

The Fundamental Theorem of Kendo?

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Kendo is composed of an immense number of techniques and concepts all centered about the combative scenario of Japanese swordplay. Many of these concepts are all very much intertwined with one another.

Even concepts which (initially) seem to be of completely different mindsets have very inherent relationships. One specific example is **Shikake** and **Oji Waza** or “Attacking” and “Counterattacking” techniques. These are the two most broad categories into which **Waza** are divided. While these are related in the obvious sense that they are both ways to “hit a target”, their relation is much deeper than this.

Using this example as a starting point, the intent here is to show how many of the common concepts in **Kendo** can be generalized from their “beginner” definitions to ones which give rise to a much wider scope of application and, given these more generalized notions, attempt to broaden our understanding of these concepts. A lengthy discussion is also given on the notion of **Seme**, its production, and its various types. The result of this generalization will be to show how these concepts are interrelated, and then to show how through expression of all of these generalized ideas, **Shikake** and **Oji Waza** are related to one another so deeply that they can in fact be considered the same thing. Finally, through this relation¹, a simplification of **Kendo** naturally appears.

Basic Definitions

The following are basic definitions for the various notions discussed throughout. These basic definitions will be built upon in the following sections.

- **Suki**. (lit.) “(1) *Gap, space*, (2) *break, interval*, (3) *chink (in one’s armor), chance, opportunity*”. In **Kendo Suki** is used to refer to an opening in the opponent’s (or your own) defenses. This opening can either be physical, for example an exposed target area, or mental such as a momentary loss of concentration, focus, or **Connection** with the opponent.

¹The title of this article is a play on “Fundamental Theorems” from Mathematics, most notably the Fundamental Theorem of Calculus which relates two seemingly unrelated concepts.

- **Shikake Waza.** **Shikake Waza** are techniques in which one initiates an attack. Examples of **Shikake Waza** would be **Tobi Komi Waza**, **Harai Waza**, **Katsugi Waza**, etc... The general idea is that the **Kendoka** creates or takes advantage of an existing **Suki** by attacking with strong spirit.
- **Oji Waza.** **Oji Waza** are techniques in which one responds to an attack initiated by the opponent. Examples of **Oji Waza** would be **Nuki Waza**, **Suriage Waza**, **Uchiotoshi Waza**, etc...
- **Connection.** This refers to the mental and physical connection one establishes with the opponent. A very rudimentary example of this connection is that established through **Metsuke**, or “Point of Observation”. In **Kendo** this is the eyes of the opponent. Once this basic **Connection** is established one can begin to perceive the opponent’s movements and attacks (initially through peripheral vision). The **Connection** is what truly makes the distinction between a **Mototachi** and an opponent.
- **Sen.** (lit.) “*First move, forestalling, initiative*”. The idea of **Sen** is that one is constantly “ready to act”. A more concise explanation is that one never allows a **Suki** to be passed up.
- **Sutemi.** (lit.) “*Body abandoning*”. **Sutemi** is commonly interpreted as “all or nothing”. This stems from the idea that in actual combat each strike must be performed with the mentality that to “kill, be killed, or both” are the only possible outcomes. The slightest hesitation or doubt would only result in your own death.
- **Kamae.** (lit.) “*Stance or position*”. The immediate notion of **Kamae** in **Kendo** refers to the stance one assumes with the **Shinai** or **Bokuto**, e.g., **Chudan**, **Jodan**, **Gedan**, etc...
- **Kiai.** (lit) “*Energy Integration/Union*”. Initially in **Kendo** this refers to the strong, verbal expression of our “fighting spirit”; the shouts used when attacking.
- **Ki Ken Tai no Ichi.** (lit.) “*Mind/spirit/energy, sword, body as one*”. This is one of the most commonly referenced ideas in **Kendo**, and is often introduced very early to a **Kendoka**. The most basic explanation of **Ki Ken Tai no Ichi** is that in order to strike effectively one must

strike the target at the same time as the foot lands (**Fumi Komi**) with strong **Kiai** all in a smooth motion.

- **Zanshin.** (lit.) “*Mind that is left-over/remaining*”. **Zanshin** is most commonly introduced as “follow-through” (after a strike) in **Kendo**. The basic explanation of **Zanshin** is that after one strikes “you must move past your opponent and return to **Kamae**.”
- **Seme.** (lit.) “*To attack, or to assault*”. **Seme** is often translated as “pressure” in **Kendo**, but in the sense of a mental or physical pressure applied (to the opponent) as a result of one’s imminent attack.
- **Mitsu no Sen.** (lit.) “*The Three Sen*”. A somewhat more advanced topic in **Kendo**, this is the three opportunities (in time) at which point one can attack the opponent. The **Mitsu no Sen** are (1) “Sen no Sen”, (2) “Go Sen no Sen”, and (3) “Sen Sen no Sen” or essentially “attacking as your opponent initiates”, “attacking after your opponent initiates”, and “initiating an attack to draw your opponent’s attack, then attacking the **Suki** made by their action” respectively.
- **San Satsu Ho.** (lit.) “*The Three Laws*”. These are three “methods” through which one can defeat their opponent: Ken o Korosu, Ki o Korosu, and Waza o Korosu or (lit.) “Kill their Sword”, “Kill their Spirit”, and “Kill their Techniques” respectively.
- **The Four Sicknesses.** These are four “afflictions” of the mind which have the effect of disrupting one’s ability to express/perform **Sen**, **Sutemi** (attacks), **Ki Ken Tai no Ichi**, **Zanshin**, or to disrupt one’s **Kamae** or **Connection**. The four sicknesses are: Fear, Doubt, Surprise, and Confusion.

Extending our Definitions

Focus will be placed on expanding the previous basic definitions with more details, and more importantly, giving a generalization of their scope.

Ki Ken Tai no Ichi

Ki Ken Tai no Ichi (hereafter KKTI) is the easiest place to start in our expansion. The basic definition given is often assumed to be the entirety of what KKTI implies.

The basic definition of KKTI given above interprets the components as: **Ki** = **Kiai**, your verbal expression of your “fighting spirit”, **Ken** = Sword, specifically your sword in the action of striking a target, and **Tai** = Footwork, specifically **Fumi-Komi Ashi** (lunging footwork), all of which must happen simultaneously in a smooth motion (“no Ichi” or “as one”). But what about when we aren’t striking? Is KKTI something that we turn on when we wish to strike and then off after we’ve hit? Examining each of the components and expanding upon their individual meaning will help show that really this is only “the tip of the iceberg”.

Ki translates as spirit, mind, and energy whereas the basic explanation given above in the context of striking is that it pertains to a “forceful yell”. While **Kiai** in **Kendo** relates to yelling, yelling is not the same as **Kiai**, nor is it the same as **Ki**.

Kiai, literally translated, is “*Energy (Ki) Union/Integration (Ai)*” and is the natural by-product of the mind and body working together. An example of “real” **Kiai** is the automatic “grunt” people utter the moment they begin to lift something heavy. We don’t necessarily think of making this sound, it simply happens naturally. This is because it is the effect of our mental intent to lift the object combining with our body/motion/muscles acting on that intent. This grunt is often a far cry from a “forceful yell” but it is “real” **Kiai**. **Ki** then cannot only refer to the **Kiai** used in **Kendo**, even when limited to the yell at the moment of striking, as **Kiai** refers to and comes from a *coordination* of energy whereas **Ki** refers only to the energy itself.

Our mental energy is a component of two other factors: **Sen** and **Sutemi**. In this context, our **Ki** refers to a more abstract notion of energy, specifically to a particular mindset. For **Sen** it’s a readiness to attack and for **Sutemi** it is the determination to carry through with one’s intent fully regardless of outcome.

In each of the above (**Kiai**, **Sen**, and **Sutemi**) **Ki** is a component. However each of these aspects are essential not just during our strikes but *before, during, and after*. Given these broader interpretations perhaps a better trans-



Figure 1: Only the Tip...

The basic definition of Ki Ken Tai no Ichi pertains to when we are striking. This leads one to ask “what about when we are not striking?”

lation for **Ki**, in regards to a more generalized notion of KKTi, would be that it refers to one's "*intent*".

Ken is translated as sword, but in the limited context of the basic explanation of KKTi above, it specifically pertains to the sword striking the target. However our sword serves more than just as a means of striking a target. What about before our strike, i.e., our **Kamae**?

The sword in **Kamae** serves both as a means of offense and as defense in that an active **Kamae** can create **Suki** in our opponent as well as prevent them from appearing in our own defenses. What about immediately after the strike, i.e., during **Zanshin**? The sword must do more than just "hit" since in order to perform **Yuko Datotsu** (effective strike) we must emulate a "*cut*". An effective strike itself has many components, but in the context here of "after the hit" the sword must be held in the proper position and at a correct angle. Aside from emulating a cut, this helps to maintain our posture and balance and also helps to protect ourselves from counter-attack.

Tai translates as body, but in the context above **Tai** was limited to footwork. If we extend the notion of **Tai** to the more general sense, i.e. that of the body before, during, and after a strike, **Tai** refers to our movement in general, our posture, balance, our grip, our breathing, and any other number of body movements.

Given these generalized notions of **Ki**, **Ken**, and **Tai**, KKTi can be extended to situations before, during, and after a strike. This allows us to address our original question of whether or not KKTi was something that is simply turned on only when we wish to strike. The answer ought to be clear: "no". KKTi must be present *at all times* since without it we couldn't begin, land, or finish a strike with any meaning.

Zanshin

Zanshin literally translates as "remaining mind" or "the mind that is left over", but is commonly given the meaning of "follow-through" as indicated in our basic definitions. But this basic interpretation pertains to physical actions, whereas the literal translation of **Zanshin** pertains to the mind. It makes sense that since **Kendo** has both mental and physical components a stronger definition of **Zanshin** encompasses both of these.

This extension is alluded in the IKF (International Kendo Federation) translation of "proper" **Zanshin** with regards to **Yuko Datotsu** (lit. "*effective*").

strike) as “*follow-through and a readiness against counter-attack*”. This implies that after a strike, as well as the usual physical follow-through, one is also able to be mentally prepared for the opponent’s possible counter attack. In essence a return to “readiness” mentally and physically. This has a very obvious connection to the notion of **Sen**. From this we can see that the physical **Zanshin** brings us back to our physical **Kamae**, our physical “ready” position, whereas the mental component of **Zanshin** allows us to return to our mental **Kamae**, **Sen**.

The IKF’s definition of Zanshin, as required in landing Yuko Datotsu, alludes to an extended definition of Zanshin.

However, what about motions or actions other than striking? We can in fact extend **Zanshin** to a more general sense, as before, where it is present before, during, and after a strike. Recall from our definitions that **Suki** can be both physical and mental openings; a gap in ones defenses or in ones concentration. Thus in order to maintain ones mental and physical readiness at all times one must exhibit a constant **Zanshin**; a return to readiness after *each and every* action. Every action encompasses “large” actions such as moving, pushing, dodging, striking, parrying, etc... to “small” actions such as observing your opponent, looking for openings, adjusting your **Kamae** and confirming your strike validity, to even “minute” actions such as breathing, blinking, hearing your teammates call your name during **Shiai**, etc...

This extended notion of **Zanshin**, that of constantly returning ourselves to “readiness”, gives us a much more all-encompassing definition. While it ought to be clear that the physical “follow-through” is most certainly an aspect of **Zanshin**, it is not the entirety of **Zanshin** itself. In this general context a better interpretation than that of “follow-through” would be that one demonstrates a constant “return to readiness” or a “sustained alertness”.

Sen and Sutemi

There is one more relatively simple relation that is usually implied, but not necessarily ever explicitly pointed out during practices, and that is the relation between **Sen** and **Sutemi** (attacks).

Specifically, there needs to be expression of one in order to fully express the other in somewhat of a “circular” relation. That is they must both be learned and practiced at the same time with one naturally leading to a strengthening of the other. Specifically, in order to attack without hesitation or doubt, as indicated in the definition of **Sutemi**, one must be in a constant state of “readiness to act” as defined by **Sen**. And in order to truly be “ready to act” as defined by **Sen**, one must possess the ability to attack without concern for outcome as defined by **Sutemi**.

The relation between Sen and Sutemi uncovers one of the core aspects of practicing Kendo basics.

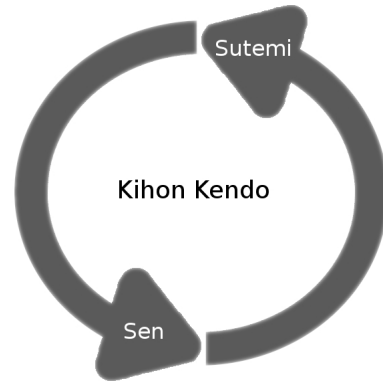


Figure 2: Sen and Sutemi’s Cyclic Relation

By examining this relation, we uncover one of the core components of **Kihon Kendo**, or **Kendo** “Fundamentals”. When one practices **Kihon**, apart from practice of basic **Waza**, **Maai** (distance), etc..., the common instruction/explanation given is always the simple notion of “Attack, Attack, Attack!”; a very common mantra for beginners. And why is this of such importance for **Kihon**? The answer is simple: *by eliminating the “choices” one has during **Kihon** practice, i.e., exclusively to **Shikake Waza**, it naturally forces the practice of the **Sen-Sutemi** cycle.*

The necessity of fully incorporating this cycle into one’s practice, and illuminating as to why it is of such fundamental importance, will be shown in the following sections.

Seme

We can now begin to pull the various pieces together and begin the next topic: **Seme**. **Seme** is relatively simple to define. In fact, the basic definition given at the start of the article is exactly what **Seme** is. It is a “pressure” put on the opponent and while it is most often a perceived pressure versus a physical one, it is not strictly limited to this this. The difficult issue, which we are now prepared to tackle, is the common question “How do I *make* **Seme**?”

Much like all things in **Kendo**, **Seme** is something that can only be discovered through years of practice. However the *verbal* answer as to how

one makes it isn't all that complex given the discussions above. There are three aspects that we can break **Seme** into. One is "physical **Seme**" and the others are "perceived" and "spiritual **Seme**". Before we go on, let's recall the definition of **Seme**: "*To attack, or to assault*". **Seme** is often translated as "pressure" in **Kendo**, but in the sense of a mental or physical pressure applied (to the opponent) as a result of one's imminent attack."

It is important to note that *there is no guaranteed source of Seme*, only *potential* sources. This is the difficulty beginners have with the notion of **Seme** and is the reason for its elusiveness. The lack of guaranteed **Seme** production is due to the fact that it depends both on oneself *and on the reactions and perceptions of the opponent*.

Physical Seme

Physical **Seme** pertains to a physical movement or object which conveys one's intent to attack. The act of moving toward the opponent, the visible initiation of one's attack, and attempts to physically disrupt the opponent's defenses are all examples of physical movements which can potentially create **Seme** as they are all a possible prelude to attack.

It ought to be obvious that these examples will only produce **Seme** if one performs them while expressing **Sen**. In fact, *Seme will not be produced until one's expression of Sen is established with the opponent*. This statement is true for all types of **Seme**, but is absolutely crucial for physical **Seme** and is the first barrier one must overcome in learning it.

This needs to be clarified as it pertains to understanding **Kihon Kendo**. Establishing one's expression of **Sen** means that the opponent knows that should you perceive a **Suki** in their defenses there will be no hesitation on your part in attempting an attack. But the only attack which will establish this intent fully and allow you to take the perceived **Suki** is a **Sutemi** style attack. Thus *physical Seme is a product of Kihon Kendo via the Sen-Sutemi cycle* discussed above, and is the basis for the more difficult forms of **Seme**.

Perceived Seme

Perceived **Seme** is much more difficult to produce as it depends both on your own ability to produce physical **Seme** as well as on your opponent *perceiving Seme* when you are not directly exerting it, i.e., your opponent perceives your intent and your ability to attack.

The first barrier for Seme is that of establishing your expression of Sen with the opponent. This first barrier is a core aspect of Kihon Kendo and can only be overcome through regular practice.

Physical seme is a direct product of Kihon Kendo practice.

Before going further, we must more clearly define “**Connection**”. To begin exerting perceived **Seme**, one must establish and maintain a **Connection** with the opponent. This **Connection** has both mental and physical aspects. The mental connection implies one must perceive how the opponent will act to a given situation, their intents, as well as perception of their level of focus, KKTI, and **Zanshin**. The physical connection allows one to react to physical movements, maintain distance, adjust **Kamae**, etc. Thus a **Connection** allows you to “mirror” the opponent mentally and physically, keeping a balance until a **Suki** is found or created by oneself or one’s opponent. Maintaining an effective **Connection** to the opponent is yet another barrier in understanding **Seme**.

Establishing, but also being able to maintain, a **Connection** is the second barrier of **Seme**.

As this **Seme** is perceived by the opponent it affects them (via the **Four Sicknesses**) in two crucial ways: their offense and defense. That is they become “fearful” of your initiation of attack and “doubtful” of their own initiatives due to perception of your intent to counter attack.

Clearly, this type of **Seme** is rooted in the notion of **Sen** in the same way as physical **Seme**. However, in order to extend **Seme** from physical to perceived we must also express both of our generalized notions of **Ki Ken Tai no Ichi** and **Zanshin**.

Expression of KKTI implies our intent, **Kamae**, posture and movements are coordinated (with the intent to attack), while expression of **Zanshin** implies we are constantly able to return to readiness after every action. This eliminates **Suki** in ourselves and allows us to pursue or create them in our opponent. These are the conditions under which the opponent will perceive **Seme**.

It must be noted that **Seme** is still possible without all of the conditions being perfectly met, e.g. one’s posture or footwork is slightly off compared to the ideal, etc. Even though the opponent perceives **Seme**, it will naturally

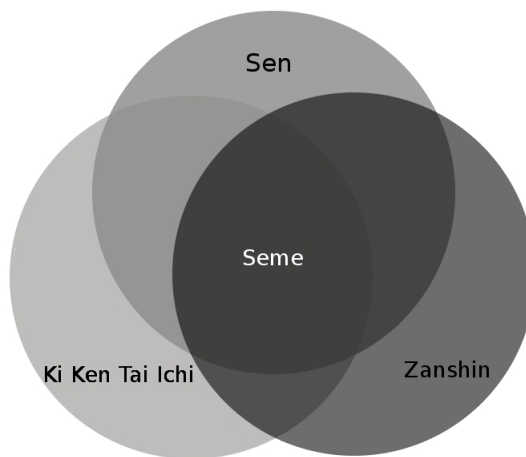


Figure 3: Simultaneous Sen, Ki Ken Tai no Ichi, and Zanshin Produce Seme

be less potent than the “perfect example” discussed. This could be used to describe the difference between a high and a low ranking **Kendoka**; aside from their technical proficiency it is their ability to express correct KKI together with **Zanshin** and a strong feeling of **Sen** which sets them apart.

Spiritual Seme

The term spiritual **Seme** could also be called “projected **Seme**”. Projected **Seme** is an extension of perceived **Seme** and is the most difficult to produce. At the same time it is the most powerful in terms of its effect on the opponent. The idea of projected **Seme** is that one is able to *proactively push their intent into the opponent’s perception* instead of passively waiting for it to be perceived. As noted above this is an extension of perceived **Seme**, hence it is a barrier before learning it.

The difference between the two types is linked to the strength of one’s **Kamae**. Specifically, being able to use **Kamae** to *constantly* challenge the opponent. The essence of this is that this type of **Seme** is *proactive*; one threatens the opponent when in position to attack, and “*bring the threat to them*” if one is not in position. This proactivity is constant, which is the source of this **Seme**’s devastating effects.

While **Kamae** is a core aspect of perceived **Seme**, it is much more important here as it is the source of our proactive threat. If one’s **Kamae** is perceived to be “weak” at any time, then it cannot be perceived as a threat. In order to project **Seme**, the threat of attack must be constant; any **Suki** in this offense can break this perception.

The ability to produce “perceived Seme” is itself a barrier to producing projected Seme.

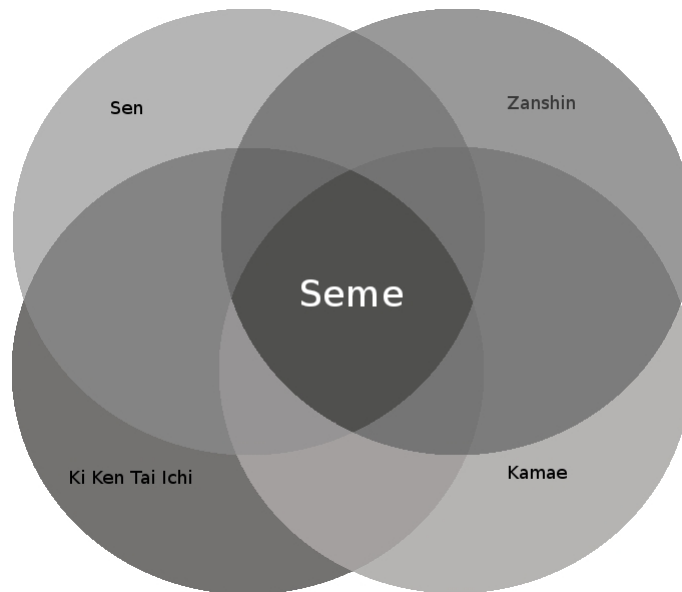


Figure 4: Active Kamae Enables Projected Seme

“Strong **Kamae**” can be described as one’s **Kamae** being “*active*”. Instead of **Kamae** being a static physical position of the sword, it has an active mental and physical component; one’s intent is displayed through **Kamae** as well as *proactively threatening and adapting to the opponent*. While **Kamae** is implied in KKTI, it is of such importance here it must be emphasized separately. Given this understanding we can sum up our results as:

***Ki Ken Tai no Ichi** and **Zanshin**, expressed properly, have the effect of producing **Seme** as a by-product of their union, in the environment of **Sen**, through one’s **Kamae**.”*

Misu no Sen, San Satsu Ho, Four Sicknesses

We will now roughly examine the **San Satsu Ho**, **Mitsu no Sen**, and the **Four Sicknesses** (hereafter SSH, MS, and FS respectively).

The SSH’s meaning are clear from their descriptions. By disrupting the opponent’s **Kamae**, spirit, and **Waza** we can create **Suki** within our opponent. Each are carried out through our **Kamae** and **Seme** with expression of **Sen**, KKTI, and **Zanshin**.

The FS are effects produced by application of **Seme**, and are sources of **Suki**. The primary results being disruption of one’s **Connection**, **Sen**, KKTI, and **Zanshin**.

The SSH and FS are related in that the use of the SSH can produce one or all of the FS, but also should the opponent suffer from one of the FS one can more effectively perform the SSH. This is yet another “cyclic” relation in **Kendo**. But the core idea is that they both stem from an application of **Seme**.

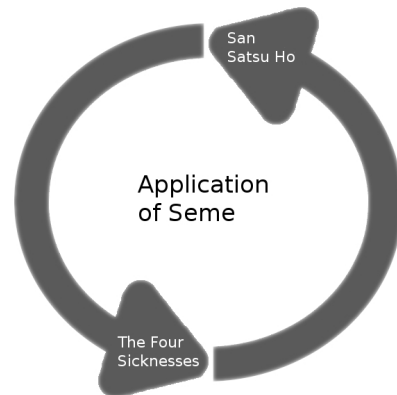


Figure 5: Applied Seme

It is also natural to ask what the defense would be against the SSH and the FS. The answer is simple: one's own ability to maintain their **Connection** to the opponent, and to continue to maintain their expression of **Sen**, **KKTI**, and **Zanshin**. Depending on the strength of one's expression of these one can either proactively prevent the application of the SSH, make oneself immune to the FS, and avoid either's potential for **Suki**.

One's ability to maintain their Connection, **KKTI**, **Sen**, and **Zanshin** serve as a defense against the opponent's **Seme**.

The **Mitsu no Sen** are the three opportunities in which one can strike the opponent as all three are opportunities in which one can take advantage of a **Suki**. However, given our discussion of **Seme** above, the **Mitsu no Sen** can now be interpreted as the three type of **Suki** made available *through the application of Seme*. To quickly analyze these notions we would have:

- **Sen no Sen**. Apply **Seme** and strike the **Suki**, via **Shikake Waza**, which opens as the opponent is just initiating their response.
- **Go Sen no Sen**. Apply **Seme**. The opponent responds with an attack attempting **Sen no Sen** via **Shikake Waza**. The attack is recognized and responded to via a counter attack (**Oji Waza**).
- **Sen Sen no Sen**. Apply **Seme** and draw out from the opponent a specific **Shikake Waza** response, again from an attempt at **Sen no Sen**, and then respond with an attack (**Oji Waza**) of your own using the "prior knowledge" of the coming attack.

The **Mitsu no Sen** are exemplified in the **Nihon Kendo (Tachi) Kata**. **Uchidachi** performs **Sen no Sen** throughout while the **Shidachi** performs **Sen Sen no Sen** (kata 1 through 5) and **Go Sen no Sen** (kata 6 and 7).

Note that I have only used the scenario where the opponent is responding to one's **Seme** with an attack. One could easily substitute the opponent's attack for some type of movement, attempt at blocking, parry, retreating, etc...

Shikake Waza and Oji Waza

We can now proceed to the crux of this article: a “fundamental theorem” relating **Shikake Waza** and **Oji Waza**.

Beginner’s often have two distinct mentalities they will adopt during Keiko: offense and defense. Each corresponds to usually exclusive use of **Shikake** and **Oji Waza** respectively.

To the beginner, these **Waza** are (obviously) both forms of attack, however there is often a separate mindset between the two. With **Shikake Waza**, one is aggressive and constantly initiating the strike while with **Oji Waza**, one tends to take the attitude of “waiting” for the opponent to initiate and then attempting a counterstrike. One simply switches between the two mentalities according to how they see fit or how the situation dictates. And, often enough, this approach can be successful early on against other beginners. But it is safe to say that this approach is anything but successful when facing an opponent who is more experienced. More specifically, one who is able to produce strong **Seme**.

Why is this so? Well, very obviously they are more experienced in their techniques, and hence able to use them with more efficiency. They also have a much more firm grasp of distance and timing. But it is **Seme** that provides the ultimate distinction.

Recall that the factors that come together to produce **Seme** are **Sen** (readiness), **KKTI** (intent, sword, and body acting in unison), and **Zanshin** (sustained alertness / ability to return to readiness). When these factors are all present, then we have the ability to initiate a powerful and balanced attack. **Seme** has the effect of producing **Suki** in the opponent in the following three ways:

- **Seme** produces a mental **Suki** in the opponent (a loss of confidence, focus, concentration, or a break in **Zanshin**).
- Production of a physical **Suki** in that the opponent reacts or moves out of fear of impending attack (attempted block, parry, dodge, or some other movement).
- Production of a physical **Suki** due to the opponent (being forced into) initiating an attack.

In the first two, we see the opportunity for an attack via **Shikake Waza**. However in the last scenario we see an opportunity for attack via **Oji Waza**.

Both of these **Waza** opportunities are created from our ability to apply **Seme** (hereafter, applying **Seme** comes with the understanding that **Sen**, **KKTI**, and **Zanshin** are all correctly expressed) and our singular focused intent to attack the opponent. In this context, it is clear that there are not separate mindsets of “attack” versus “defense” or preparing for **Shikake Waza** versus preparing for **Oji Waza**; *both **Shikake Waza** and **Oji Waza** opportunities arise from a singular intent to strike.* Which **Waza** is used and which target is attacked *is determined purely by the reaction of the opponent toward the applied **Seme**.*

It is through our **Seme** that our attack on the opponent begins. Whether this is physical, perceived, or projected **Seme**, in conjunction with our **Kamae**, we are constantly attempting to apply pressure to the opponent, i.e., to *proactively* induce **Suki** and create one of the openings listed above.

In this context we are always considered the “aggressor” and always the one who initiates the attack. It simply becomes a matter of how we perform the strike.

Through this mindset and by the application of **Seme**, **Shikake** and **Oji Waza** lose their separation of “offense” and “defense”. In fact it is because of the application of **Seme** that the distinct categories (offense and defense) of **Waza** is removed and they are unified into a single category of “attacking” **Waza**. The distinction now lies in which *type* of **Suki** we can land a strike on the opponent.

Finally, through this unification of **Shikake** and **Oji Waza** we obtain a simplification in **Kendo** in that there is only one mindset, one method of attack: *maintain focus, control both the opponent and yourself, through **Seme** create a **Suki**, strike.* This is much more commonly known in **Kendo** as “win, then hit.” The defeat of the opponent comes in creating the **Suki**, the **Waza** and the strike are secondary. This simplification is summed up by the following quote from [1] (taken somewhat out of context):

“In the beginner’s mind there are so many possibilities, but in the expert’s there are so few.”

Bibliography

- [1] Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*, Weatherhill, Inc., 1970.