

# Bokuto Ni Yoru Kendo Kihon Waza Keiko Ho

Basic Kendo Practice Methods Using a Bokuto

## **Shikake Waza: Attack Initiation Techniques**

1. **Ippon Uchi no Waza** (Single strike techniques)
2. **Ni / San Dan no Waza** (Two / three step techniques)
3. **Harai Waza** (“Sweeping aside” opponent's stationary weapon)
4. **Hiki Waza** (Techniques while withdrawing)

## **Oji Waza: Techniques for Responding to Attack**

5. **Nuki Waza** (Techniques for counter attacking while dodging)
6. **Suriage Waza** (Parrying opponent's incoming strike)
7. **Debana Waza** (Attacking at the initiation of the opponent's strike)
8. **Kaeshi Waza** (Receive and counter attack techniques)
9. **Uchiotoshi Waza** (“Redirection” techniques)

The Kihon Kendo Bokuto Waza (Bokuto Waza) are performed in pairs; the mototachi who has the role of one creating the openings, and the kakari-te who has the role of the attacker practicing the prescribed waza; both are active participants in these forms. Both partners share equal footing in the bokuto waza v.s. the formal hierarchy of uchidachi and shidachi in the Nihon Kendo no Kata. Both “kata” share the same introductory formalities.

The descriptions of each Kata begins with the mototachi and kakari-te in chudan no kamae<sup>1</sup> after the initial attacker has stepped into issoku itto no maai<sup>2</sup> from yokote kosa<sup>3</sup>.

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1 **Chudan no kamae** = mid-level stance.

2 **Issoku itto no maai** = “one step one sword distance”. The maximum distance from an opponent where one needs to take only one step to successfully reach them with a strike.

3 **Yokote kosa** = The point at near the end of the bokuto where the bevel of the kensen transitions into the shinogi.

(1) Ippon Uchi no Waza: single strikes to the men, kote, do, and tsuki.

**Mototachi**

- (1) Open<sup>4</sup> Men by moving the kensen to the right.
- (2) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.
- (3) Move the kensen back to ai-chudan.
- (4) Open kote by moving the kensen to the left.
- (5) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin<sup>7</sup>.
- (6) Move the kensen back to ai-chudan.
- (7) Open do by raising the bokuto overhead at 45 degrees
- (8) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.
- (9) Move the kensen down to ai-chudan.
- (10) Open tsuki by moving the kensen slightly to the right. Step backward one step when kakari-te thrusts.
- (11) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.
- (12) Return to chudan and step forward.

**Kakari-Te**

- (1) Step forward and strike shomen<sup>5</sup>.
- (2) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat.
- (3) Step back into ai-chudan at issoku itto no maai<sup>6</sup> 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 maai for the next strike.
- (7) Step forward and strike migi<sup>8</sup> 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) Step back to ai-chudan at yokote kosa.

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4 When opening for the kakari-te move the Kensen (sword tip) aside, pointing toward the collarbone.

5 When striking be sure that the monouchi is fully on the target and as close to it as possible.

6 This distance is different for each target. For Men the monouchi should cross at their midpoint, Kote the tips ought to cross, Do is a bit closer than Men, and Tsuki is between Men and Kote.

7 **Zanshin** = lit. "Remaining mind". Often translated as "follow-through".

8 **Migi** = "Right". In this case the opponent's right.

## (2) Ni / San Dan no Waza: kote-men combination strike

### **Mototachi**

- (1) Open Kote by moving the kensen to the left.
- (2) Step back and move your kensen to the right opening Men. Move the kensen underneath the kakari-te's bokuto.
- (3) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.
- (4) Return to ai-chudan.
- (5) Step forward while in ai-chudan.

### **Kakari-Te**

- (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.

### (3) Harai Waza: Sweep aside opponent's kensen and strike men.

#### **Mototachi**

- (1) From issoku itto no maai the kakari-te breaks your kamae by using harai waza.
- (2) The kakari-te continues forward and strikes shomen.
- (3) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.
- (4) Return to ai-chudan.

#### **Kakari-Te**

- (1) From issoku itto no maai and using the omote<sup>9</sup> shinogi<sup>10</sup> break the mototachi's kamae by hitting / pushing<sup>11</sup> his kensen to your left.
- (2) After breaking kamae<sup>12</sup> strike the mototachi's shomen<sup>13</sup>.
- (3) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat.
- (4) Step back into ai-chudan at yokote kosa.

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9 **Omote** = Left (or inside) side of the bokuto.

10 **Shinogi** = The central ridge on the bokuto.

11 Do not “wind up” for this deflection by moving your tip to your right. Your kensen only moves from center to the left during the deflection. The deflection originates from the hips v.s. the hands.

12 Step one and two ought to be considered as “one motion”.

13 This men strike must be “big” as with all of the other strikes. Do not rush and make it “small”.

#### (4) Hiki Waza: Strike Do while withdrawing from opponent.

##### **Mototachi**

- (1) At Issoku itto no maai receive the kakari-te's men strike with the omote shinogi of the bokuto.
- (2) Step forward and enter tsuazeriai<sup>14</sup> with the kakari-te.
- (3) The kakari-te presses your hands down as if to create a shomen suki<sup>15</sup>.
- (4) Press your hands upward in response to the kakari-te.
- (5) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.
- (6) Step back and assume ai-chudan.

##### **Kakari-Te**

- (1) Step forward and strike shomen.
- (2) Your strike having been received, step forward and into tsubazeriai with the mototachi.
- (3) Press the hands of the mototachi downward.
- (4) As the mototachi begins to bring his bokuto up bring your bokuto up overhead, step back and strike migi do.
- (5) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat.
- (6) Step back into chudan.

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<sup>14</sup> **Tsubazeriai** = The “tsuba lock-up”. The tsubas (thumb guards) of both bokuto meet as do the omote shinogi. The left hand is at the chudan position and the right is slightly elevated.

<sup>15</sup> **Suki** = “Opening” either in ones physical defenses or concentration. In this case it refers to a physical opening.

## (5) Nuki Waza: Dodge an incoming strike while counter-attacking

### **Mototachi**

- (1) From issoku itto no maai step forward and strike shomen.
- (2) While turning slightly to the left to align yourself with the kakari-te, take a step back and assume chudan.
- (3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

### **Kakari-te**

- (1) Dodge the mototachi's strike by taking a step to the forward, diagonal right while simultaneously striking migi do.
- (2) The mototachi turns to align himself with you. As he does, take a step back along your current off-center angle, and assume chudan.
- (3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

## (6) Suriage Waza: Parry an incoming strike and counter-attack.

### **Mototachi**

(1) From issoku itto no maai step forward and strike kote.

(2) Step back and assume ai-chudan.

### **Kakari-te**

(1) As the mototachi strikes, step back and perform suriage<sup>16</sup> waza<sup>17</sup> with the ura<sup>18</sup> shinogi. Then immediately<sup>19</sup> step forward and strike men.

(2) Step back and assume ai-chudan.

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16 **Suriage** = “Rising slide” parry. Using the shinogi, deflect the strike by sliding your bokuto along the opponent's as you raise your own upward. This upward motion for the parry itself ought to double as the upward motion needed for the subsequent counter strike.

17 As with the **Bokuto Waza #3: Harai Waza**, do not “wind-up” and hit the opponent's bokuto. The deflection comes from the wrists and originates in the hips, and the kensen should remain primarily centered.

18 **Ura** = Right side (outside) of the bokuto.

19 There should not be a pause between your backward step for the suriage waza and your forward step for the men strike. You should be moving continuously.

(7) Dehana Waza: Strike as your opponent's attack is just “coming out”.

**Mototachi**

(1) From issoku itto no maai begin the motion of a “small<sup>20</sup>” strike: Take a half step<sup>21</sup> forward with the right foot and press the kensen slightly forward / upward from chudan (as if to initiate a strike).

(2) Wait for kakari-te's zanshin.

(3) Take a half step back and return to chudan kamae.

**Kakari-te**

(1) At the moment the mototachi begins to move<sup>22</sup>, step forward and strike “small” kote.

(2) Take a small step back and point toward the mototachi's throat.

(3) Take a step back into ai-chudan.

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20 Small strikes refer to the small strikes kendoka use once they have become accustomed to the large swings.

21 Half step refers to moving only with one foot, in this case the right foot, as compared to the standard complimentary stepping in Kendo in which you always move both, i.e. , “right-left”.

22 This waza is more of a “perceptual exercise” in that it helps kendoka practice establishing a connection between themselves and their opponent.

(8) Kaeshi Waza: Receive (block) a strike and then immediately counter-attack.

**Mototachi**

- (1) From issoku itto no maai strike shomen.
- (2) While turning slightly to the left to align yourself with the kakari-te, take a step back and assume chudan.
- (3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

**Kakari-te**

- (1) Receive<sup>23</sup> (block) the mototachi's strike with the omote shinogi of the bokuto. Immediately upon receiving the strike step to the forward, diagonal right and strike migi do.
- (2) The mototachi turns to align himself with you. As he does, take a step back along your current off-center angle, and assume chudan.
- (3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

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<sup>23</sup> It is a common error to turn the bokuto horizontal while receiving strikes for kaeshi waza. Your bokuto is not to become a rigid “shield” that brings the opponent's bokuto to a dead stop, but instead think of it as serving to disrupt the strike and move it off of the center line very similar to suriage waza.

## (9) Uchiotoshi Waza: Redirect the opponent's strike and counter attack.

### **Mototachi**

- (1) From issoku itto no maai strike migi do.
- (2) While turning slightly to the left to align yourself with the kakari-te, take a step back and assume chudan.
- (3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

### **Kakari-te**

- (1) As the mototachi strikes, step to the diagonal back left and, using the omote shinogi<sup>24</sup> and in a large overhead swing, redirect the incoming strike downward. Then immediately step forward and strike men.
- (2) The mototachi turns to align himself with you. As he does, take a step back along your current off-center angle, and assume chudan.
- (3) While in ai-chudan take a circular step to the left back to the starting positions.

This ends the Kihon Bokuto Waza. The closing formalities have been omitted.

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<sup>24</sup> There is some debate as to whether you use the shinogi for this (v.s. The “blade”) or not since, as these are bokuto forms made for modern Kendo, performing these waza according to how one would use a real katana isn't necessarily possible. These waza are not katana waza, but are waza using bokuto to give kendoka a link between shinai kendo and the katana.