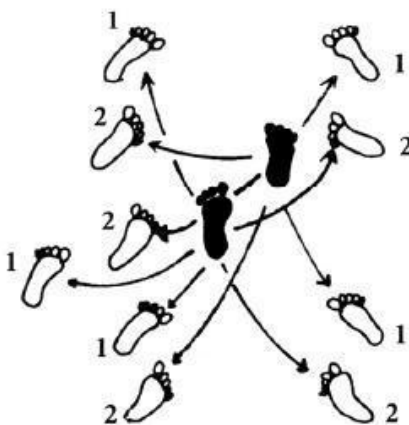
Okuri-ashi

Of the four footwork techniques, okuri-ashi is the principal technique, as it allows coordinated body movement in all directions and can be associated with all kendo techniques. The movement is a simple shuffle step with the foot corresponding to the direction of travel initiating the movement.



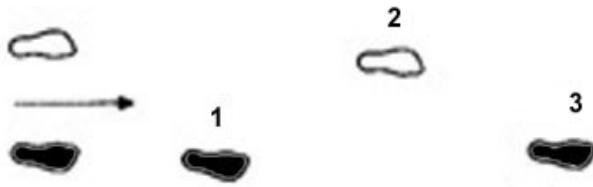
Hiraki-ashi

Hiraki-ashi is a footwork technique applied when a diagonal movement would prove advantageous in avoiding an opponent's attack and open opportunities for a counterattack. Hiraki means "open". As the name implies, this footwork allows a person to step out of the way, opening the path of an advancing opponent, while maintaining correct guard posture of the body and feet.



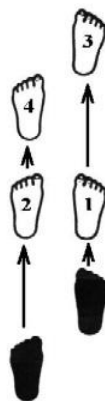
Ayumi-ashi

Ayumi-ashi is the same as a walking step and is used in situations requiring rapid movement across an extended distance.



Tsugi-ashi:

Tsugi-ashi is an advanced footwork technique. It is normally recommend leaving this practice to later in your study (Shodan +) as it can lead to bad habits forming in Kihon. Tsugi-ashi is used to move forward quickly across a distance greater than would be possible to cover using okuri-ashi. I was taught (as older texts describe it), when practicing tsugi-ashi, it is particularly important to keep in mind the basic rule that the foot corresponding to the direction of movement is advanced first. In other words, the tsugi-ashi technique starts with the forward foot advancing first, then followed by the left foot being drawn even with the right to complete the first step of the movement. Do not move the left foot first - in all circumstances, moving the trail foot first is incorrect and should not be practiced, Fig A. However, I note that some newer texts and more recent instruction have described it as drawing up the left foot parallel with the right, and then immediately stepping forward on the right foot, Fig B. Please discuss this with for coach / Sensei before practicing.



Tsugi-ashi

Fig. A

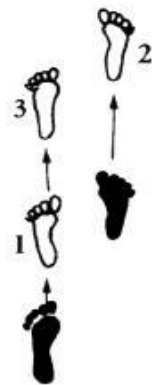


Fig. B

Suri-ashi (Sliding step)

- All Ashi-sabaki should be learnt and practiced with **Suri-ashi** - sliding step.
- Slide (actually Glide) your feet across the floor without pointing toes up.
- Keeping the heel slightly raised, and sliding the ball of feet and toes helps slide feet smoothly.
- Do not drag feet; try to make ashi-sabiki smooth and graceful.
- This footwork is ideal for wooden smooth surfaces, but will be difficult on treated anti-slip surfaces.
- If your toes rise, it may be due to the step being too large - try smaller steps.

Fumi-kiri and Fumi-komi-Ashi - (Lunge forward with stamping footwork)

To execute this footwork correctly is difficult to do, and can take several years to do properly. I have broken the sequence of movements down, and later will describe some practice ideas.

Fumi-kiri: A forceful kick / Push off the floor with the leg to begin a “jump” forward.

Fumi-kiri-ashi: The leg/foot which provides force and stability by pushing off the floor, in a forward strike the left leg, in retreat the right leg.

Fumi-kiri-dōsa: The motion of pushing off from the floor with **Fumi-kiri-ashi**.

Fumi-komi: A firm stamping step with the forward to stabilise the body.

Fumi-komi-ashi: The foot which stamps on the floor with the entire sole.

Fumi-komi-dōsa: The series of motions from stamping, recovery to a stable position by bringing the left foot in after a rapid lunge and accomplished by the continuous body movement forward with Okuri-ashi.

The processes to complete these actions are:

- Without bending the left leg, lunge forward the hips maintaining your posture.
- The right foot should move forward parallel to, and just above the floor - don't point toes upwards.
- Straighten your right leg, causing you to stamp the floor with right foot - feeling of slapping the floor with the foot. Remember, Fumi-komi is to stabilise your body, and the loud stamping slap is the result, not the aim.
- The above action should “straight” posture and bring hips and Left leg/foot up behind the right. (Similar feeling to when stepping up) - Again left leg/knee straight.
- The body should naturally want to keep moving forward with its momentum - use okuri-ashi to continue forward movement.
- **Do not cheat.** Since it is hard to reach our training partner with one *fumi-komi*, people tend to cheat to get closer to their training partner. Common cheating to shorten the distance between you and your training partner is using *tsugi-ashi* and *ayumi-ashi*.

Seme-ashi

This will be mentioned in later chapters. The right foot action is called ‘Seme-ashi (foot used for Seme) when you move your right foot slightly (only slightly) forward, without leaning forward. Have the feeling of pushing right knee, foot and hips forward as if pressing into opponent.

Jiku-ashi

This is the left foot. (Foot used for supporting the body) - The left foot must remain planted in the correct position to allow you to push forward and attack immediately. Do not lose the feeling that your left foot, left leg, left hip and left side of the body are connected.

NB: If the distance between your right foot and left foot is too wide from front to rear, or the centre of gravity moves forward and backward or from backward to forward, or your upper body leans forward and backward in the Kamae, whilst you are trying to give pressure to each other, inviting to initiate an attack, you will not be able to use both feet as described above

Main Points for all footwork:

1. It is **Important** that during ashi-sabaki, that you move maintaining your posture. Have the feeling of moving your hips/tanden along, keeping constant eye level.
2. Keeping your posture must prevent back heel touch the floor. During Okuri-ashi make sure left heel does not touch floor when stepping back.
3. Especially during Okuri-ashi, never drag the rear foot - it must “snap” up immediately behind the front foot. **Hiki-tsuke** is the action of immediately drawing / pulling up the back foot.
4. The foot corresponding to the direction of movement is advanced first. For example, when moving forward the forward foot leads the movement. Likewise when moving backward, the back foot leads. When moving left, the left foot leads, etc. This is the general rule for all footwork techniques.
5. The speed and strength of both feet should be synchronous, the trailing foot being drawn back to its correct guard position quickly. This tempo was termed "Inyo-ashi" (shadow and light foot-movement) by Miyamoto Musashi. Musashi wrote: *"When you cut, when you retreat, and even when you deflect an attack you step right-left-right-left with Inyo-ashi."*
6. The upper body should remain toned, yet relaxed so the shoulders, arms, and shinai do not sway or bob when moving.

Conditions to avoid

In the Book of Five Rings, Miyamoto Musashi invalidates three types of footwork methods: Tobi-ashi, Uki-ashi, and Fumi-suyuru.

Tobi-ashi (Jumping foot)

This foot movement is exhibited when the lead foot is raised upward upon the execution of a step or strike.

Uki-ashi (Floating foot)

This foot movement is when one foot is not grounded. This situation occurs when the body weight is not centred between the feet, allowing one foot to move lightly over the floor while the opposite foot bears the body weight.

Fumi-suyuru (Stuck foot)

When the feet are inactive - fixed in their position.

Chapter 4

Suburi

Suburi is the act of swinging the shinai or bokuto up and down vertically or diagonally. The purpose of suburi is to learn how to handle the shinai or bokuto, the correct direction of its movement (**ha-suji**), the proper grip for striking, and the basic striking movements related to **ashi-sabaki** (footwork) and **tai-sabaki** (body action).

Basic Suburi are **Joge Suburi** (vertical swing) and **naname suburi** (diagonal swing). **Kukan Datotsu** is suburi where one practices striking the targets of *men, kote, do* and *tsuki* to an imaginary opponent.

In the Kamae chapter we discussed the correct posture, grip and stance for Chudan-no-kamae. To master suburi, it is essential all these elements are followed correctly. A solid platform is required for correct cutting.

The elements needed for correct suburi are:

Furi-kaburi (*furi-kaburu*) – Swing the arms and shinai up above the head. NB: The shoulders should be the centre of rotation for the swing – avoid bending wrists and elbows inwards.

Furi-oroshi (*furi-orosu*) – swing the shinai down from an upward position and strike.

Furu (verb) - To move the shinai, continuously up and down or diagonally right and left.

Joge Suburi (also Joge-buri)

- Starting from the correct Chudan-no kamae position:

NB: The manuals state that we should swing the shinai without changing the grip. Some Sensei suggest moving the right hand close to the left or gripping with both hands together in the centre of the tsuka, to make action easier when learning – others say to keep normal grip - do as Instructor asks, but either way - Do NOT allow hands to slide up and down Tsuka during swing - hand position must remain constant.

Furi-kaburi

- Swing the shinai upward in a large movement keeping left and right hands perfectly centred.
- The feeling should be of pushing the left hand forwards and up over the head, raising the hands and elbows as far as shoulders will allow. (DO NOT pull it up with the right hand- this arm must remain relaxed.) Think of lifting elbows up as far as you can.
- The shoulders are the point the arms and shinai rotate around, the other joints should not move initially.
- Keep the shoulders down and relaxed - do not “hunch” them up during swing.

NB: The size of the swing varies with different Sensei’s ideas. Some say that it should only swing back parallel to the floor, as beyond this requires the other joints to bend. Others state that the swing should go all the way back until the shinai tip reaches the centre of your

buttocks. The later one is best for beginners / children as it checks the swing is perfectly centred and teaches the correct way to relax and open the shoulder. Therefore this is the method normally practiced.

- Swing the shinai all the way back over your head in a large arc until the kensen touches the centre of your buttocks.
- You will need to bend / relax your elbows and wrists to do this - Do **NOT** allow your hand grip to loosen.

Furi-oroshi

- Keeping the feeling of rotating the swing around shoulder, allow arms (Elbows and wrists) to naturally extend during the down swing, while turning wrists slightly inwards, with the feeling of “wringing the Tsuka-gawa” with the bottom 3 fingers - **shibori**. Thus, swinging the shinai in a large arc, forward and downwards in a perfectly centred line.
- The swing should finish with the kensen at knee level.

Important points and Common Mistakes:

1. The upswing and down swing should be one action, there is no pause or break between the actions (unless instructed to during certain practice patterns)
2. Cutting off centre is normally a result of the right arm being too stiff, or using it to swing shinai.
3. Keep wrist, elbows and shoulders relaxed - do not hunch shoulders.
4. Keep correct posture - do not “duck” or nod head during swing, and keep hips square to front.
5. Do not stick out your left elbow - this is result of wrong kamae / grip and no shibori action.

Once you have mastered the basic swing add **Okuri-ashi** footwork, moving forward / backward and Kake-goe (shout) to suburi.

- Step forward on the right foot and swing up shinai for furi-kaburi.
- Immediately Swing down shinai and bring up the left foot behind the right - so it is in place at the same moment the swing finishes at knee level - with shout - normally counting, e.g. “ichi”.
- Step back with the left leg and swing shinai up for furi-kaburi.
- Immediately Swing down shinai and bring back the right foot in front of the left - so it is in place at the same moment the swing finishes at knee level - with shout - normally counting, e.g. “ni”.
- Repeat sequence 10, 30, 50, 100 times as required to learn it.

Naname suburi (Naname-buri)

Naname suburi is a progression from Joge suburi where the swings are diagonal. Where as Joge suburi leads to Men and Kote striking, Naname-buri is the basis of Sayu Men (right and left) and Do; Most of the exercise should be performed as Joge Suburi, with some changes:

- Large swing up until kensen reaches between buttocks (as above)
- Swing down and squeeze / turn the wrists to the left, so shinai swings down at on a 45 degree angle path from the right.

NB: Angle is approximate, and can vary between 30 and 60 degrees, just try to keep consistent.

- With the same furi-oroshi action as before, swing down the shinai until kensen is level with left knee.
- Swing the shinai back over your head following the reverse path as swing came down - until kensen touches between buttocks.
- Swing down and squeeze / turn the wrists to the right, so shinai swings down at on a 45 degree angle path from the left.
- With the same furi-oroshi action as before, swing down the shinai until kensen is level with the right knee.

IMPORTANT

- Left hand (think of left thumb) must remain in the centre body line during entire swing.
- Once you have mastered the basic swing, add **Okuri-ashi** footwork, moving forward / backward and later **hiraki-ashi** footwork (moving diagonal sideways).

Kukan Datotsu.

This is suburi practice where we imagines cutting an similar sized opponent's target zones of Shomen, Migi and Hidari Men, Kote, Migi and Hidari Do and thrust to Tsuki.

I will focus on **Shomen** (straight frontal head cut) suburi - as this fundamental strike must be mastered before you can properly learn any other cuts.

Shomen suburi:

- Assume **Chudan-no-Kamae** - it is essential that your posture, grip and kamae are correct - otherwise it will affect and destroy your suburi. (Check Kamae in mirror if needed)

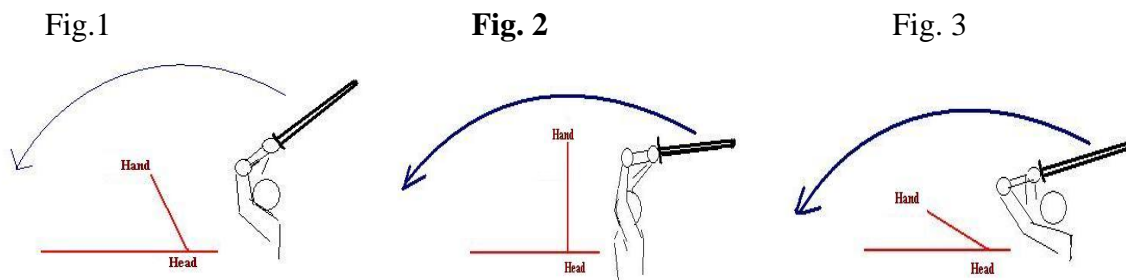
Furi-kaburi

- Raise the arms up until the left fist is above the forehead (at about one fists distance), Shinai is at about a 45 degree angle at least pointing up and back, keeping your head still. NB: The shoulders should be the centre of rotation for the swing – avoid bending wrists and elbows inwards, feeling of throwing hands and elbow forward and up.
- Instruction: “Raise both elbows as far as they will go” may best describe action.

Below are some commonly taught Furi-kaburi. Most text books state: “swing up until left fist is above forehead, the Shinai at 45-degrees up and back.” This would appear to be Fig. 1. Also very common is that seen in figure 3, but I feel this is more the result of bending elbows or Jodan kamae - as it is clear that right fist above forehead here. I have also been taught to swing back until shoulder resist movement, and can act like a spring. Ffurhter to this, to “swing back as if thrusting into a wall behind you.” This would appear to be as seen in Fig. 2.

From practice, Fig. 2 swing is an extension of Fig 1 that is the arms continue their swing up to their natural limit. As we cannot see behind us when swinging up, this is the point reached in most cases. So maybe the saying “perform a large upward swing with the feeling of shinai

being at 45 degrees behind, and left fist above your forehead, use the natural limit of swing to send arms forward to strike." Later, I will include some scientific proof that this method (Fig. 2) is the fastest and most efficient action - see Appendix C.



Furi-oroshi

NB: Other terms: **Kiritsuke** is a cut, and **Kirioroshi** is a downwards cut.

- Swing the shinai down from an upward position and strike.
- Have the feeling of pulling left fist down and forward. Remember arms must rotate around the shoulders. Keep right arm relaxed.
- Naturally allow elbows and wrist to stretch forwards.
- Squeeze both hands slightly in, straightening arms - **shibori**.
- Strike down so kensen stops at your head height.
- Do not use strength to strike, but snap wrists forwards with “whip” action.
- Right fist just below shoulder level, almost parallel to floor, left fist just below chest level.

When performing **Kiri-tsuke** (kiri-oroshi) you must also include:

- **Te-no-uchi** – this is the overall use of the hands when striking. It includes the way of tightening / loosening of the grip, and the adjusting of the balance between the two hands.
- **Chakin-shibori** – the way to grip the shinai with both hands, in posture, or when striking. The term originates from the fact that the way the shinai is gripped when striking resembles the method used to wring out a towel in the tea ceremony. One grips tightly with the little, ring, and middle fingers and loosely with the thumb and forefinger.
- **Sae** – When striking, the correct coordination of the right and left hands, with instantaneous te-no-uchi, and sharp “whip like” wrist action give the strike the sharpness known as “sae”.

"Cut with the left hand, not the right"

I am sure everyone has heard or been told this. So what does it mean? We hold the sword with two hands, not one, so what is the thought here? After listening to the Sensei's I have trained with, I think the following sums up the idea:

The right arm is the forward one and normally the strongest, so there is a tendency to make it do the work. If the right arm is used for pulling up the shinai and cutting, then the action will be incorrect, and will affect your posture. The left hand must pull down and back as the right arm extends forwards to achieve the correct cutting action. By having the **feeling** of the Left arm doing 70% of the work, and the right side 30%, they should work in balance.

Points to watch and avoid:

- Pause between furi-kaburi and Kiri-tsuke (NB: Unless practice like san-kyu-do suburi).
- Hips are not square to front.
- Head ducks / nods down - keep correct posture.
- Left elbow bent and/or sticking out after cutting.
- Left fist finishes to high (level with right fist) or to low (arms not reaching forwards)
- Using excess strength - stiff right arm or shoulder raise (hunch) when cutting.
- No snap action with kensen.
- Kensen should not be below level of the hands - maybe sign of incorrect grip or hand position in Kamae.
- Not completing cut, but pulling it back upwards without completing action - try pausing.

Kake-goe (shouts)

Kake-goe is a natural vocalisation which shows that one is full of spirit and on guard. It can serve to encourage one's self, to intimidate the opponent, and to announce victory.

The shout is often called **ki-ai**, as the shout shows that one's spirit is fully focused on attacking.

Before attacking from toma (long distance), use shouts of "Yah" or "Ei" are often used to increase one's own spirit and to unsettle the opponent.

When attacking we shout the name of the target, "MEN!", showing that you meant to hit where you did, but that you are throwing all of your **ki** into the strike. Continue this kiai until Zanshin is complete. During Suburi make **ki-ai** short and sharp. If counting, shout the numbers.

The shout must be loud and strong - not from your mouth/vocal cords, but from your abdomen / belly. Close your mouth after you shout.

1. Stationary Shomen Uchi

- **Furi-kaburi**: large swing up until left fist is above forehead.
- **Kiritsuke: Shomen Uchi** - left fist in front of chest; right arm extended and almost parallel to floor, both hands (**Te-no-uchi**) snap and squeeze slightly inward in (**Chakin-shibori**), express sharp loud **Ki-ai** - "MEN!"

After this, add Okuri-ashi:

2. Okuri Ashi - Shomen Uchi. ("Men uchi San Kyo Do Suburi")

- One step forward from right with **Suri-ashi** as SHINAI swung up **Furi-kaburi** above head as in above practice - "Ichi"
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right (**hikitsuki**).
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ni!"
- Retreat from the left foot in one **Okuri-ashi** step to original position; assume **Chudan-no-kamae** - "San!"

NB: The first steps may be altered in order to aid learning principles

- *Swing up/ Furi-kaburi – "Ichi"*
- *Step forward from the right, then perform Kiritsuke – "Men"*

Later, do both actions in one continuous motion (**Ik-kyo-do**) -no pause between **Furi-kaburi** and **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi**:

3. "Men uchi Ni Kyu Do Suburi."

- One step forward from right with **Suri-ashi** as Shinai swung up **Furi-kaburi** above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right.
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ichi! etc"
- Retreat from left foot in one **Okuri-ashi** step to original position; assume **Chudan-no-kamae** - "Ni!"

4. Renzuku Shomen Uchi- "Zenshi Kotai Men Suburu."

- One step forward from right with **Suri-ashi** as Shinai swung up **Furi-kaburi** above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** - as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right, later motion should be in **Ik-kyo-do** (one motion, no pause.)
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ichi! etc"
- Retreat from left foot **Okuri-ashi** step swinging the Shinai up with **Furi-kaburi**.
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** as you bring right foot back to the proper position in front of the left, the later motion should be in **Ik-kyo-do** (one motion, no pause.)
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ni! etc"

NB: Each cut must be with **Ki-ten-tai-itchi** - the harmonisation of Spirit - Sword - Body when cutting. Co-ordinate the strike - withdraw of trailing foot - kiai together.

The above basics can be expanded to include other suburi, such as:

- **Sonkyo suburi** - cut when rising, furi-kaburi as sinking back to sonkyo.
- **Matawari suburi** - feet in wide stance, and cutting as you squat/sink down.
- **Sayu Men suburi** - cutting to the left and right men (see **Kiri-kaeshi** chapter)
- **Kote men suburi** - practice renzuku Kote and Men forwards then back.
- **Katate suburi** - using only left hand (best performed against target.)
- **haya suburi** - using jumping foot work to cut forward and backwards

Also, as well as practicing alone with shinai, they can be practiced:

- In pairs, cutting to a Shinai held out in both extended arms at your head level. This is beneficial in teaching feeling of not striking to hard, learning te-no-uchi and sae, as well as practicing reigi of working together.
- Using Bokuto instead of shinai can be beneficial in the understanding of ha-suji.
- Practicing suburi forward and backwards up and down the Dojo length on one breath to help breathe control and ashi-sabaki.
- Using Hiraki-ashi or Fumi-komi-ashi to learn ashi-sabaki.

Chapter 5

Ma-ai, Kihon-no-uchi-kata, Tsuki-kata, Uke-kata, Tsuba-zerai and Zanshin

Ma-ai

Ma-ai is the spatial distance between you and your opponent. The establishment of **ma-ai** through relationship with the opponent is a subtle and important matter.

1. **Chika-ma (Chikai ma-ai)**: Closer distance. When you get in further from *issoku itto no ma*, you are in *chika-ma*. You can easily reach your opponent but your opponent also can reach you easily.
2. **Issoku itto no ma-ai (Issoku itto no ma)**: This distance is a distance where you can reach your opponent with one step forwards and you can avoid your opponent's cut with one step backwards. The fundamental spatial distance in Kendo.
3. **To-ma (Toi ma-ai)**: Distance beyond **issoku itto no ma**. You cannot reach your opponent and your opponent cannot reach you. Basically your shinai and your opponent's shinai are not touching (or barely touching).
 - **Uchi-ma**: The distance for you to strike. One's optimum distance and opportunity for striking. When learning, start close to make keeping posture easy, then increase distance - try to be able to strike from as far as possible.

It is easy to strike from **Chika-ma**; Beginners should focus on practicing **Keiko** from **To-ma** to encourage fast *ashi-sabaki* and large fluid striking.

Closing from *to-ma* is when one must be fully prepared to attack or be attacked - there is no chance to relax.

Kihon-no-uchi-kata -The Basic way of striking and Tsuki-kata - Thrusting.

We can learn, practice and improve our cutting with *Suburi*, but we need an opponent to learn about distance and striking effectively.

We should practice striking with *Bokuto* to just above the target, and striking the target with *Shinai* - either to the *Bogu* or a *shinai* held close to actual target position, so not to effect cutting distances.

Practicing in pairs, the term **Kakarite** is used for the one striking (practicing technique) and **Motodachi** used for the receiver of the strike or technique. Both must maintain alertness during practice as both roles are vital.

Kakarite must always maintain posture and pressure to be ready to cut immediately any opportunity to strike. The height of the **kensen** in **kamae** will vary with the size of one's opponent, as will your **Uchi-ma**. When in **kamae** adjust the **kensen** level by moving the left fist position rather than bending the wrist. When cutting your right hand should finish around your opponents shoulder level.

Motodachi must help maintain correct Ma-ai and provide correct opportunities to be struck.

- Open for **Men** by moving **Kensen** to your right, or lowering it to the right.
- Open for **Kote** by raising the **kensen** to the left - at first, exaggerate movement to make **kote** easy to strike.
- Open for **Do** by raising arms to reveal target, and sometimes turn body to the right to offer larger target.
- Open for **Tsuki** by lowering **kensen** down to the right - keep chin pulled in to receive.

If not wearing Bogu (armour) then use the shinai to receive strikes. Do not hold it arms stretched out as mentioned in the Suburi section as this will effect **Ma-ai** - instead hold close to where actual target would be, in such a way you are still protected.

- **Men** - hold shinai in both hands just in front and above the head, or with hands in that position, shinai out to your side.
- **Kote** - hold shinai in stretched out hands at position **Kote** would normally be, or with hands in that position, shinai out to your side.
- **Do** - hold shinai in both hands, right hand low down close to your right hip and left hand by right shoulder. The vertical shinai is then in similar position to the **Do**.
- **Tsuki** - Not normally practiced by beginners except in style of Bokuto ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho.

First one must master **Reigi -Kamae - Ashi-sabaki** and **Suburi**. Then you must learn and develop effective **Kihon**. Keep in mind some important ideas:

- Strike must be with sufficient force to cut with a real sword. Not too soft or too hard - **Men** and **Do** are struck more firmly than the **Kote**.
- You must always keep control of posture and kamae.
- Strikes are not made by force of strength, but by the correct action of arms and wrists.
- Do not think of striking with the Right hand, strike with the left. Do not think of striking with the left hand, but strike with the hips, legs and feet - use all your body.
- Do not put strength into lifting the shinai, relax arms, and strike quickly.

Steps to Kihon Waza:

1. Focus on large proper **Furi-kaburi**, **Ki-ai** and **Te-no-uchi** from a stationary position where **Datotsu-bui** (striking zones) can be reached without moving.
2. From **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai**, step one step in using **Suri-ashi** to strike to add **Ashi-sabaki** and **Ki-ten-tai-no-itchi** practice.
3. From **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai**, build up pressure, and then step one step in and strike using **Fumi-komi-ashi** and **Ki-ten-tai-itchi**. Here one learns and improves their **Uchi-ma** (optimum distance and opportunity for cutting)
4. From a far distance (**Toma**), step into **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai** with **Suri-ashi**, then use sharp **Fumi-komi** to strike and follow through with **Zanshin**

Step 1: Statory Shomen Uchi

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance where Datotsu-bu can be reached without step.
- **Furi-kaburi**: large swing up until left fist is above forehead.
- **Kiritsuke: Shomen Uchi** - cut Men with left fist in front of chest; right arm extended and almost parallel to floor, both hands squeeze slightly inward in (**Chakin-shibori**)

and (**Te-no-uchi**) wrist snap, express sharp loud **Ki-ai** - "MEN!"

- Do both actions in one continuous motion (**Ik-kyo-do**) -no pause between **Furi-kaburi** and **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi**.

Step 2: Okuri Ashi Shomen Uchi

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance of **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai** (where one step required to reach the target.)
- One step forward from right with **Suri-ashi** as Shinai swung up **Furi-kaburi** above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** strike as you bring left foot up to proper position behind the right.
- At the moment of striking, express **Ki-ai** - "Men!" or "Ichi! etc"
- **Ki-ai, Hiki-tsuke** (pulling up Left foot) and Strike must be simultaneous - **Ki-ten-tai-itchi**
- Retreat from left foot in one small **Okuri-ashi** step to show **Zanshin** in **Chudan-no-kamae**.
- Retreat from left foot, in another small **Okuri-ashi** step, to original distance / position, maintaining **Chudan-no-kamae**.

Step 3: Fumikomi ashi Shomen Uchi - **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai** (one step cut)

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance of **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai** (where one step required to reach the target - start at easy distance, then try to increase it maintain posture.)
- When Moto-dachi (opponent) opens their shinai to their right -
- **Furi-kaburi** swing up Shinai above head as in above practice, and immediately,
- Step forward and **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi**. Strike **Men** while stepping decisively forward with the right foot, and expressing **Ki-ai** - "Men!" the step should be large enough to reach the opponent at **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai**. When striking, **Ki-ai**, stamping **Fumi-komi-ashi**, and Strike must be simultaneous - **Ki-ten-tai-itchi**
- Immediately bring the left foot to proper position (**hiki-tsuke**); use quick **Okuri-ashi** (**suri-ashi**) to proceed straight forward; relax hands; keep the arms extended until ready to return to **Chudan-no-kamae**.

NB: Several ways of continuing after cutting which are useful to practice are:

1. Continue just 1 step forward and stop at tsuba-zerai (see later) - takes 2 steps back.
2. Continue straight forward 3-4 steps while Motodachi retreats - Kakarite keeping Shinai close to men target. Assume **chudan** and reverse roles.

Step 4: Seme – Fumikomi ashi Shomen Uchi - **Toma** (two step action)

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at a distance of **To-ma** (where one cannot reach the target in one step - Kisasi not touching.) express **Ki-ai** (Yaah!, Aeii! etc)
- Take one step into **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai** with **Suri-ashi**,
- Advance right foot/knee/body slightly while maintaining **Kensen** position to apply pressure (**seme-ashi**)
- When Moto-dachi (opponent) opens their shinai to their right -
- Immediately, (**Ik-kyo-do** - in one motion) **Furi-kaburi** swing up Shinai above head as in above practice, **Kiritsuke - Men-uchi** -strike **Men** while stepping decisively

forward with the right foot, and expressing **Ki-ai** - "Men!" the step should be large enough to reach the opponent at **Issoko-itto-no-ma-ai**. When striking, **Ki-ai**, stamping **Fumi-komi-ashi**, and Strike must be simultaneous - **Ki-ten-tai-itchi**

- Immediately bring the left foot to proper position; use quick successive **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)** to proceed straight forward 3 to 4 fast steps; relax hands; keep the arms extended until ready to turn shortest way towards opponent - steps slow slightly to turn with good posture., with eye contact and return to **Chudan-no-kamae**, at **To-ma** or **Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai** fully ready to attack again.

NB: Several different ways of Motodachi offering target can be practiced:

1. Open immediately after Kakarite makes pressure (**seme**)
2. Keep relaxed kamae, and Kakarite will "Drive" in **seme** to control centre line and make opportunity to strike (**kizeme**)
3. Wait 2-3 seconds before opening Kamae - to teach sensing opportunity.

Summary of Undesirable habits:

Furi-kaburi:

- **Kensen** pulled back to soon losing control of the centre.
- Eyes looking at target rather the straight ahead into opponents.
- Hands in front of face at **Furi-kaburi**
- A stiff left elbow or bending the elbows in.
- Shoulders rise or hunch.
- Head "ducks" under arms, nodding action.
- Shinai up angled to the right due to excess strength in the right arm or hand
- **Kensen** drops in the back below hand level during **Furi-kaburi**.

Fumi-komi, Kiritsuke and Zanshin:

- A pause after **Furi-kaburi** and before **Kiritsuke**.
- Insufficient **Ki-ai**
- Not moving straight forward.
- Hips not square to opponent.
- Right arm low
- Left elbow bent
- Left fist too high.
- Shinai swings down in an angle due to excess strength in the right arm or hand
- Striking too hard or too softly or without snap
- Raising **shinai** above your head after striking
- Dropping hands to make tsuber-zeriai to soon.
- Turns away from opponent to soon or runs around them.
- Turns to soon while passing opponent or runs to far from opponent.
- Turns wrong direction (away from them)
- Turns with hands and shinai still extended forward.

After understanding the fundamentals of **Men-uchi**, progression onto the other strikes and thrusts can be made using the same basic practice method.

Kote-Uchi

- As in **Men-uchi**, a straight large **Furi-kaburi** and **ashi-sabaki**.
- From **Chudan-no-kamae** the distance where one step required to reach the target is different to **Men-uchi** as the **Kote** is held forward of body. Adjust your **Uchi-ma** and the size of the step appropriately.
- Looking at the opponent's eyes, strike the **Kote** straight with both arms naturally extended. Say "**Kote!**"
- Keep **Kensen** directed to the opponent and bring left foot up behind right immediately (**hiki-tsuke**).
- Use quick **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)** to proceed straight forward and stop at **tsuba-zeriai**.

NB: In some exercises, (such as using Uchi-komi-bo) run straight past Motodachi for Zanshin, and turn to the right at correct **ma-ai** (distance). Most, not all, text books and Sensei teach to always to take Tsuba-zeriai after Kote-uchi.

*Normally the motodachi should make a clear opening that is easy to strike. However in some exercise they may keep a passive kamae. In this case it is only possible to strike the kote cleanly by either displacing the **kensen** using a push-release technique or **harai-waza**, or to change ones body centre. Adjusting the foot work allows clean striking of the **Kote** as soon as **kensen** rises.*

- During forward step, position your **RIGHT** foot in front of opponent's right foot, with hips and body facing them directly.



Undesirable habits:

- **Shinai** swings down in an angle.
- Eyes look to **Kote** before striking.
- Left fist too high or to the side.
- Hips bent or twisted.
- Pulls **Kensen** away from the opponent after striking.
- Arms not extended - pulling hands inward to correct incorrect distance.

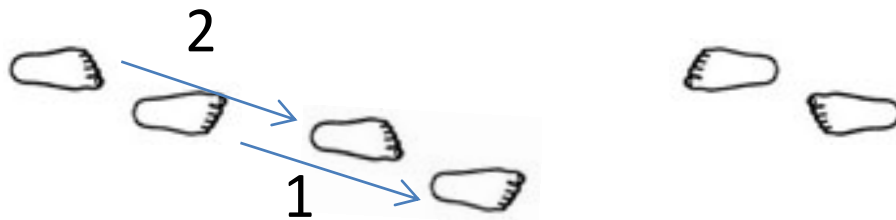
Do-Uchi (Migi)

- As in **Men-uchi**, straight large **Furi-kaburi** and **ashi-sabaki**.
- Looking at the opponent's eyes
- Swing the shinai down at a 45 degree angle in front of you keeping the Left fist/thumb centred and below level of right fist (with opponent same size).
- Strike the **Do** straight in front with both arms naturally extended, say "**Do!**"
- Bring left foot up behind right immediately (**hiki-tsuke**).
- Use quick successive **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)** to proceed straight forward 3 to 4 fast steps for **Zanshin**.

NB: Begin by cutting straight ahead, and passing opponent on your right side. **Motodachi** can turn to their right to offer large **Do** area, and allow **kakarite** to pass. Zanshin - after passing turn right.

Later,

- Step out to the right so your left foot is in line with opponents left foot on completion of the strike.
- Move quickly past them to your left side with the feeling of "brushing" shoulders. At appropriate distance, turn left for zanshin.



Undesirable habits:

- **Kiri-tsuke** does not start from above the head.
- Eyes look to **Do** before striking.
- **Shinai** strikes with the side **take**.
- Left fist too high (Shinai tips down) or fist not centred.
- Arms are crossed
- Hips twisted or leaning forward.

Tsuki-uchi.

- From **Chudan-no-kamae** at the required distance
- Step in one (or two from To-ma) large step from the right without moving or dipping the **Kensen**.
- Thrust to **Tsuki** straight to the **Nodo** (throat)
- Extend both arms naturally without raising them and shout "**Tsuki!**"
- Bring left foot up to proper position immediately, thrusting hip forward to maintain posture and stability.
- As soon as thrust complete relax kamae and let arm return naturally back into **Chudan-no-kamae**.

Undesirable habits:

- **Shinai** is thrust in an angle because of uneven strengths in both arms or hands
- Hands too high
- Hips are twisted
- **Kakarite** strikes the floor with **kensen** after **Tsuki**.

Uke-kata - (Basic blocking techniques)

These are the methods of defending oneself from strikes using the shinai or bokuto. So why do we need to learn these? Kendo teaches that there is no defence for the sake of defence and it is not Kendo to just block attacks.

That being said, it is common for beginners in Ji-geiko or shiai to block attacks in such a way that they leave other areas open and easy to strike. Usually this is because all they know is to attack, and when under pressure they back off and try to avoid being hit.

By teaching correct Uke-kata, they should learn the correct posture, use of arms and shinai to block attacks and be in a position where they can immediately attack. These actions will eventually lead onto Oji waza such as Suriage and Kaeshi waza.

Shomen-uchi-no uke-kata I (blocking straight strike to head)

- Push both fist forwards and up. (No higher than right hand at opponents throat level.)
- Take a small step forward, or have feeling of going forwards
- Block opponents strike in a diagonal direction with left (**omote**) or right (**ura**) side of shinai (or bokuto).
- Immediately return kamae to control the centre - being mentally and physically return to attack.

NB: This movement is the principle beginnings of **suri-age**.

Shomen-uchi-no uke-kata II (blocking straight strike to head)

- Raise hands and kensen in response to opponents attack.
- Strike down opponent's shinai in a diagonal direction with left (**omote**) or right (**ura**) side of shinai (or bokuto).
- Immediately return kamae to control the centre - being mentally and physically return to attack.

NB: This movement is the principle beginnings of **kiri-otoshi**.

For blocking attacks to the Hidari and Migi (Left and right) Men, please refer to Kiri-kaeshi chapter 7.

Kote-uchi-no uke-kata I

- Push both fist forwards, turning them (think of using left fist) slightly right (also possible to the left.)
- Adjust Kamae to maintain correct using rear step if required, but with feeling of going forwards.
- Block opponents strike to the right front with a sliding lift using the right (**ura**) side of shinai (or bokuto) (- left (**omote**) side can also be used in the other direction.)
- Immediately return kamae to control the centre - being mentally and physically return to attack.

NB: This movement is the principle beginnings of **suri-age**.

Kote-uchi-no uke-kata II

- Push both fist forward left, turning them to the right
- Receive opponents strike on the left centre side area of your shinai.
- Immediately return kamae to control the centre - being mentally and physically return to attack.

NB: This movement is the principle beginnings of **kaeshi waza**.

Do-uchi-no uke-kata

- Adjust Kamae to the diagonal rear left.
- Lift both hands slightly.
- Slap opponent's striking shinai down. (Feeling of small sharp striking action)
- Immediately return kamae to control the centre - being mentally and physically return to attack.

NB: This movement is the principle beginnings of **uchi-otoshi-waza**.

Tsuki-no-uke-kata I

- Push both fists forward, turning them (think of using left fist) slightly left.
- Take a small step forward, or have feeling of going forwards
- Block opponents strike with a sliding lift to the left front with the left (**omote**) side of shinai (or bokuto).
- Immediately return kamae to control the centre - being mentally and physically return to attack.

NB: This movement is the principle beginnings of **suri-age**.

The above is not the only ways - The idea of cutting down the attack (as mention for men and do above can equally be used for **Kote** and **Tsuki**, leading to Uchi-otoshi waza.

Always have the feeling of going forward when blocking where I have mentioned moving backward, have the feeling of stepping back left foot to where it would be needed for your **uchi-ma**, then block with a feeling of pushing forward. Your kamae must be stable and prepared to attack going forwards.

Tsuba-zeriai:

Above, I mentioned moving into Tsuba-zeriai. This is the situation in which the distance between opponents is at its closest. Both are holding shinai (bokuto) tilted slightly right with the tsuba's locked together, fighting to spoil opponent's posture and gain initiative to attack.



- After striking, move forward quickly with **Okuri-ashi**.
- Do not pull hands down too quickly, but allow hands to come down naturally as you close in. Have the feeling of keeping shinai in contact with Men, forcing hands to lower as you close the distance.
- Hands should not be close to the body, but keeps arms forward in a position where you can swing up (**furi-kaburi**) normally.
- Shinai held forward - upward - tilted to the right. Left hand is left of centre, right hand to the right - **NB** Left thumb knuckle should be almost centred.
- Blades are locked together by the Tsuber. (NB: 1. not fists - try using Bokuto to see position. 2. Touch fist to the blade is Hansoku (Foul) in Shiai.

NB: After cutting **Kote**, when moving in quickly after straight strike, raise **kensen** only when needed to avoid touching opponent, and make sure it come to the correct forward right upward position - this will be impossible if cutting at an angle and pulling tip backward after striking.

From this position, **seme** by pushing body / hands in, down, right and left to find opportunity to strike (see **Kiki waza**). Do not relax, keep alert and show **Zanshin**, being ready to attack at once.

Zan-shin:

The body posture and state of mind in which, even after striking, one is alert and ready to respond instantly to any counter attack by your opponent.

Zan-shin is the state in which, after striking with full power and without hesitation, one faces the opponent with full spirit and with the ability to respond naturally.

Generally speaking, after striking one should put the proper distance between yourself and the opponent, and face them in **Chudan-no-kamae** ready to attack or respond to counter attack.

During **kihon** and **Keiko**, the **motodachi** will normally move aside to allow you to move past, straight forward, to the correct distance, where you turn to show **Zan-shin** by being able to attack immediately. If they do not move, then do not "run around" them - you must drive forward.

You may force them out of your way, but if not, enter to **Tsuber-zeriai** or perform **Tai-atari**.

If you cannot move the proper distance away from your opponent, such as after **Tsuki** attack (and during **Kata**), show **Zan-shin** by keeping **kensen** centred around the throat area to guard against attack. Only then move back to the correct **ma-ai**.

You must show and train this idea of **Zan-shin** during all practices. It is a vital part of **yuko-datotsu** (valid striking). In shiai, even a perfect strike will be deemed invalid if you do not display **Zan-shin** afterwards.

Ways to practice.

Some ideas of improving **Zan-shin**, and instil the actions required are:

- **Motodachi** to turn and following **Kakarite** as they past. Check that they look, turn correctly, and kamae is in balance to respond and attack.
- Try **Men - Zanshin - Men**, where, after striking and making distance, **kakarite** turns and cuts **Men** immediately (**Motodachi** must be in correct place).
- During **Uchikomi**, **Kakari**, **Ji-geiko** - follow up after attacks, and try to strike opponent as they turn - this is one of the key opportunities to attack.

Chapter 6

Kiri-kaeshi and Tai-atari

The importance of training the fundamentals has already been mentioned. **Kiri-kaeshi** is an important practice method for beginners and experience Kendoka alike. It should be used at the start and end of practice as a warming up and cooling down exercise.

I will later discuss all the benefits of Kiri-kaeshi, but first is how to practice it.

Kiri-kaeshi

Important points to check:

- All movements must be as large as possible.
- Movements of body and striking action coordinated correctly.
- Do not sever the mental connection between you and your opponent and perform all motions in an unbroken series.
- When swinging the Shinai upward, make sure it reaches centre position well above your head.
- Make the left and right strikes at an angle of about 45 degrees, beginning with a strike to the left side (your right).
- Keep shoulder relaxed, extend elbows when striking, and keep left fist centred.
- Keep correct ma-ai and make sure you cut with the monuchi.
- It is important for beginners to practice correctly with slow and exaggerated movements rather than with speed.
- Always end with a strike to the left side (your right.)
- Use strong **ki-ai** and correct and controlled breathing.

If **kiri-kaeshi** is not done properly it will not have the desired results. It is essential to practice fully committed and correctly. If one seeks only speed, striking will become imprecise and small. Aim for precision and with improvement gradually increase speed.

Kiri-kaeshi practice:

Kakarite:

- From **To-ma** give loud **Ki-ai, seme** to body and perform a large Shomen strike .
- Move forward quickly and **Tai-a-tari** with good posture. (**Breathe allowed**)
- Immediately **Furi-kaburi** straight up while stepping forward on right foot, and strike continuous **Hidari** and **Migi Men** - first and last are **Hidari Men** (your right side).
- Move forward in **Okuri-ashi (suri-ashi)** four steps and retreat about five steps (see below)
- Cutting the men (not the shinai) from correct **uchi-ma**, give loud **Ki-ai (Men, Men, Men etc)**, follow **Motodachi's** movements.
- After last **Hidari** strike, return to **To-ma** in **Chudan**, then repeat above **Kiri-kaeshi** actions.
- After last **Hidari** strike, return to **To-ma** in **Chudan** and,
- From **To-ma** give loud **Ki-ai, seme** to body and perform a large **Shomen** strike
- Follow through with the final **Shomen** 3-4 steps and show **Zanshin**.

Motodachi:

- After **seme**, open quickly to allow unobstructed **Shomen** to be received.
- Receive tai-a-tari.
- Move backward from the left foot and receive alternate **Hidari** and **Migi Men** strikes, controlling the **ma-ai** using Ayumi-ashi footwork. (Normally 4 back and 5 forward).
- Repeat above sequence.
- Then on receiving final **shomen**, move to your right and let **kakarite** move passed, turn and check **zanshin**. (The pairs then usually reverse the roles and repeat exercise.)

The **motodachi** role is very important as they control the **ma-ai** for the exercise.

According to **Kakarite's** ability, they must alter the speed and intensity of the practice.

1. Allow beginners to strike your **Men** by either keeping open kamae or by hold shinai vertically close, and in centre of your men.
2. Block left / right strikes by hold shinai vertically (or slightly angled inwards) and moving it to the left and right side, while keeping left wrist at waist level.
3. For more advance practice, keep hands more central and stop strikes by striking down there shinai.
4. Use ten-o-uchi when blocking to stop your own men being struck.
5. Keeps constant rhythm moving backwards and forwards.

A good **motodachi** is required for correct **Kiri-kaeshi**. Always watch **kakarite's** movements and be able to point out any mistakes.

Some of the Benefits of doing Kiri-kaeshi:

- Improves posture
- Improves stamina while learning correct breathing.
- Strikes become stronger and reliable
- Learn to keep shoulders relaxed and flexible
- Learn the skill of **ten-o-uchi**
- Develops faster striking technique
- Improves footwork
- Develops a stable **kamae**
- **Ma-ai** is made clear
- Strengthens ones spirit and body.
-

Some of the Benefits of receiving Kiri-kaeshi:

- Improves posture.
- Improves footwork and balance.
- Gain awareness of **ma-ai**.
- Develops **ten-o-uchi**.
- Gain awareness of judging opponents skill.

Always practice **Kiri-kaeshi**. Practice it at the start of Keiko to warm up and prepare oneself for practice, and at the end to correct one's posture. Use it to condition one's body.

Variations on Kiri-kaeshi practice:

- Practice with **bokuto** and **suri-ashi** to master the basic pattern of cutting, blade path, and breathing.
- Practice the sequence striking only **Shomen** to teach partners footwork and **ma-ai**.
- Practice cutting **Sayu men** the length or width of the Dojo. Boosting stamina and number of strikes.
- Strike **Hidari** and **Migi Do** forwards and backwards.
- Alternate **Sayu Men** and **Do** strikes.
- **Uchikomi Kiri-kaeshi** - Perform Striking techniques such as Men, Kote-Men etc 3 or 5 times, after which the set of 9 - sayu Men cuts, followed by another set of uchi-komi, and another set of 9-sayu men cuts before finishing on men or another 3-5 cuts.

The standard format for BKA Grading requires **Kakari-te** to execute **Tai-atari**. However, not all senior Sensei say it is necessary. At the start of training, it may be easier for **motodachi** just to move backward, as this will not disturb the posture or balance of **Kakari-te**, and will avoid them pulling hands down after cutting.

Tai-atari

This is the act of colliding with the opponent with the surplus force of a strike. **Tai-atari** is important not only for upsetting the opponents balance and posture and creating an opportunity for a strike, but also for stabilizing your own posture (especially lower body).

Effective & Correct Tai-atari:

- Your position of your hands and elbows are very important as you make contact. Your left hand should be at the similar level as **chudan kamae** but slightly left of centre line.
- Consequently your right hand will move slightly off centre to the right, with **shinai** lifted up of course, your right hand will be mid chest or a little lower.

NB: This will help to stop your elbows from crushing into your *do* and your shinai will be at slight angle rather than straight up. This is same as discussed in **tsuba-zeriai**.

Breathing is very important. Do not inhale as you make contact. Hold in some of your breath as contact is made, don't expend all your air striking. Feel that you have a strong hara (tension in stomach muscles).

- As you meet opponent in **tsuba-zeriai**, have a feeling like te-no-uchi in the hands - to make arms strong.
- Use your body and hips to push forward and slightly up while using **fumi-komi** like footwork. Push forward with arms only so much as they maintain the correct position for swinging up to strike.
- Use left leg and lower back to drive in. The feeling is of a crashing blow rather than a push.
- Whether opponent moves backward or is strong and you move backwards, you must be ready and strike immediately.

When receiving **Tai-atari**, step forward right foot and push in the hips. (Do not step back when receiving). You must maintain your balance.

- For **Kiri-kaeshi**, allow the force to push you back a step, and receive strikes.
- Otherwise, both should crash into each other. Whoever keeps their posture and arms positioned correctly, can then perform Hiki-waza and strike.

Therefore Tai-atari can be used for to purposes:

1. To force back and unbalance opponent to allow you to strike going forwards.
2. To force arms in and unbalance opponent, to give you opportunity to perform **Hiki-waza**.

Chapter 7

Seme, Sen and Kikai

It is the achieving of the perfect strike which is the goal of Kendo. All the previous practices teach our bodies how to move correctly. When we face our opponent in perfect **Kamae**, we will be in a deadlock. Breaking this deadlock, by pressing and probing for weakness, is known as **Seme-ai**. While taking the initiative to attack (**sen**), we must also be able to detect or make an opportunity to strike (**kikai**) before we select a technique to make the valid strike. It is said that without the struggle to break the deadlock by taking the initiative, it is not Kendo, but mere “slapping for points”

Seme

This complex idea is critical to learning Kendo. **Seme** is described as taking the initiative to close the distance with the opponent with full spirit. This puts the opponent off balance mentally and physically.

Basically it is the process of searching for a way to break the deadlock of **kamae**, and putting yourself in an advantageous position where you produce an opportunity to make a valid strike.

There is a saying in Kendo “Win then strike; do not strike to win” - it is **seme** where we must win before we strike.

San-sappo. (Mitsu no kujiki)

San-sappo is the teaching of the three ways to overwhelm an opponent. Everyone’s Kendo differs due to their physical build and personality, and the kind of defence and attack methods developed are almost unlimited. However, they can be grouped together in 3 ways to unbalance and overwhelm your opponent.

1. **Ki-o-korosu -Killing the Spirit (Ki)** - Use your own spirit and force of will (Ki) to overcome your opponents Ki. With strong spirit they may feel fear, doubt or surprise, forestalling their attack and leading to a weakness or opportunity to strike.
2. **Ken-o-korosu - Killing the sword** - Spoil the opponents **kamae**. Control the opponent’s **kensen** by restraining or deflecting it. If you direct your **kensen** to the centre of your opponent’s body, you will exert control over their actions.
3. **Waza-o-korosu - Killing the technique.** - By anticipating opponents attack, you can disrupt it and make it ineffective. As they attack, sweep it aside and counter attack, or be in a position where they are unable to strike.

Sen - the initiative:

Sen can be defined as Initiative, advantage, and ambition. When facing an opponent in Kendo, we must constantly strive to seize the initiative. When one has **sen** (the initiative) one defeats the opponent. There are said to be three **sen** within **sen**. In relation to the opponent these are before, during, and after **sen**.

There are different names and descriptions given to them, such as **sen-sen-no-sen**, **sen-no-sen**, **go-no-sen** or as Mushashi used in his book, Go Rin no Sho, **Ken-no-sen**, **Tai-no-sen**, **Tai-tai-no-sen**. I have used the terms listed by the All Japan Kendo Federation.

Mittsu-no-sen:

In **kendo** it is of paramount importance to suppress the opponent's movement at the moment it begins. It may be said that the competition to take **sen** decides the match. There are said to be three **sen**:

1. **Sen-sen-no-sen** - (The before **sen**) When facing an opponent, having keen insight to quickly recognise their start, attack immediately, forestalling opponents move. This act of attacking faster than opponent's **sen** is the most important in **kendo**. This is the initiative of the pre-emptive strike **debana-waza**.
2. **Sen-no-sen (sen-zen-no sen)** - When the opponent starts an attack, win by striking him before their attack is complete
3. **Go-no-sen** (the after) - When the opponent see **suki** (weakness) and initiates an attack, win by striking down or parrying attack, and counter attack when opponent is discourage.

Kikai

This is a good opportunity. The best moments to strike are called **datotsu-no-koki**. These are said to be when:

Datotsu-no-koki:

- Opponent begins to strike
- Opponent Blocks a strike
- Opponent finishes a strike or moves back.

It can be said that these are the three great opportunities that cannot be missed. It is important to practice recognising these situations.

There are moments that are said to occur unfailingly during the course of combat where opportunities occur:

1. Avoid their strengths, strike where and when they are weakest.
 - Strike openings when they appear, but do not be tricked by feints of weakness.
 - Control opponent, take an advantageous **ma-ai**, and strike them when they are immobile or move backwards. (**Ippon uchi no waza, Tobikomi-waza**)
2. Harass them and strike.
 - Aggressively probe opponent's **kamae** and strike at resultant movements.
 - Attack relentlessly and strike at openings. (**Ni-san-dan-no-waza**)
3. Strike them when they move to attack.
 - Discern your opponent has decided to attack, as their **Ki** is about to take form, and strike them first. (**Debana-waza.**)
4. Strike them at the moment of his attack.
 - Fein weakness, and invite them to attack
 - Strike at the unbalanced part of their attack. (**Nuki-waza ,Suriage-waza.**)
 - Wait until they think of success, then counter and strike. (**Nuki-waza, kaeshi-waza**)
5. Strike them when they are confused.
 - Strike when your opponent when they are beset with doubts and unable to decide on action.
 - Confuse them and strike. (**Katsugi-waza.**)
6. Strike them when they stop.
 - Strike opponent when their attacks comes to an end.
 - Strike when their psychological, physical and technical impetus as ended. (**Uchiotoshi-waza.**)

This is the idea of taking the initiative (**sen**) by use of **seme** to find the opportunity (**kikai**) to perform technique (**waza**).

Basic Seme techniques:

- The saying "Win then strike; do not strike to win" emphasizes the importance of gaining superiority over the opponent before striking.
- **Seme** is a way to overcome opponent's strong **ki-ai** and **Kensen**;
- Breaking the opponent's **Ki-ai** and **Kamae** creates opportunity to strike.
- As soon as **Seme** defeats the opponent's **Kensen**, you must strike without hesitation
- Basic practice is done with Shinai or Bokuto; applications are practiced later with Bogu.

Kensen and opportunity:

When is **Chudan-no-kamae**, the kensen is directed towards the throat, this exerts pressure on opponents, preventing them attacking. If the kensen moves there is a chance to strike.

- **Kensen** moves to far to the sides, or is to low, and then **Men** and **Tsuki** become open.
- **Kensen** is raised to high - **Kote** becomes open.
- Hands and Arms raised to high - **Do** becomes open.

These above points also apply to how **seme** and **furi-kaburi** are performed - if you move your **kensen** away from centre before moving into attack, you will give opportunity away.

Ways to Deflecting the Kensen.

When opponent obligingly offers an open target, simply proceed with one on the basic strikes or thrust. If however, he has assumed a stable **kamae**, you must break it before striking.

1. **Fureru** (Touch): lightly touch **Kensen** from right or left side without moving the position of your left grip. Feel how the opponent responds, you may raise doubt or concern in opponent's mind and induce a reaction.
2. **Osaeru** (hold down or suppress): push down or lightly cover opponent's **shinai** with your left or right side of **kensen** (**shinogi**) as opponent is about to move or strike, then strike as soon as opportunity arises.
3. **Hajiku** or **Hari** (knock away): Using a wrist snap or slap, knock opponent's shinai to the left or right side, thus destroying their kensen's centre position.
4. **Harai-otoshi** (Slap down): When opponent's **kensen** is in a lower position, hit down (diagonally) their **shinai** with a quick sharp action, returning to maintain your **Kensen** in the centre to capture the opportunity to strike. Be aware that during the slap down, your own kensen will reveal a **suki** (**weakness**).
5. **Harai-ageru** (deflect upward): When **kensen** in high position or is lightly held, deflect it diagonally up. Use your snap and semi-circular motion to hold the centre. (Beware of opponent's **Shinai** returning with momentum.)
6. **Maku** (**maki-age** or **maki-otoshi**)(wind round): When someone holding the **Shinai** tightly, keeping the **shinai's** close, wind your **shinai** around opponents **shinai** close to their **tsuba** from the right or left side. You can force their kensen diagonally up or down to break their **kamae**.

When performing the above actions you must make sure you follow these rules:

- Use your body during **seme** not just your hands - the above actions should include the use of **seme-ashi** (see chapter 4) to press with whole body.
- Use your **mono-uchi** to strike or knock their **shinai** close to its centre.
- You must dominate the centre position. During any push or slap, your **kensen** must return immediately to the centre.
- Have strong spirit and determination. Make actions powerful and strike at any opening immediately.
- Do not push hands forward during **seme** - the left fist must maintain its position to allow correct **furi-kaburi**, and the right arm must remain relaxed - as mentioned already, use your body. Hold your breath in your tanden, hold the ki in place with an unyielding left fist

Ki-zeme:

Senselessly "batting" around your opponent's **shinai** using your wrist will only induce weakness (**suki**) in your own position, even if you are moving forward. Even though the above techniques have their place, a strong **kamae** and power body movement should form the root of all **seme**.

- Take the initiative with your Ki.
 - Dominate the centre.
 - Control the ma-ai to your advantage.
1. **Ki:** Do not let your opponent ki gain form. Bottle up or frustrate his spirit and exploit their immobility. Hold the breath in your tanden, don't allow hands to rise, hold your ki in with an unyielding left fist. Feel the ki flow from your belly through the shinai and kensen into your opponent's centre. Try to develop **Ki-gurai**.
 2. **Dominate the centre:** without moving your hands aim your **kensen** at your opponent's centre. I have been told different ideas (**seme** to body)- focus the **kensen** towards the throat (**tsuki**), chest (left or right breast) or sternum. The fundamental idea though is to dominate the centre and the aim is that this will cause your **shinai** to force opponent's **kensen** away from the centre, leaving an opening.
 3. **Ma-ai:** You must break into opponent's space and break down their kamae. You must position yourself at your **uchi-ma**, but do not raise your **kensen** too soon or you will lose the centre. Have the feeling of closing inside their shinai and ma-ai before striking.

NB: Ki-gurai - The strength or commanding presence derived from confidence acquired through repeated training.

Practice applications of Seme.

I have used the term "seme to" for these exercises. This refers to the focus of the **kensen**. As discussed already, DO NOT push hands forward toward target, as this will stop correct **furi-kaburi** - instead use **seme-ashi** and the left hand to control **kensen**.

- **Seme to Tsuki** (Body) - then strike **Men** or **Kote** depending on response
- **Seme to Men** - then strike **Kote** or **Do** according to response.
- **Seme to Kote**, then strike **Men**.

- **Opponent retreats:** use **Oi-komi Men** (chasing up opponent) or **Renzoku-waza** (such as **Kote-Men**.)
- **Opponent advances to strike:** use **Debana-waza** or **Harai-waza**

Ken-Tai-ichi - Attack and waiting (defence) as one

In this saying, **Ken** means to attack or strike opponent fiercely to strike the first blow, and **Tai** means to wait resisting making the first move, while observing opponents movements calmly ready to counter attack..

In Kendo it is the direct attack that is valued most. We are all taught we should attack with "**sutemi** - giving our all", not thinking of receiving or dodging, but only of striking. This does not mean it is right to attack recklessly when there is no opportunity, and in fact over attacking is a weakness that can be used to strike us.

Offence and defence are inseparably combined. You must attack when one should attack, and wait when one should wait. While attacking one also watches and waits. While waiting and watching one is on the verge of attacking.

- Have a posture of **Ken** with the body. Advance the body ready to strike at any time.
- Have an attitude of **Tai** with the sword. Entice the opponent to attack and counter it at the first opportunity.
- The mind should retain an attitude of **Tai**, as it is not good to race in. You must be calm and able to discern the correct opportunity to strike.

Chapter 8

Shikake-waza and Oji-waza

Kendo techniques (**waza**) are usually grouped into two categories:

1. **Shikake-waza**: techniques for initiating an attack. These positive attacking techniques are used to challenge and forestall the opponent, gaining the centre, and thus an opportunity.
2. **Oji-waza**: techniques where you avoid or parry opponent's strike and counter attack at the resulting weakness. It is commonly said that in Kendo we never defend for the sake of defence, but as a way of striking ourselves. Oji means respond, but we cannot wait to be attacked. We should still probe our opponent's **kamae**, leading with our **ki**, to force their attack which we can use to generate an opportunity to strike.

The situation is not however so clear cut. Rather like the idea of ying and yang, these ideas have to be balance, and merge into one another. What may start as shikake-waza may end as oji-waza. An example here is to initiate the attack with **harai-waza** but you are countered by **debana-waza** - you then counter and strike with the same action, but this is now **suriage-waza**. Only by constant training can we hope to react correctly.

You should be able to move and strike correctly as discussed in previous section. All the following assumes these previous **kihon** have learnt, and that **seme** is used. These **waza** are then used according to opponent's response (see **Kikai** - chapter 8).

These two categories are further divided into sub groups of similar techniques. I have only listed a few. I have made my choices based on what senior **Sensei** most commonly teach us, and on the ideas and goals of the **Bokuto ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho**.

I have heard different ideas with regards to the learning and use of the different **waza**. It is an old kendo dictum that says it takes three years to learn the basics. This I believe depends on the person and how much they practice, but still without the ability to perform large correct strikes, it is impossible to progress to complex techniques. However, Kendo without **waza** can become dull if you think of only striking **Men**. The use of the **Bokuto ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho** is a good way of introducing the ideas of **waza**. I have read that these are designed to teach students these basics of **waza** by the time they reach 2nd **Dan**. To begin with, concentrate on **Shikake-waza**, taking the initiative to strike going forwards.

Shikake-waza.

Ippon-uchi-no-waza:

These attacks are performed as the basic **Kihon** strikes already discussed. They sometimes go under other names, such as **Tobikomi-waza** and **hikibana-waza**, but these are really ways of describing the **seme** and timing. Some basic ideas and practices are:

- **Men-uchi**: from **To-ma**, push in with full spirited **seme** to **tsuki** (body). Opponent hesitates or retreats - drive forward controlling centre and strike **Men**.
- **Men-uchi**: from **To-ma**, push in with **seme** to **kote**. Opponent drops **kensen** to cover your shinai - take centre and strike **Men**.

- **Kote-uchi:** from **to-ma**, **seme** to **men or tsuki**. Opponent raises **kensen** to defend, showing a weakness- strike **Kote**.
- **Do-uchi:** from **To-ma**, push in with **seme** to **Men** as if about to strike. Opponent raise shinai to block revealing **Do**, leap forward and strike.

Renzoku-waza (Ni-san-dan-no-waza)

There are two methods of using these techniques.

1. The first attack rather than just **seme** is used to destroy opponents spirit and posture, revealing an opportunity to strike. These actions must be performed in a continuous unbroken sequence. You must strike with determination, not a mere feinting action.
2. When first attack unsuccessful, observe the change in opponent's position, respond to their movement and strikes again (and again) until a valid strike is made. The correct continuous rhythm must be maintained.

NB: In **shiai**, even if first strike was a perfect **ippon**, it would not count if second strike was unsuccessful - keep this in mind.

- **Kote-Men:** from **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Kote**. Opponent defends and retreats - pull left foot quickly up into place, drive forward and strike **Men**.
- **Kote-Do:** from **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Kote**. Opponent avoids and anticipates men cut blocking while retreating or retreats while raising shiani to perform **nuki-waza**- pull left foot quickly up into place, drive forward (diagonally right) and strike **Do**.
- **Men-Do:** from **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Men**. Opponent avoids and anticipates men cut blocking (while retreating) - pull left foot quickly up into place, drive forward (diagonally right) and strike **Do**. (Ma-ai is harder here - control footwork to strike with **monouchi**).
- **Men-Men:** from **To-ma**, push in with full spirit and strike **Men**. Opponent anticipates strike and retreats while losing strong kamae - pull left foot quickly up into place, and strike **Men**. (This is a case where opponent is trying to avoid making first strike ineffective).

Many other combinations exist, such as **Tsuki-Men**, **Kote-Men-Do**, **Men**, **tai-atari**, **Hiki-men**.

When practicing, keep the following in mind:

1. Begin with large striking action and body movements, where **motodachi** moves back sufficiently to allow correct striking.
2. Later, use small techniques where **motodachi** does not have to move to allow second strike.
3. The left foot must be drawn up immediately (**hiki-tsuke**) to allow correct striking in good posture.
4. Learn to control the size of your steps. You must move body in posture to allow striking with **monouchi**.
5. Each strike must be made in full spirit.
6. Your **tenouchi** must be tightened and relaxed with each strike. Correct **tenouchi** is essential.
7. Perform actions in one continuous attack sequence.

Harai-waza:

When your opponent has a strong **chudan-no-kamae** there is no chance to strike. The **kensen** must be moved away from the centre to give an opportunity. This can be achieved by

Harai-age - parrying their **shinai** diagonally upward to the left or right or **Harai-otoshi** - parrying it diagonally down to the left, controlling the centre and striking immediately.

There are several key aspects that must be observed or considered to be effective:

1. You must use perform the sweeping action with your body (moving forward), not just your hands - sweeping with **seme-ashi**.
2. Use both hands to parry, at the moment of parry snap your wrist to sharpen action.
3. Parry in a semi-circular motion. Your hands must move quickly forward and up along the path of **furi-kaburi**.
4. Parry the midpoint of opponent's **shinai** using **monouchi** of your **shinai**.
5. The curved movement allows sweeping action to finish at the end of **furi-kaburi**, and ensures **shinai** in the correct position to strike - all in one action.
6. At the beginning, learn techniques using **suri-ashi** and large techniques.
7. Later use small sweeping action and fast powerful **fumi-komi**.
8. The entire action must be made in one continuous action.

The timing and opportunities are also critical:

- When stationary, the **kamae** is strongest. You will gain great advantage performing this **waza** at the moment opponent advances to attack or retreats.
- **Harai-age** most effective when opponent's **kensen** higher than your own.
- **Harai-otoshi** most effective against a **kensen** lower than your own.

NB: You can set the level of your **Kensen** as part of **seme**, i.e. to **Kote**, is lower position.

Harai-Men (omote)

- Push forward while sweeping up **shinai** form lower right to upper left in semi circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent away from the centre.
- Maintaining the centre, immediately (in one motion) strike **shomen**.

Harai-Men (ura)

- Drop **kensen** slightly, and push forward while sweeping up **shinai** form lower left to upper right in semi circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent away from the centre.
- Maintaining the centre, immediately (in one motion) strike **shomen**.

Harai-Kote (ura)

- Drop **kensen** slightly, and push forward while sweeping up **shinai** form lower left to upper right in semi circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent away from the centre.
- Maintaining the centre, immediately (in one motion) strike **kote**. This requires quick action and small fast footwork.

Harai-Men (otoshi)

- Raise **kensen** and push forward while sweeping down **shinai** form upper right to lower left with sharp **tenouchi** in a small circular action knocking **kensen** of opponent down to your left.
- Your **kensen** must return immediately to the centre position, from where you can complete the strike to **shomen**.

Again, many other options of the **waza** exist, such as **harai-tsuki**., **ura**, **omote** and **otoshi**.

Hiki-waza

These are stepping back techniques, a **waza** where you strike while retreating from close quarters. These techniques are usually performed from **tsuba-zeriai** after a previous attack. You must first break your opponent's guard either by **tai-atari** or pushing opponent to off balance them and break posture.

Tsuba-zeriai means to fight on compete with the hand guard (see **Kamae**.)

- The foot work is hard to master.
- First practice using **Suri-ashi** and large actions, then later use small fast actions and powerful footwork.
- Push with right foot/knee, body, hips and arms. But do not push arms forward or allow them to collapse inward - left fist must remain in correct position to strike.

There are many ways of breaking the **kamae** from **tsuba-zerai**, I will discuss the basic ideas only:

Hiki-Men

- From **tsuba-zerai**, push forward with **seme-ashi**. Push **shinai** inward towards body or their right shoulder.
- Wait for opponent to push back, trying to maintain their **kamae**,
- Immediately step back from the left leg to **uchima**, with the feeling of pulling opponent toward you.
- Opponent should now be off balance and **kensen** will drop forward (to your left) giving an opportunity.
- Stamp the right foot (**fumi-komi-ashi**) while striking **Men** with **ki-ken-tai-ichi**, and flick left foot up and back to move back showing **zanshin**.

NB: Zanshin - do not pull arms above the head, when retreating keep hands forward (may be slightly raised, **kensen** point up). Retreat about 3 steps and take **chudan-no-kamae** at appropriate distance.

Hiki-Do

- From **tsuba-zerai**, press in and down with **seme-ashi**. Push **shinai** and hands down.
- Wait for opponent to resist, push hands back up, trying to maintain their **kamae**,
- Immediately step back from the left leg to **uchima**, with the feeling of push opponent's hands up as you swing up.
- Opponent's arms will rise.
- Rotate wrist and strike the **Do** while stamping the right foot (**fumi-komi-ashi**) and flick left foot up and back to move back showing **zanshin**.

NB: Zanshin - do not pull arms back when retreating, keep hands forward in striking position (may be slightly raised, **kensen** point up). Retreat about 3 steps and take **chudan-no-kamae** at appropriate distance.

Hiki-Kote

- From **tsuba-zerai**, push forward and down with **seme-ashi**. Push **shinai** inward towards body as if trying to touch the neck of opponent.
- Wait for opponent to push back, trying to maintain their **kamae**,
- Immediately step diagonally back to the left, starting from the left leg, to **uchima**, maybe have feeling of flicking left hand up beneath opponent's hand.

- Opponent should now be off balance and **kensen** will rise, giving an opportunity.
- Stamp the right foot (**fumi-komi-ashi**) while striking a straight **Kote** with **ki-ken-tai-ichi**, and flick left foot up and back to move back showing **zanshin**.

NB: Zanshin - do not pull arms back when retreating, keep hands forward centre, in striking position (may be slightly raised, **kensen** point up). Retreat about 3 steps and take **chudan-no-kamae** at appropriate distance.

You can practice this waza in many different ways:

- From **tsuba-zeriai**, compete to find opening and strike. **Motodachi** should follow up to help develop speed of your footwork and **zanshin**.
- Strike opponent, then both performs **tai-atari**, and **kakari-te** will strike with **hiki-waza**.
- Strike opponent. **Motodachi** will "block" strike - both perform **tai-atari**, and **kakari-te** will strike with **hiki-waza**.
- Strike opponent. **Motodachi** will "block" strike and move aside, and **kakari-te** turns as they pass and will strike again with **hiki-waza**.
- **Motodachi** strike (**Men**) - you block attack using correct **uke-kata**, and immediately use **hiki-waza** to strike them.

Debana-waza

Just as the opponent moves toward you on the verge of striking, they are likely to be concentrating on their own technique, losing sight of your actions, thus presenting you with a good opportunity to strike.

You must strike at the first sign of their intentions to attack. If you wait for **kensen** to lift, you have already missed the chance.

Debana-men

- From **To-ma**, push in with **seme ashi** to **tsuki** (body) or **kote**.
- Opponent steps forward with intention to **seme** and strike **Men**.
- Dominate the centre and push body and hips forward to strike **Men** immediately.

Debana-kote

- From **To-ma**, push in with **seme ashi** to **tsuki** (body) or **kote**.
- Opponent steps forward, with the intention to **seme** and raises **kensen** to strike **Men**.
- Anticipate attack, and as opponent's **kensen** rises, step forward with small quick footwork and strike **kote** with small fast action using **tenouchi**.

NB: Try stepping forward so your right foot faces opponent's right foot when striking.

Practice types:

- From **to-ma** use **seme-ashi**. **Motodachi** reacts by pushing forward to strike **seme-men** (2 step cut due to **ma-ai**) - as they push forward, dominate centre and strike **kote** or **men**.
- As a pair step forward and back using **suri (okuri) - ashi** trying to reach an advantageous **ma-ai** and position. Once you feel opportunity strike **Motodachi** as they step forward (or back) - can be repeated with both trying to strike.

Oji-waza

Nuki-waza

This is an evasion technique, where you avoid opponent so his strike cuts only air, and counter attack. You need to anticipate opponent's intent, and timing is vital. If you move to soon, you will signal your intention, and this becomes his opportunity. If you move to late, you will be struck.

Start by learning large **waza** with **suri-ashi**, and late **fumikomi-ashi**, where a rear step is required. Later, using small action, learn to position left foot to allow fast dynamic counterattacks.

Men-nuki-Do

- Press in with **seme-ashi**, **seme** to body or kote, and wait for reaction.
- As opponent swings down to strike **Men**, step diagonally forward right on the right foot while swinging up shinai.
- Immediately turn wrist and strike his right **Do**.
- Pass close to opponent pulling shinai through, and turn to them in chudan for Zanshin.

NB:

- Move with the whole body. Keep posture upright, push forward the hips.
- Your footwork must be fast.
- Pass close to opponent as if hitting shoulder.

Kote-nuki-Men

- Press in with **seme-ashi**, **seme** to **men**, and wait for reaction.
- As opponent swings down to strike **Kote**, step back on the left foot, quickly swinging up shinai in a large movement.
- Opponents shinai will swing down on to thin air,
- Immediately step forward and strike his right **Men**.
- **Tai-atatri**, **tsuba-zeriai** or pass through and turn to them in **chudan** for **Zanshin**.

NB:

- Evade with entire body not just hands.
- Step back with feeling of going forward - Position of left foot vital - try **Haya suburi** footwork.
- Swing shinai up in large rapid motion.
- The entire sequence must be one continuous action.
- It is possible to also evade from below by dropping **kensen** and stepping diagonally back.

Many other nuki-waza exist, such as **Men-nuki-men** (see **Nihon Kendo Kata- Ipponme**) and **Kote-nuki-kote** (see **Nihon Kendo Kata- Nihonme**).

Suriage-waza

This is a raising slide technique used to deflect opponents attack, and immediately counter strike. The parrying action is similar principle as **Harai-waza**, but the timing is after **sen**.

Here the strike has begun and we deflect his shinai during the strike.

Kote-suriage-Men (Ura)

- **seme-ashi**, **seme** to **men**, and wait for reaction
- Opponent reacts by cutting your **kote**.
- As they strike down, push forward and sweep **shinai** forward and up in a right semi-circular arc parrying with the right side of **monouchi**.
- Top of sweep must be central, immediately strike **Men**.

Important:

- Learn basics with **suri-ashi**, and large movements. Here you must place left foot back to correct **uchima** position as they strike, still trying to do **waza** going forwards.
- Later add **fumikomi-ashi**, and then try small fast movements.
- Due to the different **ma-ai** for **kote** and **men** it is best to **suriage** and strike **men** going forward in one continuous action.
- **Suriage** is part of **furi-kaburi** motion; remember it is the strike that is the object of **waza**.
- The position of the left foot is important.
- During **suriage** have feeling of advancing hips, left hand must move forward and up along **furi-kaburi** path, and right fist rolls to the right with a snapping action.
- Try to parry close to the middle of opponent's shinai.
- Reverse above and try **waza - Omote**.

Men-suriage-Men (Omote)

- **seme-ashi**, **seme** to **kote or tsuki**, and wait for reaction
- Opponent reacts by cutting your **Men**.
- As they strike down, step forward and right and sweep **shinai** forward and up in a left semi-circular arc parrying with the left side of **monouchi**.
- Top of sweep must be central, you face opponent, immediately strike **Men**. Your left foot should end in line with opponent's left foot.

Important:

- Learn basics with **suri-ashi**, and large movements.
- Later add **fumikomi-ashi**, and then try small fast movements.
- Due to close **ma-ai**, this is a very difficult timing to master - try with feeling of **Fumikomi-ashi** almost on the spot.
- Try to catch strike early, parrying close to the middle of opponent's **shinai**.
- Try reverse, **waza** on **ura** side also.
- Can be executed with back step action (see **Nihon Kendo Kata- Gohonme**)

Many other suriage-waza exist, such as **tsuki-suriage-men** and **kote-suriage-kote** (**Nihon Kendo Kata- Ropponme**)

Kaeshi-waza

This is a reflex deflection technique in which you parry with one side of the **shinai** using the opponent's energy to reverse direction and counter strike the other side. Again, many options exist for this **waza**, and I have again selected those most simple and therefore most practical:

Men-Kaeshi-Do (Migi)

- **Seme** to **kote** or **tsuki** and wait for reaction.
- Opponent strikes **Men**.
- As they strike down, push forward and right and lift **shinai** forward and up parrying with the left side.
- Rotate the wrists over, using the strikes force to change direction and immediately strike their **migi Do** while stepping forward diagonally right from your right foot.
- Pass each other, turn towards opponent with **zanshin**.

Important:

- Learn basics with **suri-ashi**, and large movements.
- Try practicing waza straight in front, then later with forward right diagonal step.
- Later add **fumikomi-ashi**, and then try small fast movements.
- Have feeling of "catching" opponent's **shinai** as far forward as possible.
- Hands must not rise above head level - neck level sufficient.
- Use small fast footwork going forward - NEVER go backward.
- There must be no break between parry and striking.

Kote-Kaeshi-Men

- **Seme** to **men** and wait for reaction.
- Opponent strikes **Kote**
- As they strike down, step back diagonally to the left on the left foot, and lift **shinai** forward and up (**kensen** down) parrying with the left side.
- Rotate the wrists over, using the strikes force to change direction and immediately strike their **shomen** while stepping forward with your right foot.
- Tai-atari or pass and turn towards opponent with **zanshin**.

Important:

- Learn basics with **suri-ashi**, and large movements.
- Later add **fumikomi-ashi**, and then try small fast movements.
- Wrists must be flexible.
- Can also be done stepping straight back.
- Small fast **waza** can be done without rear step.

Other versions include **Men-kaeshi-men** and **kote-kaeshi-kote**. These both have difficult ma-ai, and I have seen them performed striking going backward, i.e. **Koke-kaeshi-hiki kote**.

Uchiotoshi-waza

This is a downward striking technique. You strike down opponents strikes to spoil its effects and upset their balance, while giving you an opportunity to counter strike.

Do-Uchiotoshi-Men

- **Seme** to **men** and wait for reaction.
- Opponent strikes the **Do**.
- As they strike down, step back diagonally to the left on the left foot, and swing **shinai** up.
- Strike opponents **shinai** down to the right with strong **tenouchi**.
- Immediately strike their **shomen** while stepping forward with your right foot.
- Tai-atari or pass and turn towards opponent with **zanshin**.

NB: Use of **tenouchi** important here. Try to strike shinai close to their tsuba.

Also, if opponent drive forward quickly, strike **hiki-men**.

Kote-Uchiotoshi-Men

- **Seme to men (or body)** and wait for reaction.
- Opponent strikes **Kote**.
- As they strike down, step back diagonally to the left on the left foot, and swing **shinai** up.
- Strike opponents **shinai** down to the right with strong **tenouchi**.
- Immediately strike their **shomen** while stepping forward with your right foot.
- **Tai-atari** or pass and turn towards opponent with **zanshin**.

Important:

- Learn basics with **suri-ashi**, and large movements.
- Later add **fumikomi-ashi**, then try small fast movements.
- Use of **tenouchi** important here. Strike **shinai** down close to their **tsuba** with small sharp action.
- With small fast **waza**: strike down opponent's **shinai** with feeling of striking their right **kote**, then strike men immediately - have feeling of small fast **kote-men** striking - maintain the centre line (**Chushin**)
- Very effective against opponent cutting **Kote** at an angle.

Chapter 9

Uchikomi geiko, Kakari-geiko and Ji-geiko

Uchikomi Hattoku (Eight Benefits)

1. Good posture (**Shisei**)
2. Strong physical body, endurance
3. Strong limbs, more agility
4. Faster **Waza**
5. Extend breathing
6. Observe, see striking distance or opportunity (**Uchima**)
7. Powerful strikes, sharper grip (**Te-no-uchi**)
8. Remove doubt or fear, unite thoughts, spirit and strength (**Shin Ki Ryoku no itchi.**)

Uchikomi Procedures:

- With **Motodachi** and **Kakarite** in **Chudan** at **Issoko-itto-no-ma-ai** or a little further - **Kisaki** just touching, express **Ki-ai** ("Yah!").
- **Kakarite** performs **seme** - step slightly forward from right foot (**Seme-ashi**)

NB: Undesirable habits: insufficient **Ki-ai**, improper **Ma-ai**.

- If **Motodachi** feels sufficient pressure (**Ki-ai** and **seme**), move **Kensen** slightly away from the centre to allow one of the **Kihon** strikes (or thrusts)
 - If **Kensen** moves down or to the sides, strike **Men** or **Tsuki**.
 - **Kensen** moves up, strike **Kote**.
 - If **Motodachi's** **Shinai** is thrust forward (and up), strike **Do**.
- Step forward and strike with **Fumikomi**: one large forward step sharply to the floor, and left foot immediately follows up, moving forward with **okuriashi**- 3 to 4 steps.
- **Motodachi** use **Hiraki-ashi** to move away after the strike, with **Tsuki**, retreat slightly with **Okuri-ashi**.

NB: Undesirable habits: inadequate **Fumikomi** gait, right foot raised too high, left foot does not follow quickly or kicks up, pause between **Furikaburi** and **Datotsu**, improper **Okuriashi**, hips bent and body unstable.

- **Datotsu**: same as in **Kihon**: equal strength in both hands, release strength from hands immediately after strike, relax shoulders (especially for **Furikaburi**) and contain power in the lower abdomen (**Seika Tanden**)
- Follow through with **Okuriashi** until distance is again at **Issoko-itto-no-ma-ai** or **to-ma**, then come to **Chudan** and show **Zanshin**.

NB: Undesirable habits: excess upper body strength after striking, follow through diagonally, breaking **Kamae** after each strike, (i.e. pulling hands down or pushing back over head), insufficient or excessive follow through without **Zanshin**.

Uchikomi Geiko methods:

- Against a **Motodachi**, practice continuous **Fumikomi** practice: **Shomen uchi**, **Kote uchi**, **Do uchi**.
- Add **Renzoku-waza**: **Kote-Men**, **Kote-Do**, **Kote-Men-Do**.
- Combine the **Waza** in a prearranged order - **Yakusoku geiko**. Such as **Men**, **kote-men**, **kote-do**, **men-hiki men**, **men-hiki kote**, **men-hiki do**, **men**.
- Following the ideas of the **Bokuto ni yoru kendo kihon waza keiko-ho**, try: **Men**, **kote**, **do**, **kote-men**, **harai-men**, **men-taiatari-hiki men**.

Uchikomi versus Kakari Geiko:

The practices may look similar at first, but:

- In **Kakari Geiko**, **Motodachi** maintains **Chudan-no-kamae**, and the student (**Kakarite**) must break this to gain centre before striking.
- There should be no pause between **Waza**, continue **Keiko** with strength, speed and power until nearly exhausted, use **Okuriashi**, as when tired people start using **ayumiashi**.
- **Motodachi** can sometimes also strike if attacks have insufficient **Ki-ai** or concentration. Use **Oji-waza** against improper strikes, but otherwise allow the strike.
- Student strikes appropriate points according to **Motodachi**'s position, instead of just rhythmically continuing the strikes.
- This is extremely exhausting since student must maintain strong **Ki-ai**, strike properly and quickly, and continue without pause, practice for 10-15 seconds at a time, but repeat several times.

Kakari Geiko

Procedure:

- With strong **Ki-ai** shout ("Yah!") break **Motodachi**'s **kamae** and step forward to striking distance, show **Seme**, observe **Motodachi**'s response, and immediately strike appropriate point.
- Follow through quickly, and commence next **Waza** as soon as **Ma-ai** is re-established
- Use **Shikake-waza** only, no **Oji-waza**.
- Continue without pause until told to stop

Kakari Geiko may be practiced by the pair simultaneously (**Sogo-no-Kakari-geiko**.)

Ji-geiko

This is the general method of doing **Keiko** in which we can practice implementing all the **kihon** and **waza** we have learnt during the other practices. Here we learn to find opportunity, polish our techniques, and discipline our minds and bodies. We will learn our own strengths and weaknesses, which we can try to overcome.

Do not let it become your focus just to beat your opponent, and try to strike him more time than he strikes you. You should aim to practice the **waza** you have learnt. Learn to use **seme** and with strong spirit, using fluid actions in good posture, try to learn when and how you can make perfect strikes.

Mawari-geiko: Here all members practice together, while rotating partners in a fixed direction, for a fixed length of time. Good for cultivating spirit as you face different opponents one after another.

Hikitate-geiko: A method of instructional **Keiko** where the higher ranked **kendoka** lets the lower ranked opponent strike correctly (without making this obvious), so the less experience person can gain experience of success, and learn the opportunities. Poorly executed attacks may be countered. The less experienced person should try their best to try to score first, using all they know to make an opening. It has been said that you should exhaust all your energy in such a 5 minute bout. For the senior, try to act maybe a half grade higher than opponent, and handicap yourself to what **waza** you can use.

Gokaku-geiko: This is **Keiko** between persons of almost equal skills. In this practice we treat each other as equals, even if there is a difference in ability. You must always try to do your best Kendo. Here you should concentrate on dominating the centre, and try to score the first valid strike.

Mitori-geiko: A method where one observes the practice of another, learning their good points and reflecting on how to improve your own kendo. If injured or waiting, do this. If you cannot make training I am sure Youtube and the like will show you experienced **kendoka**.

Shiai-geiko

In this type of practice, referees rate the match. Both **kendoka** compete as if it is a real match. This way we learn our inadequacies and faults, as well as finding our effective **waza**, and gaining confidence in our techniques.

When judging our own bouts we must be honest, and call our opponents successful strikes, and not cheating to gain advantage. Do not let this **Keiko** degenerate into a violent fight. You must maintain the correct mental attitude to do your best kendo. If you try to attack without the same basic principles you have learnt, **Kamae - Seme - Kikai** (Opportunity) - **Datotsu - Zanshin**, you will not achieve a valid strike. Remember **Shiai** is to challenge yourself and your training. If you cannot succeed there, then you have not learnt correctly.

Shiai

Kendo is not a sport or martialart to learn to kill somebody. It is part of your life to train yourself. It is not about somebody else, it is about yourself. Kendo training is hard and strict because it means to be so and not to be something enjoyable like football or any other sports.

Winning a match is not so important. More importantly is how you achieved that; how you prepared, practised before and how you fought, controlled yourself physically and mentally in the match.

However, winning a match is still very important. You should understand now how difficult it is to get ippon against your opponent. You need to practice long and hard to be able to beat someone. Through the preparation for a competition you will learn many things and this is the reason why we have competition.

Therefore a bad result or defeat makes your preparation meaningless. Only a victory can justify your preparation. It is wrong to think that "I lost, but it was good kendo". That is just an excuse hiding or justifying weakness.

Try to win once you compete in a shiai and after you have become able to win then talk about your ideal kendo.

Appendix A: Bokuto ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho

This practice method was devised so students can learn the fundamental techniques of **Kendo** based on the notion that the **Shinai** is a sword. Some of the benefits of this practice are:

- Movements are based on those of the Nihon Kendo Kata, thus giving a basic understanding, to aid their learning.
- You use bokuto to learn kendo correctly.
- Develop solid basics and techniques that are directly translatable into bogu kendo practice.
- Develop reiho (manners).

There are 9 Kihon, that comprises of 5 Shikake-waza and 4 Oji-waza:

Shikake-Waza are Kihon 1, 2,3,4,7 while the others are Oji-waza, Kihon 5,6,8,9.

The following rules need to be followed:

Reigi:

This is the same as for the Nihon Kendo Kata. Begin with bokuto in right hand, rei, and swap to left hand for **tai-to** and move 3 ayumi-ashi steps to centre, draw bokuto as taking sonkyo at the correct ma-ai. Stand in Chudan, Yokote of tips just crossing. Lower kensen while turning hands to the right, until Kensen just below knee level, retreat 5 small ayumi-ashi steps, take chudan, then begin kihon. Reverse sequence at the end.

Kamae

Kamae used is chudan-no-kamae.

Metsuke

Eye focus centred on opponent's eyes, but seeing whole body.

Ma-ai

Use issoko-itto-no-ma-ai. The distance will vary slightly according to size, experience levels, and the target of your strikes.

Datotsu

Strikes must be made in full spirit, with large and correct furi-kaburi. Strikes must have correct tenouchi (grip), hasuji (path of the blade) and use the monouchi. All strikes should stop just short of the target.

Ki-Ken-Tai-ichi

This must be demonstrated by coordinating the Strike, Shout and rear foot "snapping" up behind the right foot.

Ashi-sabaki

For Kihon, all footwork is Okuri-ashi with suri-ashi (sliding step).

Kakagoe

Show Ki-ai with clear, loud, sharp shout of the targets during all strikes. "**Men!**", "**Kote!**", "**Do!**" and "**Tsuki!**"

Breathing

Breathe in deeply before beginning, and perform each Kihon using one breath.

Zanshin

Step back at the end of striking keeping mentally alert and exerting pressure on opponent with the kensen. The manual states kensen to the throat, although some teachings state between the eyes.

After the **Shikake-waza**, you take a small step back for zanshin, then another back to ai-chudan.

For **Oji-waza**, both step back simultaneously to Chudan for zanshin.

Practice ideas:

Perform Kihon fully as the Kata.

Perform Kihon in a continuous sequence, with no break between them.

Perform each twice, reversing the roles, before separating.

Choose those relevant for lesson plan.

Use principles to practice other similar waza.

Kihon Ichi - Ippon-uchi-no-waza "Shomen, Kote, Do, Tsuki"

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) Open Men by moving the kensen a sharply to the right. 2) Wait for kakarite's zanshin. 3) Move the kensen back to ai-chudan. 4) Open Kote by moving the kensen up to the left. 5) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin. 6) Move the kensen back to ai-chudan. 7) Open Do by raising the bokuto upward. 8) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin. 9) Move the kensen down to ai-chudan. 10) Open tsuki by moving the kensen slightly down to the right while taking a step backward receiving the thrust. 11) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin. 12) Return to chudan and step forward simultaneously with kakarite's second step.	1) Step forward and strike shomen. 2) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat. 3) Step back into ai-chudan at issoku itto no ma-ai for the next strike. 4) Step forward and strike kote. 5) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat. 6) Step back into ai-chudan at issoku itto no ma-ai for the next strike. 7) Step forward and strike migi do . 8) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat. 9) Step back into ai-chudan at issoku itto no maai for the next strike. 10) Step forward and thrust tsuki. 11) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat. 12) Take a second back to ai-chudan at yokote kosa .

- Keep tension between each other. Kakarite must strike immediately when motodachi release the centre position.
- Kakarite should complete entire sequence of cuts in one breath.
- The ma-ai (uchima) for each strike is different. When taking Zanshin, adjust rearward steps to reach correct ma-ai for next strike.

NB: **Yokote kosa** – distance where the Yokote of sword are cross (tips just crossing)

Kihon Ni - Ni/San-dan-no-waza (Renzoku-waza) "Kote-Men."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) Open Kote by raising the kensen up to the left. 2) Take a small step back and move your kensen to the right opening Men . (Move the kensen straight across underneath the kakarite's bokuto.) 3) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin. 4) Return to ai-chudan. 5) Step forward while in ai-chudan.	1) Step forward and strike Kote. 2) Step forward and strike Men. 3) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat. 4) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kosa. 5) Step back while in ai-chudan.

- Kakarite's strikes must both be performed in one continuous sequence of action.
- Motodachi must control the ma-ai for the second Men strike. Do not take a large step as this will make it hard to make up the extra distance between the kote and men position.

Kihon San – Harai-waza, "Harai Men" (omote)

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku itto no maai the kakarite breaks your kamae by using harai-waza. 2) (Kakarite performs harai-aga , and shomen in one action) 3) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin. 4) Return to ai-chudan.	1) From issoku-itto-no-ma-ai, Kakarite takes one large step forward and at the same time moves the bokuto in an upward, clockwise, circular motion to strike and using the omote shinogi to break the mototachi's kamae by hitting / pushing his kensen to your left. 2) Continuing the same upward circular motion used to offset Motodachi's bokuto, Kakarite completes the upward swing of the bokuto and then strikes forward to Motodachi's Shomen 3) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat. 4) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kosa.

- The Harai action must have sufficient force to move opponents' Bokuto, resulting in a audible knock sound.
- Harai with the body going forward, not on the spot.

Kihon Yon - Hiki-waza, "Hiki-do."

Motodachi	Kakarite
<p>1) At Issoku-itto-no-ma-ai, receive the kakarite's Men strike with the omote (left) shinogi of the bokuto without moving feet.</p> <p>2) Step forward and enter tsuazeriai with the kakarite.</p> <p>3) The kakarite presses your hands down as if to create a shomen opening, so you push hands upward in response.</p> <p>4) As kakarite release pressure, your hands spring up forwards.</p> <p>5) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.</p> <p>6) Step back and assume ai-chudan.</p>	<p>1) Step forward and strike shomen.</p> <p>2) Your strike having been received, step forward and into tsubazeriai with the mototachi.</p> <p>3) Press down your tsuba against mototachi's tsuba, forcing hands downward.</p> <p>4) Feeling the upward response, Kakarite releases the downward pressure to elevate the bokuto, takes a large step backward with the left foot, and executes a strike to Motodachi's right Do.</p> <p>5) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat.</p> <p>6) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kosa.</p>

- Both step into tsubazeria together. Kakarite's tsuba on top.
- The action of taking tsubazeria, pushing down, and stepping back to strike must be a continuous sequence of actions.

Kihon Go - Nuki-waza, "Men-nuki-do."

Motodachi	Kakarite
<p>1) From issoku itto no maai step forward and strike shomen.</p> <p>2) While turning slightly to the left to align yourself with the kakarite, and take a step back and assume chudan.</p> <p>3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the the left back to the starting positions.</p>	<p>1) Avoid the mototachi's strike by taking a step to the forward, diagonal right while simultaneously striking migi do.</p> <p>2) Face the motodachi and take a step back together along your current off-centre angle, and assume chudan.</p> <p>3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to left back to the starting positions.</p>

- The Ki-ai "**Men! – Do!**" should sound joined as one voice if the timing is correct.

Kihon Roku - Suriage-waza, "Kote-suriage-men." (ura)

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku-itto-no-ma-ai step forward from the right foot and strike kote. 2) Step back together and assume ai-chudan.	1) As the mototachi strikes, step back from the left foot, and perform suriage waza with the left (ura) shinogi of bokuto. Then immediately (in one action) step forward and strike men. 2) Step back together and assume ai-chudan.

- The stepping back by Kakarite must be co-ordinated to allow the the strike to made going forward, with entire action in one continuous motion.

Kihon Nana - Debana-waza, "Debana-kote."

Motodachi	Kakarite
1) From issoku-itto-no- ma-ai, take a small step forward with the right foot (as seme-ashi) and raise the kensen slightly by moving hands forward / upward from chudan as if to initiate a strike. 2) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin. 3) Withdraw right foot and return to ai-chudan.	1) At the moment the mototachi begins to move, step forward and make a "small" fast strike to the right kote. 2) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat. 3) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kosa.

- Motodachi should move kensen slightly left if required, to allow Kakarite to strike Kote cleanly.
- For Kakarite, this shows Debana waza and small striking action (see Appendix). Make sure the hands rise then cut correctly.
- Kakarite may try moving forward slightly left of centre, still facing opponent (see kihon)

Kihon Hachi - Kaeshi-waza, "*Men-kaeshi-Do.*"

Motodachi	Kakarite
<p>1) From issoku-itto-no-ma-ai strike shomen.</p> <p>2) While turning slightly to the left to align yourself with the kakarite, and take a step back and assume chudan.</p> <p>3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the the left back to the starting positions.</p>	<p>1) Receive(block) the motodachi's strike with the left shinogi of the bokuto while starting to step forward, diagonal right and continues moving while flicking bokuto around underneath to strike migi Do.</p> <p>2) Face the motodachi and take a step back together along your current off-centre angle, and assume chudan.</p> <p>3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to left back to the starting positions.</p>

- Kakarite should not raise the hands above the head for the Kaeshi-waza action. Keep hands in front with the feeling of moving forward.
- Blocking action and kaeshi-do action must be a continuous motion.

Kihon Kyu - Uchiotoshi-waza, "*Do-uchiotoshi-Men.*"

Motodachi	Kakarite
<p>1) From issoku-itto-no-ma-ai strike migi Do.</p> <p>2) While turning slightly to the left to align yourself with the kakarite, and take a step back and assume chudan.</p> <p>3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the the left back to the starting positions.</p>	<p>1) As the motodachi strikes, step back to the diagonal left and strike the centre motodachi's bokuto, down right, with your monouchi. Then immediately step forward and strike men.</p> <p>2) Face the motodachi and take a step back together along your current off-centre angle, and assume chudan.</p> <p>3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to left back to the starting positions.</p>

- Motodachi must cut with correct hasuji – blade at 45 degrees when cutting.
- Kakarite knocks down opponent's bokuto with te-no-uchi action of straight downward strike to the centre (close to tsuba) of motodachi's bokuto.
- Strike straight down with the blade – do NOT use the side or shinogi.

Appendix B: Nihon Kendo Kata

Brief History:

- **Kata** is the essence of a **Kendo** school, with all the techniques that have been tested in combat
- During **Tokugawa** period, there were over 200 schools of Kendo.
- Major schools gathered for the first time to establish a Ten form **Kata** for the Imperial Police in 1886 (**Keishicho Ryu Gekken Kata**)
- **Butoku-kai** established the three forms **Kata** in 1906 to promote **Kendo** in schools.
- **Kendo** became part of requisite curriculum in intermediate and high schools in 1911.
- A **Kata** Committee by **Dai-Nippon Butokukai** introduced the Kata forms in October 1912.
- In September 1917, and May 1933 the **Kata** was revised with additional details to take its present form.
- At this time it became known as **Nihon Kendo Kata** or **Nippon Kendo Kata**

From the original writing of Noboru Shigeoka Hanshi 9th Dan, and passed on by Jumpei Matsumoto 7th Dan:

Practicing Kata helps one to:

1. Establish adequate Kiai and spirit
2. Understand the principle of Sen (taking the initiative)
3. Control your mind
4. Establish natural Reiho (etiquette) and calmness in behavior
5. Establish correct posture
6. Improve footwork
7. Learn how to read the opponents' movements and mind
8. Move and react quickly
9. Correct your bad habits
10. Understand about distance
11. Understand the law, reason, rationality and logic of Kendo
12. Establish your Kihin (elegance in presence), Fu-Kaku (noble presence) and Kigurai (noble bearing – pride in attitude)

Points to remember when practicing Kata:

- 1) When moving forward and backward you should hold your breath whilst maintaining a good balance of spirit and mind. When moving forward, firstly you should breathe in deeply and continue to move in holding this breath, until exhaling with the utterance of either 'Ya' or 'Toh'. The strike should be perfected with an awareness of Tanden (the lower part of the abdomen). When moving within Ma-ai, a diaphragmatic breathing method should be exercised quietly so that the opponent will not notice your breathing pattern.
- 2) In Kata the movements are pre-arranged, however one should exercise a freedom of thought and Uchidachi should consider various ways of potential Seme in the attacks, in order to break through Shidachi's pre-arranged defence, strikes or counter-attacks, try to use this imagination to make this as real as possible. This will also create a high level of spiritual tension.

- 3) Shidachi should practice all of the techniques with a quick reaction against the strikes made by Uchidachi, but not by hasty or rushed actions. Both Uchidachi and Shidachi should maintain enough tension from the first Rei until the last Rei.
- 4) Uchidachi should strike when the harmony in the breathing coming from both sides meets and when the level of spiritual tension from both sides reaches an adequate point. Uchidachi as a teacher initiates his/her spirit and encourages and helps to establish Shidachi's spirit and in turn should teach the opportunity for the strikes.
- 5) Shidachi should maintain the spirit of Seme or Sen and even though the movements are pre-arranged, he/she should not just wait for Uchidachi's strikes to happen. When within Ma-ai [see foot note on this particular Ma-ai], he/she should win in spirit by Seme firstly, inviting Uchidachi to attack and therefore creating a reaction against the strike and then to win with technique.
- 6) When striking, always pull the left foot towards the right foot. The shoulders should be relaxed whilst maintaining good tension in the Tanden, this way you can strike correctly with the back and the lower part of the body. Cut by pushing the sword away from the body with the right hand and by pulling it back with the left hand towards the body. Only in this way can a Japanese sword cut.

Foot note on Ma-ai.

According to the teaching of Noboru Shigeoka Hanshi 9th Dan: The Ma-ai referred to here in item 5, is when engaging in the Issoku Itto no Mai, which is a particularly dangerous distance to enter into, as it could become a mutual position where your opponent may also be able to implement a strike from, so extreme caution should be exercised. This also includes any closer distance after Issoku Itto, between and including Chikama.

I have only discussed the first three kata here. There are many good text books available on the subject that you can refer to for more detail.

The reigi is similar to that discussed in chapter 1, except:

- **Sage-to - Bokuto** held in right hand on right side (blade up)
- Bring **bokuto** up in front of the chest and swap to left hand and place in **Tai-to**.
- Start and finish at a position where the **Yoko-te** of **bokuto** are crossing.
- **Metsuke** - keep eye contact throughout **Kata**.

Keys Points:

- Practice predefined steps but perform with flexibility.
- Maintain focus from the first **Rei** to the last, especially when retreating after each **Kata**.
- **Uchidachi** is the senior and **Shidachi** is the student, so **Uchidachi** always leads and **Shidachi** responds.
- Learn not only the steps but also the reasons and logic of the **Waza (Riai)** and the variation of speed and strength.
- Always look at each other's eyes and not at the target point.
- Move forward from the front foot and retreat from the back foot.
- Kata starts after **Uchidachi** sees a proper opportunity to strike. NB: **Kodachi kata** starts as **Shidachi** tries to enter into the **Ma-ai (Irimi)**.
- **Shidachi** always shows Zanshin after each Kata, and **Uchidachi** moves after seeing this.
- Use **Suriashi** footwork quietly.
- With **Datotsu** bring the rear foot immediately up to the heel of the front foot to a proper

gait, release shoulder tension, focus power to lower abdomen, and strike from the hip (whole body, not just arms).

- **Monouchi** must reach the target point with force, stopping just short.
- Coming into **Ma-ai** or retreating, hold breath to stabilize the body; inhale deeply before stepping forward, approach at once, then strike with Ki-ai (exhale) and power from lower abdomen (while in Ma-ai, breath shallow, quietly, and naturally from the diaphragm so as not to let the opponent sense your breathing.)
- Ki-ai is expressed by the shouts of "**Yah!**" for **Uchidachi** and "**Toh!**" for **Shidachi**, with loud voice with power from the lower abdomen.

Ipponme - The first LongSword kata

Jodan-no-kamae (Kame of Fire)

- Assume **Morote** (with both hands) **Hidari Jodan** by stepping left foot forward, being alert; bring hands up without changing the hand grip from **Chudan**.
- Left fist is one fist away above/front of forehead and above the left foot; sword 45-degrees with body slightly oblique; blade forward but **Kensen** slightly to the right
- **Morote Migi Jodan** is similar, except right foot forward, body **bokuto** and **kensen** are straight.

"Fire" represents all consuming power, **Jodan** is primarily attacking **Kamae**.

- **Uchidachi** takes **Morote Hidari Jodan** and **Shidachi** responds by taking **Morote Migi Jodan**
- **Uchidachi** leads from the left foot and **Shidachi** follows in response from the right foot, both move to correct **ma-ai**.
- **Shidachi** shows **Sen** (pressure), then, at the right opportunity, **Uchidachi** strikes **Shomen** to overcome this pressure - "strike" means to "cut through" - **Uchidachi** attempts to strike through the **Tsuka** all the way down (fast, strong, large arc), the **Kensen** may drop to below **Gedan** position at this time.
- **Shidachi** avoids this by stepping back and extending the arms up and back in the **Kensen's** direction (**Kensen** does not drop down) - **Uchidachi** leans slightly forward at the end of strike due to force of effort.
- **Shidachi** strikes back (fast, strong) with forward step (avoiding and striking must be a continuous action).
- Immediately **Uchidachi** steps one step back with **okuriashi**, and **Shidachi** lowers the **kensen** to the centre of **Uchidachi's** face (between eyes), then as **Uchidachi's** retreats another step, **Shidachi** follows up assuming **Morote Hidari Jodan** and shows **Zanshin**.
- As **Uchidachi** raises sword and straightens up, **Shidachi** retreats to **Chudan**.

This **Kata** teaches **Sen**, power, courage, conviction, faith, justice, truth.

Nihonme - The second long sword kata

- Both assume **Chudan-no-kamae**. With **Uchidachi** leading and **Shidachi** following in response, both move forward to the correct **Ma-ai**. (**Bokuto** cross at about three inches)
- Both sides endure the pressure until **Uchidachi** can no longer withstand the **Shidachi**'s force.
- At the right opportunity, **Uchidachi** strikes the **Kote** (fast, strong) with large technique to a point where **Kensen** is slightly below the fist level.
- **Shidachi** avoids by stepping back diagonally to left, while dropping **Kensen** straight down to approximately **Gedan** (knee) level, then (naturally drawing an arc under **Uchidachi**'s **bokuto**) with large swing and large step from the right foot, make a straight strike to **Uchidachi**'s right **Kote**.
- **Shidachi** shows **Zanshin** (without bodily motion, so must show this with **Ki** - spirit)
- **Uchidachi**'s **Kensen** goes under **Shidachi**'s **bokuto** when returning to **Chudan**.

This **Kata** teaches endurance, patience, thus **Waza** is minimal and strike is not fatal.

Sanbonme - The third long sword kata

Gedan-no-kamae (Kamae of earth)

- Lower the **Kensen**, straight down.
- **Kensen** should be at a level 3-6 cm below the opponent's knee cap.

Gedan is defensive posture.

- Both sides in **Gedan-no-kamae**. With **Uchidachi** leading and **Shidachi** following in response, both move forward to the correct **Ma-ai**.
- From this **ma-ai**, both raise **kensen** towards **Chudan** with **Sen** (being alert, **Kiarasoi**), with **bokuto** just crossing.
- At the right opportunity, **Uchidachi** thrusts towards the solar plexus using **Shinogi** (blade turned slightly to the right)
- **Shidachi** parries with the **Mine** (with blade turned to the right) to control the force, then immediately thrusts back to the chest (blade down).
- **Uchidachi** deflects by stepping right foot back using the right **Shinogi** (blade to right down) with arms somewhat extended and **Kensen** to the throat. (**Hidari Shizentai-no-kame**)
- **Shidachi** deliberately pressures further forward (**Kuraizume**, not a thrust with arms) with left foot leading, so **Uchidachi** steps back and uses the left **Shinogi** to parry the **Bokuto** (in **Migi Shizentai-no-kame**) but is unable to withstand advancement, so lowers the **Bokuto** to the right and retreats three rapid steps (left-right-left)
- **Shidachi** quickly follows **Uchidachi** raising the **Kensen** gradually to end at the centre of face (between eyes) and show **Zanshin**.
- After **Zanshin**, **Uchidachi** slowly raises the **bokuto** to **Chudan**, and **Shidachi** begins to retreat slowly two steps, so both meet in **Chudan** (at **issoko itto no maai**), and continue another three steps back to the centre position (All five steps should be continuous for **Shidachi**).

This **Kata** teaches **Kigurai** and **Kuraizume**, commanding the opponent without injuring him.

Appendix C: SUBURI SWING SPEED STUDY

By: Ueda Fumio & Yoshida Yasumasa - Keio University, Japan

Translated by: Matt (Kingofmyrrh - Kendo World Forum)

INTRODUCTION

In your daily practice, to what angle do you swing up the shinai, and to what position do you swing it down to? In Heisei 10, at the 31st Japanese Budo Forum, two pieces of research were presented: 'Changes in suburi - in particular changes caused by kensen position at the apex of the upswing - due to variations in kendo teaching methods' and 'Suburi teaching methods in kendo - variations in arm action at the terminal position during empty striking'.

The researchers were a group centred around Professor Ueda Fumio (kyoshi 7 dan) and Assistant Professor Yoshida Yasumasa (7 dan), both of Keio Gijuku University. Both researchers have since further advanced their research into suburi, and continue to scientifically search for the most effective suburi. Here, they explain suburi that is effective in actual use.

INDEX

- **Doubts toward Ambiguous Instructional Methods**
- **Research into the Upswing Movement**
- **Investigation into the Terminal Position of the Downswing**
- **The Most Effective Suburi**

DOUBTS TOWARD AMBIGUOUS INSTRUCTIONAL METHODS

Ueda

I see this every year in my role as kendo club coach at Keio University, but when it come to university kendo clubs, the members gather together from all over the country. Even though we can raise suburi as an example of something that each of the students has been taught, the fact is that it varies wildly according to their home region. I felt that in order to be able to instruct all of them, it would be necessary to start by teaching them exactly what correct suburi was. At Keio University, there are not all that many students who achieved superb results in competitions during their high school years; in fact, there are many that are close to beginners [this is a somewhat relative description!]. I thought that by having them master correct basics as best they could during their 4 years here their skill level would rise. Taking up a shinai and striking each other is something that cannot be done without an opponent, but suburi is something that you can do by yourself. I feel that important factors in kendo are kamae and suburi. These days we have machines so we can easily do strength training, but in the old days they didn't have such things. It was most likely suburi itself that was strength training back then.

At every Japan Budo Forum, a research topic is presented. In Heisei 10, Keio University was used as the venue, and we performed the role of hosts. When we then wondered what we should present research on, we hit upon the idea of presenting something about suburi. I looked into the position of the downswing, while Yoshida sensei led those who got to work on the angle of the upswing.

Yoshida

I first turned my eye to the instructional methods of 'swing back until the shinai touches your buttocks' and 'swing up such that the angle of the shinai reaches 45 degrees'.

Ueda

Talking about the '45 degrees' method, we were somewhat concerned as to whether one could discern what angle the shinai was at, since it was in a position behind the body where it could not be seen. We wondered whether it was really necessary to stipulate the angle to which the shinai should be swung back to, and whether it wasn't possible just to teach a naturally flowing backswing movement without specifying an angle. We also had our doubts as to which stopping position was best for the downswing position. When talking conceptually, suburi is often taught in terms of stopping the right fist at the height of the right shoulder. However, we were aware that when we did suburi we often stopped the kensen at the height of the opponent's head. If you stop with your right hand at the height of your right shoulder, the kensen comes to a halt at quite a high position. I carried out my research into the downswing of the shinai from a stance of trying to find out just which of these suburi methods was most effective.

As far as I am concerned, the suburi method in which you swing back until the shinai touches the buttocks, so called 'jogeburi' suburi, is a method used to instruct children. It's difficult for children to understand if you just tell them to 'swing straight'. By having them line up the shinai with the coccyx, you can teach them a straight shinai path.

In fact, in the suburi described in the All Japan Kendo Federation's 'Points for the Instruction of Young Children' there are only two types, 'jogeburi' and 'sayufuri'. Swinging straight down at an imaginary opponent is distinguished with the name 'shomen strike'. In other words, it is seen not as suburi but a movement that comes at the striking stage. Despite the fact that suburi, where one stops the shinai at shomen is actually carried out, it does not exist as a term. In this research, we used the name 'air shomen suburi'.

Yoshida

Most likely 'shomen strike' refers not to suburi but to the movement that comes at the stage when bogu is worn and actual striking is carried out. In Nakano Yasoji's 'An Illustrated kendo Dictionary' there is something called 'advancing and retreating men strike suburi', which is probably safe to think of as shomen suburi.

Ueda

Kendo suburi and basic techniques came to be standardised after the war, from around the latter half of Showa 30s to the Showa 40s. The central figure of that time was Nakano Yasoji sensei. Since 'An Illustrated Kendo Dictionary' was put out by Nakano sensei, it naturally became the basis of post war instructional method.

Yoshida

If we go even further back from there, we arrive at Takano Sasaburo sensei's 'Kendo'. This 'Kendo' is the start point. As such, the makeup of many instructional texts that followed was the same as that of 'Kendo', and there are many texts that use almost the same terms.

Ueda

At present, research into kendo is carried out from every possible viewpoint, but surprisingly, there has been almost no research or data on suburi.

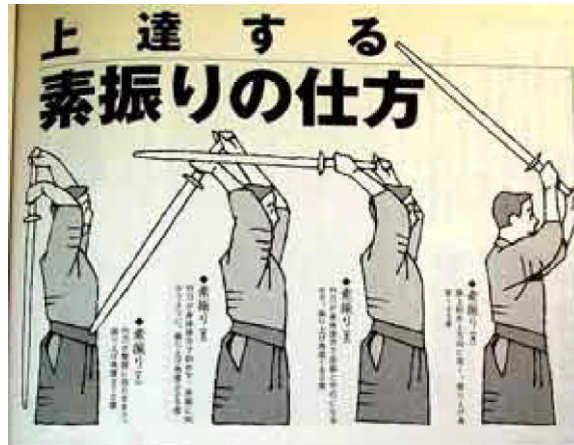
RESEARCH INTO THE UPSWING MOVEMENT

Ueda

For this investigation, we obtained the cooperation of five subjects with kendo experience, ranging from 3rd dan to 7th dan, and five subjects without kendo experience. Yoshida sensei also used the same subjects in his research.

Yoshida

Yes, Ueda sensei looked at an electromyogram (EMG), and I carried out analysis of movements using a high speed camera. For these observations, we first divided ways of swinging up the shinai into four types (see illustration). We designated swinging back as far as the buttocks as suburi 1, and from there suburi 2, suburi 3, and finally we designated swinging up to 45 degrees as suburi 4. We selected these 4 classifications based upon photographs of suburi that we had seen in various instructional texts and kendo magazines. Actually, while no matter which book you read the explanatory text is pretty much the same; the photographs of suburi are almost completely inconsistent. We looked at these photographs, and while there was a suburi method in which one touches the buttocks, there was also talk of swinging up such that the kensen would thrust into a wall behind you, with the shinai horizontal. Then again there was some where the shinai was swung so that it pointed diagonally up. We divided these into four types.

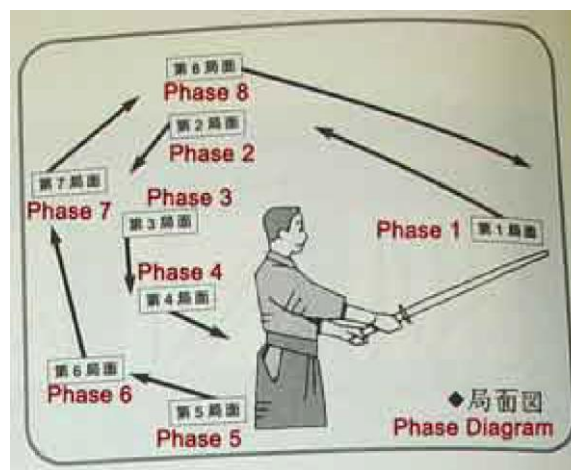


4 Types of Suburi Tested:

- Swinging upward at a 270 degree angle
- Swinging upward at a 225 degree angle
- Swinging upward at a 180 degree angle
- Swinging upward at a 135 degree angle

Ueda

When Yoshida sensei said to me, 'It seems that there's also a method in which you swing back as if thrusting into a wall behind you,' I argued that that was ridiculous. This is because if you swing back as if to thrust into a wall, your elbows will end up going behind your head. I felt that this type of upswing was probably inefficient.



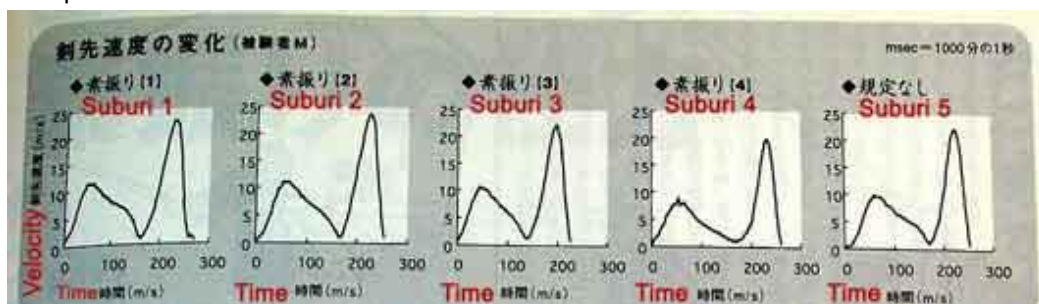
Test Phases

Yoshida

Before starting the investigation, we had our subjects actually practice the four types of suburi. We made the same subjects perform all four types. Next, we measured which of these swinging methods produced the greatest kensen speed at the point of swinging down, measured at phase 8 (see phase diagram).

Speaking from the results, suburi 3 was found to give the fastest kensen speed. The slowest was suburi 4. If I were to try to explain, it would seem that because with suburi 4 you are in a situation where the shinai has merely been thrust upwards, it is not possible to smoothly switch to a downswing action. In the end, all that you can do is swing using just the power of your hands.

Additionally, from doing this research we became aware of how difficult it is for humans to calibrate angles at a position not visible to themselves.



Speed Comparison Graph

During the investigation, when we had the subjects perform the four types of suburi, we instructed them to 'swing back to this position,' but the point to which they swung was rather varied. At first they swung to roughly the designated point, but there was a trend for their upswing to become steadily larger as they continued to swing the shinai. The result was that suburi 3 was the fastest, but their actual backswing was somewhere between suburi 2 and suburi 3. I think you'll see what I mean if you look at the graph of 'variation in kensen speed'. This graph is of subject M. In his case, suburi 2 is fastest. Next is suburi 1 and suburi 3.

Ueda

Based upon these results, we tend to feel that while there is no problem as long as the angle is at a position that can be seen, trying to specify angles outside of the field of vision is not a good idea. Expressing it in terms of getting somebody to look from the side and find the rough angle is probably better.

INVESTIGATION INTO THE TERMINAL POSITION OF THE DOWNSWING

Ueda

We designated two kensen stopping positions. One was the position reached when stopping the right hand at the height of the right shoulder, and the other was the position reached when stopping the kensen at the position of the head of an imaginary opponent (see illustration). Since opponents come in all shapes and sizes, we went for roughly one's own head height. What we were looking for as a result was a movement close to that of actual combat. The fact is that suburi that has an effect on the actions of actual fighting is good, so the suburi that showed a balanced distribution of power use when viewed on kindenzu would be the best.

We investigated which of suburi 1 and suburi 2 used the muscles most effectively. We took measurements with an EMG, constructed a graph and looked at the results (see 'muscular electrical output of suburi 1 against suburi 2'). For this, we did not make any stipulations with regard to the backswing.



Yoshida

Looking at the results, with suburi 1, where the right hand stops at the height of the right shoulder, we see a situation in which tension remains in the right arm for a long period. Tension in the right deltoid was seen especially frequently. It continued to be tense even after finishing cutting men. On the other hand, with suburi 2, where the kensen was stopped at head height, the tension soon disappeared when cutting down.

Ueda

In actual fighting, two step strikes and continuous strikes are essential. In order to move quickly to the next movement, it is essential to first shift to a state of relaxation from the state of tension that exists after making a strike. With suburi 1, the muscles are constantly tense, and the shift to the next action is not smooth. We can state that suburi 2 enables muscle usage more in line with the movements of actual fighting.

As an aside, we only specified the kensen stopping height for suburi 2, but when we started the experiment, we saw that most of the subjects brought their fists down to the solar plexus.

Yoshida

In this experiment, we stretched a piece of rubber at each of the stopping positions of right shoulder height and head height, and measured the tip speed when the kensen touched this rubber. In the case of suburi 1, we saw that the maximum tip speed occurred not when it touched the rubber, but prior to that point.

THE MOST EFFICIENT SUBURI

Ueda

We would like people to think of Yoshida sensei's research on the backswing, and my own on the downswing, not separately but together. That is, that suburi performed with the upswing and downswing that resulted from this research is effective. In conclusion, effective suburi would be something like the following:

First, with regards to the upswing, 'from kamae, raise both elbows as far as they will go'. The position of the kensen is not specified.

Yoshida

However, there is one important condition here, which is not to loosen the grip of the left hand. If you loosen it, you end up with a different movement.

Ueda

That's right; you must raise the arms whilst gripping the shinai properly. This is an important condition. If you think about it, it's doubtful whether suburi 1 from the upswing investigation can be performed with correct te-no-uchi in the first place.

Yoshida

That's right. As long as you don't loosen the grip, it's pretty difficult to get the shinai to reach the buttocks.

As for the downswing, you should 'swing down so that the kensen reaches your own head height'. It's best to just specify the kensen height, and not the height of the arms. Since everybody has a different physique, the position of their head will also vary.

Yoshida

One other thing that I can explain with confidence from the results of this research is that you must use the shoulders, then the elbows, then the wrists, in that order, such that it becomes a shoulder joint-centric movement. Best of all is to make full use of the snap of the wrists, rather like a whip. Something often seen with suburi where the right hand stops at shoulder height is people who go directly from the shoulder to the wrist. It ends up being a movement like a pole, not a whip.

Ueda

If you do suburi in this pole-like state, the extra effort required leads to extra fatigue, and repeated many times, there is even the possibility of damaging the elbows. If the elbows extend flexibly, the burden on them should be less.

Ueda

There is a teaching often used when striking men, 'after you've struck men, extend both arms'. You'll soon see if you try to do this that if you try to extend the right arm when the body is facing forwards then the left arm bends. To extend both arms, you have no choice but to take a hanmi stance. It's difficult to describe this as correct suburi.

Yoshida

If those teaching just say, 'Stretch out your arms, stretch them!' then it's difficult for those being taught as that's just what they will try to do. Something like 'you should end up with both arms extended in front of you' is probably a better expression.

Appendix D: Small cutting action for striking.

All the basic practices discussed in this document refer to the need for large swinging action when striking. Indeed, it is essential to master the large relaxed striking motion, and practice it during all the previous practice types.

All my Kendo manuals mention this fact, but none discuss the way to perform the small fast striking action we see used in Ji-geiko and Shiai.

It is common for beginners to emulate their seniors, and as soon as they wear Bogu to start using small striking actions to become faster and help them strike targets. It is also a problem that the action they use is incorrect, and will hinder their progression in learning proper Kendo.

I have therefore set out the basic principles and common errors for striking with a small cutting action.

- To start, the Kamae, posture, grip must all be correct. This is exactly the same as already discussed in the Chapters of this document.
- The **furi-kaburi** action is in essence a small version of the large striking action. The hands swing up and forward until the **kensen** is just above the target.
- **Kiri-tsuke** (cutting down) is then performed with normal action - left fist pulling down, while right arm extends forwards to strike. **Shibori**, **ten-o-uchi** and **sae** actions are all required.
- Shinai, hands and arms finish extended at the same level as discussed in previous chapter.

As the swing is much smaller, the coordination with the body movement and step is different.

- When pushing forward to strike, keep the **kensen** centred until almost reaching opponent, then quickly raise hands with a spring like action to strike as above with **fumikomi**. This gives you control over opponent and centre and reduces chance of being countered.
- Which ever target you are striking the **kensen** and hands must rise up before striking to have the correct cutting action.

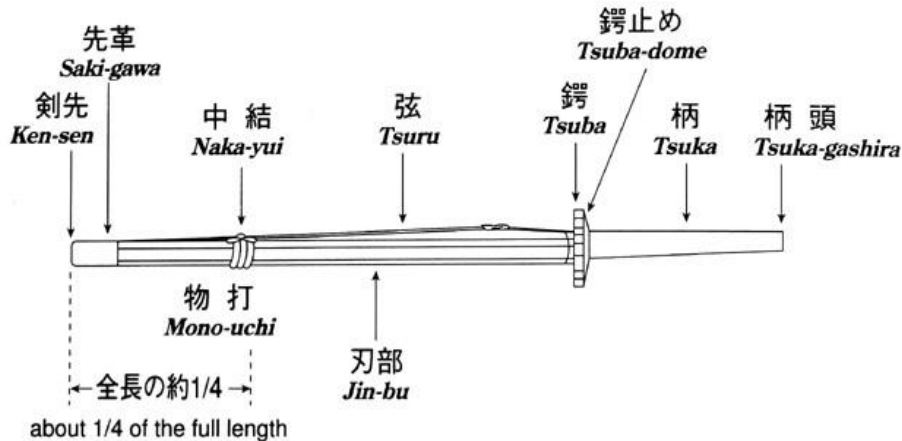
Points to Avoid:

- A common mistake is to leave left fist stationary, and pull and push (pump) right arm when striking. This results in a slapping action, not a cutting action.
- Another error is pulling right hand back as lifting arms. This pulls **kensen** away from opponents, losing your **seme**.
- Both above points rely on bending in the right elbow during up swing - remember correct basic furi-kaburi - the position of the arms DOES NOT change when swinging up, they only extend during striking.
- Also, many people do not swing up and forward enough, especially striking **Men**. Make sure **kensen** is raised above target slightly before striking.
- So called **Sashi-men**, is an action where **kensen** is pushed onto target with a wrist flick action. This is NOT small striking. It results in a strike to light. It has not cutting action - think of using a real sword.

Appendix E: Equipment.

Shinai

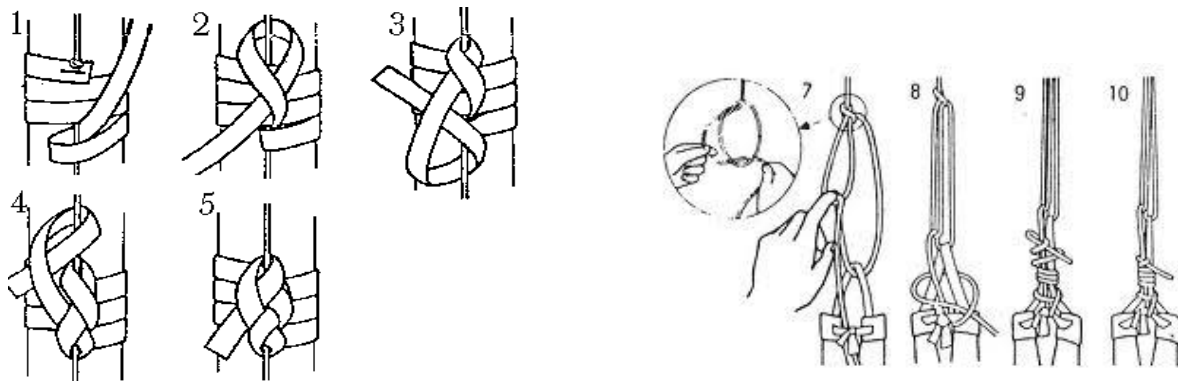
竹刀各部の名称・Structure of the *Shinai*



The complete list of physical parts of a **shinai** is as follows, including the ones not explicitly highlighted in the above diagram.

- **Sakigawa:** The leather cap on the tip of the sword.
- **Sakigomu:** The rubber mushroom-shaped stopper that prevents the take from poking through the sakigawa.
- **Take:** The four bamboo slats of which the body of the shinai is made.
- **Tsuru:** The cord that holds together the **sakigawa** and **tsukagawa**. It represents the back of the blade.
- **Nakayui:** The strip of leather that ties the take together.
- **Tsuba:** The sword guard.
- **Tsubadome:** The stopper that prevents the tsuba from slipping.
- **Tsukagawa:** The leather cover of the tsuka.
- **Chigiri:** The small square metal plate embedded inside the shinai at the base of the tsuka to hold the four slats of bamboo together.

Your shinai must be maintained well to prevent accidents. You should check it for any splits or damage to the **take**, and re-tie loose **naka-yui** and **tsuru**.



Hakama

The **hakama** resembles a pleated skirt in its outward appearance, but is actually a trouser-like garment with individual pant legs. The **hakama** is well suited for kendo as it allows good air circulation around the legs and lower body, and permits unrestricted movement. **Hakama** made for kendo are of cotton or a polyester material and are most commonly found in solid colours of white and indigo blue.

The pleats of the **hakama** are symbolic of six fundamental virtues. Viewing the hakama from the front and identifying the pleats from left to right, the first five virtues are Jin (mercy), Gi (righteousness), Rei (etiquette), Chi (intelligence), and Shin (trust). The back pleat represents the sixth virtue of Makoto/Chu-kou (loyalty/allegiance)

Wearing hakama:

- 1) Holding the front of the hakama, step into the garment, first with the left foot. When removing the garment, step out with the right foot first.
- 2) Place the front of the hakama at waist level and wrap the maehimo (front cords) around the back of the body and around to the front. Bring the maehimo across the front of the body about 6 to 10 cm below the top edge of the hakama. At a point in front of the right hip, fold the himo that is coming around from the right side of the body over the maehimo that is coming across from the left side. Bring the haehimo around to the back and secure the ends together with a horizontal bowknot.
- 3) Bring the koshiita just above the knot of the maehimo and wrap the ushirohimo around to the front of the body.
- 4) Crossing the left ushirohimo over the right, wrap it under and around all of the hakama himo.
- 5) Tie the ushirohimo in a square knot and neatly tuck the ends in the back.
- 6) Reach inside the side openings of the hakama and straighten the coattails of the kendo-gi. Pull any slack on the backside of the keiko-gi to the sides so that the kendo-gi is neatly fitted to the back with no vertical wrinkles.

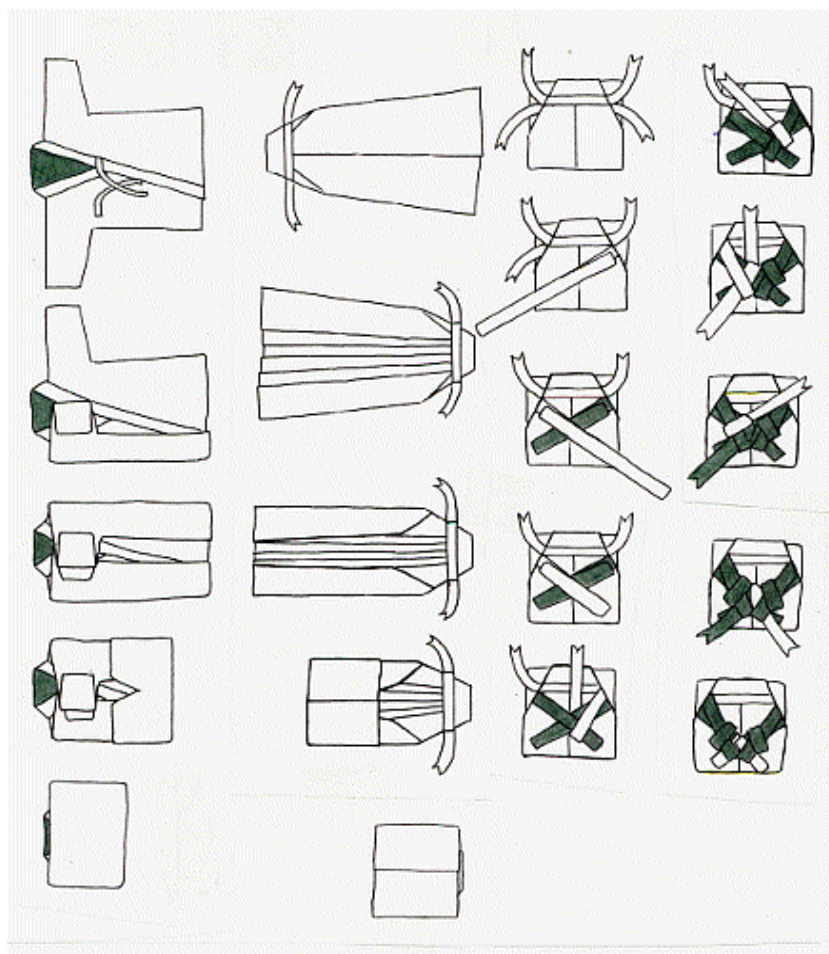
Kendo-gi.

The kendo-gi, also called keiko-gi or do-gi, is a jacket-like garment made of thickly quilted cotton fabric. The resiliency of the material provides a level of protection from bumps and stray strikes that may be encountered during a kendo practice. The quilting helps absorb perspiration and facilitates drying. Kengo-gi can be found in several different colours and patterns; the most common are solid colours of white and dark indigo blue.

Wearing Kendo-gi:

- 1) Wear the keiko-gi with the left lapel overlapping the right.
- 2) Secure the kendo-gi with the munehimo (cords), tying the end in a bowknot. Be sure the knot is tied such that the loops rest in a horizontal position.

Folding.



Care and Washing.

The kendo-gi and hakama should always be kept clean and presentable. They should be replaced if they become faded, discoloured, worn, or in any way unsightly. Proper care and storage of the uniform will prolong the life of the garments and keep them looking crisp.

Polyester hakama should be cared for in the same manner as other permanent press garments. Prompt removal from the dryer and immediate folding will help preserve the pleats and keep the garment looking neatly pressed.

Dyed cotton hakama and kendo-gi require a level of special handling. Dyed uniforms should always be washed separate from other laundry, as the indigo dye will bleed from the material throughout the life of the garments. New hakama and kendo-gi should be soaked overnight in a bath of vinegar and water. Add about ½ cup of vinegar to every 4 litres of water. The acidity of the bath will set the dye and help reduce fading. After soaking, wash the garments using cold to lukewarm water and mild detergent; old fashion soap flakes work well. Sequent washings may include additional vinegar to further slow fading. Hand washing is recommended for maximum colour preservation – the bath converts to the perfect washtub for this task. After air-drying, the hakama and kendo-gi should be properly folded, and stored to maintain a smartly pressed look. (Damp folding the hakama and letting dry on a clean, flat surface will help set the pleats and reduce wrinkling.)

Appendix F: Training.

Kendo training consists of Kata-geiko, Kihon-geiko and Ji-geiko. All three elements are part of Kendo, and do not exist separately. They should all be connected fundamentally, and all come together to allow us to learn and develop complete Kendo.

Kata-geiko

Here the term includes all bokuto practice such as **Bokuto ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho, Nihon Kendo Kata** and **Koryu** (such Mizoguchi-ha itto ryu). The use of the Bokuto gives emphasis to the practice of techniques in relation to using a real sword. We can see the correct path of the blade, and the shape of the sword. We learn waza that can be applied to Shinai practices, and practice correct abdominal breathing.

Kihon-geiko

Here repeated practice of striking and waza is performed under predetermined situations. We become proficient with the strikes and thrust made using the shinai, and practice striking accurately the Bogu.

We should develop full ki-ai, good posture and master ki-ken-tai –itchi when striking.

Ji-geiko

As mention in previous chapters, this is where you can learn to make effective seme, and to recognise opportunities to strike. Only by testing the techniques learnt in other practice in unrestricted situations will you learn if your kendo is effective.

All three Geiko must be practiced throughout your kendo training, and must be balanced according to the stages of learning. Whether everything is practiced in all sessions, or averaged over an on going practice plan is a matter of choice.

The balance and content of training will vary according to the aim of the practice. The Coaches should have regular discussions to the content and time allocated to each area. This will vary according to members and up coming Shiai and gradings.

A normal training session should include warm up / stretching before practice begins, and a cool down to finish. Normally all suburi, kihon-geiko, ji-geiko and kata-geiko will be practiced after rei.

An example of a lesson plan:

Warm up (5)

- Brisk walking, gentle jogging, squats and jumps lasting for about 5 minutes.
- Going from rest to hard exercise is bad for the body, so make sure to warm up.
- Static stretches are far more effective after a correct warm-up.
-

Stretching (5)

- Static stretches are performed for Calf muscles, Thighs, lower back, upper back, shoulder / triceps, arms, elbows, wrists and neck.
- Ease into and out of all stretches; do not “bounce” during them.
- Hold each one for 10-30 seconds, and repeat several times.
- Breathe out naturally while performing them.
- Stretch each side of body equally.

- Boost your spirit with shouts- leader counts “ichi, ni, san, shi!” then others count “go, roku, shichi, hachi!” – use this to include breathing out requirement. Counting this sequence twice will take about 20 seconds, so you can use it to time stretching.

Rei

- Everyone will line up and perform **rei** – see chapter 1. (5)

Suburi and Ashi-sabaki (10)

- Perform the different Suburi types as required. Use Shinai or bokuto as required.
- Practice the different footwork types alone, or as part of above practice.
- Consider paired practice for **Katate** and **te-no-uchi** practice.

Normally, unless doing Bokuto exercises, we now take seiza and put on Bogu ready for practice.

Kihon-geiko (20-30)

- **Kiri-kaeshi** practice. This should be tailored to the experience level of Kendoka.
- Basic Striking practice – Large **Men, Kote, Do** (and **Tsuki** if suitable for experience levels)
- Basic **Waza** practice. Concentrate on Shikake waza such as **Nidan-waza, hari-waza, hiki-waza** etc.

NB: Consider practicing using opening waza to make Men / Kote-Men strikes (x3), leading onto Kakari-geiko.

- Applied **Waza** – Practice different **seme**. Have motodachi strikes at various targets, where you can practice the various counters to them, including any Oji-waza you know.

Check Shinai and Bogu while in seiza. This may be a good time for fluid intake. (5)

- The BKA make clear the need for adequate breaks for fluid intake during training sessions.
- Breaks will be provided as required, do not just stop training, unless invited.

Striking Practice (5-10)

- Perform **Kakari-geiko** for about 20 seconds each in several rounds.
- **Uchikomi-geiko** with a fast pace maybe more beneficial to beginners.

Check Shinai and Bogu while in seiza.

Combined Practice (Ji-geiko) (20)

- Senior members will normally act as **motodachi**.
- Practice **Ji-geiko** for 2-5 minute with opponents.
- Beginners without Bogu may practice **uchikomi-geiko, kakari-geiko** or **Kiri-kaeshi** against motodachi, or combination of them all.
- Let Beginners practice, but after one or two rounds, they can perform **Mitori-geiko** (watching practice) while seniors practice together.

Basics and Kiri-kaeshi (5)

- Perform Basic large striking exercise, such as **Uchikomi** - 5 x **Men uchi** (continuous action) and **Kiri-kaeshi**.

- This helps correct body and mind attitude after Ji-geiko.

A short jog and brisk walk will help body cool down.

Rei (5)

- Line up and remove Bogu.
- Use Mokuso as part of the regulated breathing, so this should last a minute or more.
- Rei, then listen to advice from sensei.

Kata-geiko

The numbers in brackets are an estimate of the number of minutes required for the tasks. This equates to 1 hour 30-40 minutes. This leaves 20-30 minutes for **Kata-geiko**. This is sometimes performed before warm up and rei, but as it is an essential part of practice, I like to practice after we have warmed up and performed **Rei**.

Practice of **Bokuto ni yoru Kendo kihon waza keiko ho** is best practiced before any Kihon training, as it is often used to introduce techniques to be practiced later with Shinai. In this case it makes most sense to perform relevant **suburi** use the **Bokuto** also.

The **Nihon Kendo Kata** can be practiced before (as above) or after Ji-geiko. Performing at the end can be beneficial as a way of correcting posture, and a good way to cool the body down slowly.

This is only a basic lesson plan idea, and even the best made plans will be subject to on going changes depending on the circumstances. A usual lesson plan could be thus:

- Warm up and stretching.
- Rei
- Suburi
- Bogu on: (all repeated twice)
- Kirikaeshi – no tai-atari
- Kirikaeshi
- Men x3
- Kote x3
- Do x 3
- (Tsuki x3)
- Kote-Men x3
- Kote- Do x3
- Hiki- men x3 (add kote and do)
- Men – tai-atari – hikimen x3
- (Uchikomi geiko Men-Kote/Men-Kote/Do-Men tai-atari- hiki men, kote, do , Men)
- Use waza to make opening for Men x3 (Seme, hari, harai etc)
- Use waza to make opening for Kote x3 (Seme- press/release, hari, harai etc)
- Kakari-geiko. 3 attacks, 5 attacks, 5 attacks with some hiki waza. Etc
- Waza - Motodachi step in to uchima – strike Men: Kakarite use Harai, Debana, Nuki etc to strike men, kote, do.
- Waza - Motodachi step in to strike Kote: Kakarite use Debana, Nuki, Suriage etc to strike men, kote, do.
- Jigeiko – Mawari geiko 2-3 minute rounds.

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