

S.QUINLAN

# NOTES ON JŌDAN NO KAMAE

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JANUARY 20, 2023



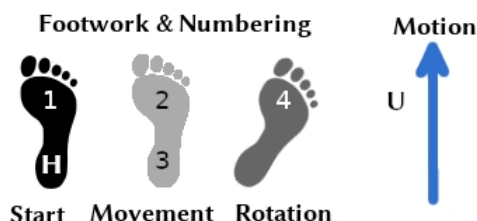
# FORMATTING CONVENTIONS

**Glossary Entries.** Any terms which are glossary entries are **highlighted**, providing a link to the entry's location in the glossary. The reader is urged to consult the glossary on p. 122 for any terms that are unfamiliar.

**Pronunciation Aids.** Many Japanese terms have been *artificially* hyphenated to aid in pronunciation, and some common rules for writing terms in English have been replaced, e.g., writing a Latin ō with the long vowel diacritic vs. an ou for a long oh sound. Also, the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) convention for indicating a silent or voiceless vowel, e.g., **u** for a voiceless *u*, is used. This is *not* normally done when writing Japanese terms in English and is purely a convention used in this text. See the Appendix on p. 121 for a basic pronunciation guide.

**Footwork, Numbering, & Movement.** In footwork images, black feet indicate the starting position, dark grey shows rotation of the foot, and light grey shows movement. Numbers refer to the order in which the feet are moved; arrows indicate the general direction of movement.

In some situations a letter will indicate a waza, e.g., **U**, **H**, etc... If this mark is placed on the foot, it occurs before the next movement step begins, if it occurs during foot movement it is placed (roughly) where the waza occurs.



*Figure 1: Footwork, numbering, and movement. For footwork, black indicates the starting position, light grey movement, and dark grey foot rotation. Numbers show the order of the foot movement and arrows show the general direction of motion. A letter will indicate roughly when a waza is done, e.g., **U**, **H** for uchi-otoshi or harai.*

**Margin Notes.** Short, general notes on the current topic appear as a boxed margin note.

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**Key Points.** A list of key points for the current topic are given either as a titled margin note or a titled note within the main text.

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# CONTENTS

<b>KAMAE FEATURES</b>	<b>7</b>
A Very Basic Comparison of Chūdan & Jōdan	7
The Spirit, Mentality, & Intent of Jōdan	9
Specifics on Assuming Jōdan no Kamae	11
<b>SWING METHODS FOR KATATE STRIKES</b>	<b>14</b>
Review: Basic Mechanics of a Strike	14
One-Handed Striking Methods	16
<b>ATTACKING FROM JŌDAN</b>	<b>25</b>
Determining Vulnerable Targets	25
Two-Handed Strikes	27
Basic One-Handed Strikes	29
Advanced Strikes	34
<b>APPLYING SEME FROM JŌDAN</b>	<b>41</b>
Issun no Seme	41
Threatening Targets	44
Threaten One to Strike the Other	48
<b>WAZA FROM JŌDAN</b>	<b>52</b>
Shikake Waza	52
Ōji Waza	59
Jōdan's "Kōbō-Itchi" Waza	72
<b>FACING AN OPPONENT WITH JŌDAN</b>	<b>74</b>
Theory & Principles: Nihon Kendō no Kata	74
A Jōdan Player's General Approach	81
<b>FACING AN OPPONENT THAT USES JŌDAN</b>	<b>83</b>
Theory & Principles: Nihon Kendō no Kata	83
Chūdan vs. Jōdan Overview	90
Chūdan vs. Jōdan Strategies	93
Chūdan vs. Jōdan: Strategies & Their Assumptions	104
Ai-Jōdan Overview	107
Approach to Ai-Jōdan	110

<b>APPENDIX I: GENERAL PROGRESSION</b>	<b>119</b>
Transitioning from Chūdan to Jōdan	119
Strike Progression: Basic, Intermediate, & Advanced	119
<b>APPENDIX II: COUNTING &amp; PRONUNCIATION</b>	<b>120</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>122</b>
General Terms	122
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>131</b>



# KAMAE FEATURES

## A VERY BASIC COMPARISON OF CHŪDAN & JŌDAN

THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL STANCE in *kendō* is *chūdan no kamae* and the ideas underlying the approach to fighting an opponent using *chūdan* are no different than those for using *jōdan no kamae*.<sup>3</sup> Each *kamae* implicitly has a different emphasis on certain aspects which creates advantages, disadvantages, strengths, and weaknesses the user must manage.

### Chūdan: General Kamae Features

As a general way to describe *chūdan*, it is a *kamae* that allows one to easily measure distance, physically control center, and in general doesn't leave any blatant openings for the opponent to attack.

Because of these features *chūdan* is capable of *kōbō*, “offense and defense”, i.e., it has easy access to both offensive and defensive techniques.<sup>4, 5</sup> Simply put, *chūdan* can be thought of as 50% offense – 50% defense.

### Hidari Jōdan: General Kamae Features

In general *jōdan* offers increased attack range, i.e., *issoku ittō no maai* is generally longer, and has increased attack speed. It also bypasses the normal defenses offered by the standard *chūdan kensen* position. This comes at the cost of losing the ability to control center with the *kensen*, it is more difficult to measure distance, the majority of *ōji waza* become unavailable, and it leaves *migi* and *hidari kote*, *tsuki*, and *dō* consistently exposed to the opponent.

Given this *jōdan* must emphasize attack, to make use of its strengths, and as a primary means of defense.<sup>6</sup> Specifically the emphasis of *jōdan* is taking the initiative to create an opportunity to attack or in the very least attacking at the same time as the opponent.<sup>7</sup>

Looking at the offense/defense breakdown for *jōdan*, and even though *jōdan* does have access to some important *ōji waza*, *jōdan* is “the most offensive” *kamae*.<sup>8</sup> Spiritually *jōdan* is considered 100% offense – 0% defense.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The term *jōdan* refers exclusively to *hidari jōdan no kamae*.

### JŌDAN: BASIC APPROACH

A simple description of the most basic approach to using *jōdan* is:

1. Create an opening and strike with *shikake waza*.
2. Respond to attacks by striking with *debana waza* or *ai-uchi*.
3. *Ōji waza* exist, but are secondary to attacking.

<sup>4</sup> The term *kōbō*, in reference to features of *chūdan*, is taken from Shigeoka (1977).

<sup>5</sup> Obviously all *kamae* have offensive intent, i.e., to always attack an opponent. The notion of defense doesn't refer to defensively stopping one from being hit, e.g., blocking, but to the amount of readily available *ōji waza* as a means of attack.

<sup>6</sup> “... offensive operations, often times, is the surest, if not the only means of defense”, Washington (1799). Or more simply, the best defense is a good offense.

<sup>7</sup> “... try to strike him at the moment when he is about to step forward, to the rear or is beginning a strike.”, AJKF (1973).

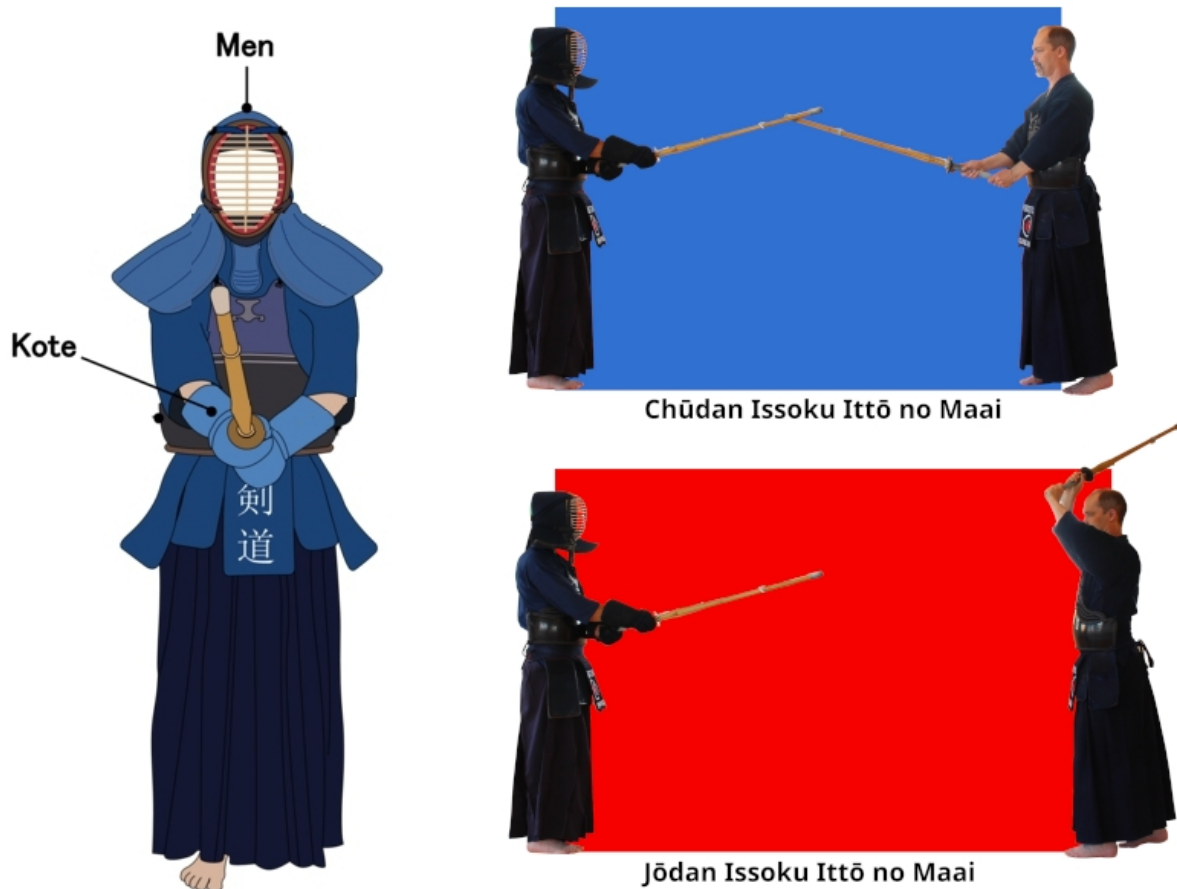
<sup>8</sup> AJKF (2002)

<sup>9</sup> “Although in general usage *kamae* refers to physical positions, you must always bear in mind the intimate relation between their spiritual and physical aspects. The two work together as an [sic] unity.” AJKF (ibid.)

It is important to reiterate, as it is implicit in all discussions, that jōdan has a larger striking range compared to that of chūdan.<sup>10</sup> This is true for both one-handed and two-handed strikes depending on the footwork used. Learning jōdan's unique striking range(s) is one of the first challenges for a new jōdan player.

Another general feature of jōdan is that the primary striking method, one-handed strikes from an increased striking range, has fewer available targets compared to chūdan: men and kote.

<sup>10</sup> While each individual has their own unique striking range, some longer and some shorter, *in general* the striking range from jōdan is longer. Specifically, a player using jōdan will have a longer striking range *compared that same player* when striking from chūdan.



#### KEY POINT: SENSITIVITY OF JŌDAN'S RANGE

Jōdan's *maai* is more sensitive to changes than that of chūdan, especially so when using one-handed strikes. Too far away and strikes may become weak due to overextension. Too close and jōdan's range advantage is lost while further exposing target areas to the opponent.

*Figure 2:* Schematic of striking ranges for both chūdan and jōdan and the generalized target options for one-handed strikes from jōdan. (Left) Jōdan's primary striking method, one-handed striking, is generally limited to men and kote. (Right) Jōdan's striking range is *usually* about one step longer compared to that of chūdan.

## THE SPIRIT, MENTALITY, & INTENT OF JŌDAN

JŌDAN IS KNOWN AS both *ten no kamae* and *hi no kamae*, the kamae of heaven and the kamae of fire respectively.<sup>11</sup> These are terms used to communicate the spirit or mentality needed for successful jōdan. *Maintaining this mentality is the most difficult aspect of using this kamae.*

**Preemptive blocking.** Preemptive blocking, i.e., blocking *before* the opponent attacks, signals a collapse in one's composure and in the *connection* to the opponent.<sup>12</sup> Without a connection or composure, *seme* and maintaining *sen* becomes almost impossible making the jōdan player unable to proactively strike.<sup>13</sup> This is opposite to the intent of jōdan.<sup>14</sup>

**General blocking.** This is when a jōdan player blocks an attack. Habitual blocking, instead of striking, *inhibits an offense based spirit.*

### KEY POINTS: BLOCKING FROM JŌDAN

1. *If you have time to block, you have time to attack.* With jōdan one should strive for *debanu waza*, or in the very least, *ai-uchi*.
2. *Ai-uchi and debanu waza must be intentionally practiced* in order to overcome our natural, defensive instincts.



### KEY POINT: SŪKI VS. AN "OPENING"

It is important to clarify *sūki* ("gap, interval, opportunity") vs. opening. Opening refers only to a *physical* gap in one's defenses, e.g., an open path to strike a target. *Sūki* includes this but more importantly *refers to mental gaps*, e.g., gaps in focus, readiness, etc. *Sūki* is the more important of the two against a jōdan player as even though they're consistently *open* due to their kamae, they're not easily hit due to offensive focus. This is why the offensive spirit and focus of a jōdan player is said to be the most important point an opponent must attack/disrupt.

<sup>11</sup> Budden (2000) and *Tokyo Koshi GoGyo no Kata* (2018).

<sup>12</sup> *Block* is used in the sense that not getting hit is the goal compared to *uke* where the goal is attack via *ōji waza*.

<sup>13</sup> *Proactive striking* is not rushing to hit. The former stems from calm engagement with the opponent, the latter on fluke or is due to desperation.

<sup>14</sup> "To break kamae to avoid being hit is tasteless; face your opponent as if prepared to die", Chiba Sensei's 'Kendo Perfect Master' – Jodan (2017).

## BLOCKING ALTERNATIVES

Jōdan has several alternatives to blocking, but a *proactive, offensive intent* is needed to use them.

### BLOCKING ALTERNATIVES FOR JŌDAN

1. *Ai-uchi*
2. *Debanu waza*
3. *Uchi-otoshi waza* to counter-attack or to redirect and reposition oneself
4. *Nuki waza*

Figure 3: Common blocks used by jōdan players. (Left to Right) San-pō-mamori, breaking kamae to cover the tsuki-dare, and a one-handed horizontal block.

## SŪKI FROM BLOCKING

There are three general blocks a jōdan player may use, each giving various *sūki* the opponent can exploit: *san-pō-mamori*, covering their *tsuki-dare*, and a one-handed horizontal block.

### RESPONSES TO JŌDAN BLOCKING

1. San-pō-mamori → *gyaku-dō*
2. Break kamae to cover *tsuki* → *men*
3. Horizontal block → *tsuki*, *gyaku-dō*, or *migi sayū-men*
4. Horizontal block → feign an attack, forcing them to cover a specific target, then hit another that opens



**Backing up vs. retreating.** A common adage in kendō is that if a jōdan player steps back they lose.<sup>15</sup> This refers to the spiritual aspects of jōdan, but there is a difference between *backing up* and *retreating*.

Backing up is simply taking a step backward. If done while maintaining readiness, i.e., maintaining *sen*, *zanshin*, *ki-ken-tai-itchi*, etc., application of *seme* and the ability to attack are not interrupted.<sup>16</sup>

Retreating is similar to preemptive blocking: an attempt to escape pressure from the opponent or prevent oneself from being hit. That is, the jōdan player's intent has shifted to defense—this must be avoided.

#### KEY POINTS: RETREATING FROM THE OPPONENT

1. Retreating inhibits the building of an offense based spirit.<sup>17</sup>
2. Similar to striving for *debanu* or *ai-uchi* vs. blocking, not retreating is a response that must be *intentionally practiced*.

**False nuki waza.** Keeping the right arm still the left shoulder rotates left, pivoting the kote *datotsu-bui* away from a strike. This is used for *nuki waza*, p. 67, but here it is *for defense alone and no counter-attack is intended*.

#### KEY POINT: FALSE NUKI WAZA

This can be an effective defense but it leaves openings the opponent can strike. *Nuki* motion → counter-attack should be the goal.

#### KEY POINTS: DEFENSE & DEFENSIVE ACTIONS

1. Defense has a place in kendō and is used regularly. However habitual, enticed, or reactionary defense should be avoided.<sup>18</sup>
2. Resisting habitual defense must be *intentionally practiced*. This is difficult, and will result in being hit as one unlearns this response. The end result however is crucial to effective jōdan.



<sup>15</sup> Kiyotsugu (1982)

<sup>16</sup> *Zanshin* here is used in the general sense of *sustained alertness*, Kiyota (2002) and Yagyu (1993), after *any* action and not just the standardized drill motions practiced after striking. Similarly, *ki-ken-tai-itchi* is used in a general sense where one's spiritual and physical intent, movement(s), and sword/kamae are unified for *all* actions.

<sup>17</sup> Taking jōdan without *consistent* offensive intent to make use of the kamae's strengths is a contradiction between the physical and mental aspects of the kamae. See note 9, p. 7.

#### SŪKI FROM A FALSE NUKI

##### RESPONSES TO FALSE NUKI WAZA

1. *Migi* kote.
2. *Katate* tsūki.
3. *Dō* or *gyaku-dō*.
4. *Hidari* kote.\*

\* As this movement is for defense only, hitting the side of left kote *may* be considered valid, *Refereeing a Nitoryu Player* (2019). This is subjective and depends on the *shinpan*.

<sup>18</sup> *Habitual* defense is when the player chooses defense vs. offense. *Enticed* or *reactionary* defense is when the opponent forces one to choose defense. Habitual defense enables the opponent to more easily induce a reactionary defense through *seme*.

**Figure 4:** False nuki waza as a defensive action for jōdan. (Left) *Hidari jōdan* and (Right) the false nuki motion. The left arm pivots to the left moving the left kote target away from an incoming strike. While this can be an effective defense, it has the same drawbacks as blocking; it leaves openings for the opponent to take advantage of and momentarily shifts the jōdan player's intent toward defense. Immediately transitioning into a counter-attack after the *nuki* motion should be the goal.

## SPECIFICS ON ASSUMING JŌDAN NO KAMAE

JŌDAN IS NOT AS standardized as chūdan, allowing for several variations in positioning, posture, and footwork to be commonplace.

### Foot Position & General Footwork

Foot position in jōdan is similar to chūdan but the left foot is the forward foot instead of the right. As jōdan uses *morote* and *katate* waza the common footwork combinations are more varied.

**Okuri-ashi.** *Okuri-ashi* is almost always done with the left foot forward, however the feet will cross for some waza making the right foot forward.

**Fumi-komi.** For *katate* waza, *fumi-komi* is done exclusively with the left foot as the forward foot.<sup>19</sup> However for *morote* waza *fumi-komi* can be done on the left foot or by cross-stepping onto the right.

**Widened stance: permanent & temporary.** Some jōdan players adopt a wider stance compared to that of chūdan, i.e., the rear foot is further behind the forward foot than the standard positioning. This is generally discouraged as it may inhibit movement.

A temporary widened stance is used by many jōdan players as they apply pressure: the forward foot is extended while applying *seme* without bringing the rear into place during *seme-ai*. See p. 42 for details.

### Position of the Shinai and Hands

The *shinai* is raised to an angle of 30°–45° down from vertical. Using the midpoint of the *tsuka* as a pivot, the *shinai* is turned to the right 15°–30° moving the hands left and right of center to sit inline with the eyebrows; the left hand is roughly one fist width in front of and above the left eyebrow, the right is slightly higher.

#### KEY POINTS: POSITION OF THE HANDS

1. The left hand is no longer on the centerline when in *hidari jōdan*. Instead the midpoint of the *tsuka* between the two hands is. Some will assume *hidari shizentai* to accommodate this, see p. 13.
2. The left and right hands pivot about the midpoint of the *tsuka* to be inline with the left and right eyebrows, respectively.

#### KEY POINTS: HEIGHT OF THE HANDS

1. The left hand should be roughly one fists width in front of and above the left eyebrow. This height will vary among jōdan users.
2. A low left hand may create issues: (1) both *kote* are easier to hit, (2) it can telegraph intent, and (3) certain waza are more difficult.

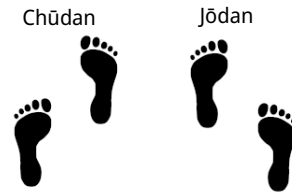


Figure 5: *Hidari jōdan* foot position. (Left) Foot position for Chūdan and (Right) for *hidari jōdan*. All relative measurements, e.g., rear big toe beside forward heel, feet between shoulders, etc., are the same as for chūdan save the left foot is the forward foot.

<sup>19</sup> Exceptions to this are rare: (1) reversed *kamae*, i.e., right foot forward, hands reversed on the *tsuka*, and *shinai* angled to the left or (2) right-handed *katate* waza from standard *hidari jōdan* using a right-footed cross-step.

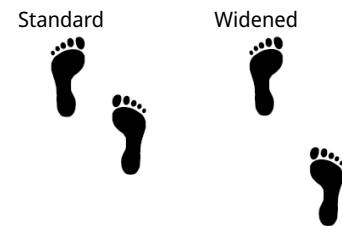


Figure 6: Standard foot position vs. a widened stance in *hidari jōdan*.



Figure 7: *Hidari jōdan no kamae* from AJKF (1973). (Right) The *shinai* is angled roughly 30°–45° down from vertical, and (Left) turned roughly 15°–30° toward the right making the left and right hands sit inline with the eyebrows.

## Gripping the Shinai

There are several styles for gripping the shinai for jōdan. In each the grip of the right hand is altered; the left hand grip is the same for all.<sup>20</sup>

**Standard grip.** Both hands hold the shinai the same way one holds the shinai in chūdan. One should have the sensation that the tsuka is laying diagonally across the palm of the right hand from the bottom left to the joint at the base of the index finger.

Morote and katate waza are equally easy to use as the grip is not altered depending on strike type and the kensen is less likely to drop.

This grip is suited for swing types, p. 16, where the right hand is used throw the shinai forward.

**Partial grip.** All fingers are not closed around the tsuka; the index finger and thumb lightly hold the tsuka and the middle, ring, and little fingers are curled behind it or off to the side.

Some feel this allows for faster katate waza. However, this can slow down morote waza, or make them awkward as one must re-grip the shinai to attack. It also makes it easier to unknowingly drop the kensen.

This grip is suited to swings types which involve the the right hand.

**V-grip.** The right hand fingers are not closed around the tsuka at all. The fingers are closed into a loose fist with the tsuka resting inside the V-shape made by the index finger and thumb.

This grip, as with the partial grip, may affect the use of morote waza and allows the kensen to drop.

This grip is not well suited for swings types that use the right hand to throw the shinai due to the minimal contact.

### KEY POINT: DROPPED KENSEN & THE LEFT HAND

To prevent a dropped kensen some players, *knowingly or unknowingly*, lower their left hand to pivot the kensen upward. While this solves one issue, a lowered left hand can create several others.

<sup>20</sup> Variation in the left hand grip, similar to chūdan, refers to the position of the tsuka-gashira.

### DROPPING THE KENSEN

This refers to angling the shinai back lower than 30°–45°. This slows down strikes as the shinai must first move up through the dropped angle. It also may cause the right hand to drop while raising the left causing awkward strikes. Kiyotsugu (1982) indicates it is a poor jōdan kamae when the “...shinai points backwards making him rigid.”

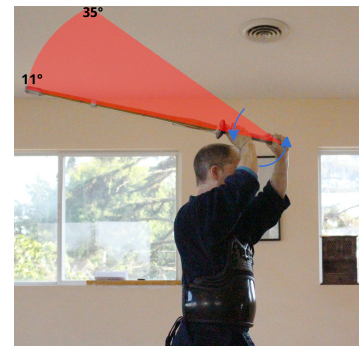


Figure 8: A dropped kensen. Often the right hand is lowered, the left hand lowers while sliding forward, and the shinai rests at a flattened angle.

Figure 9: Variations in the right hand grip. (Left) *Standard grip* is the same as used in chūdan. The fingers are closed around the tsuka and it lays diagonally across the palm. (Center) *Partial grip* has the tsuka held loosely by the thumb and index finger while the middle, ring, and little fingers are moved off to the side. (Right) *V-grip* has the tsuka resting inside the V made by the thumb and closed index finger; the middle, ring, and little fingers are moved off to the side.





## Hidari Shizentai or Square Posture

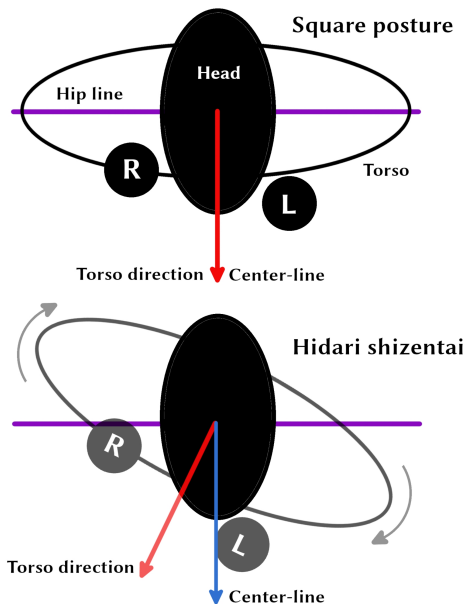
There are two postures for hidari jōdan: square or hidari shizentai.

**Square posture.** The shoulders and hips are aligned, keeping the torso facing directly toward the opponent. The left and right hands are roughly in line with the left and right eyebrows and the middle of the tsuka is in line with the jōdan player's centerline.

**Hidari shizentai.** This is often assumed when the left foot is forward.<sup>21</sup> The right shoulder is drawn back slightly by twisting the waist. This alters the position of the hands relative to the centerline.

### Altering the Position of the Hands Relative to the Centerline

Hidari shizentai alters the position the jōdan player's hands with respect to their own centerline *as presented toward the opponent*.<sup>22</sup> Due to the rotation of the waist, the left hand is brought more in line with the center. By altering the position of the left hand relative to center removes the need to move it there prior to striking, see note 28, p. 16.



### KEY POINTS: HIDARI SHIZENTAI & HANMI KAMAE

1. Hidari shizentai alters the position of the hands relative to the centerline, but *not* between the hands themselves.
2. Some assume jōdan with a [hanmi kamae](#), creating several issues:
  - (i) Morote waza can become awkward as the strike path can tend toward a diagonal, right-to-left motion vs. a straight one.
  - (ii) The hips and feet are rotated, which may affect one's footwork.

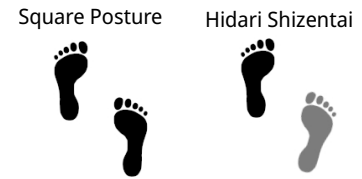


Figure 10: Foot positions for (Left) square and (Right) hidari shizentai postures in jōdan no kamae. The rear foot is angled slightly vs. being square when in shizentai. The rotation shown here is 15°; this will differ among kendōka.

<sup>21</sup> This posture is used in the [nihon kendō no kata](#) for [hassō no kamae](#), specific instances of [iri-mi no kamae](#) in [kodachi kata](#): [nihonme](#) & [sanbonme](#), and used in addition to [migi shizentai](#) during [uchidachi](#)'s deflections in [tachi kata](#): [sanbonme](#).

<sup>22</sup> Due to varying postures a jōdan player's centerline is best measured by using their [tsuki-dare](#) as a landmark and ignoring the torso.

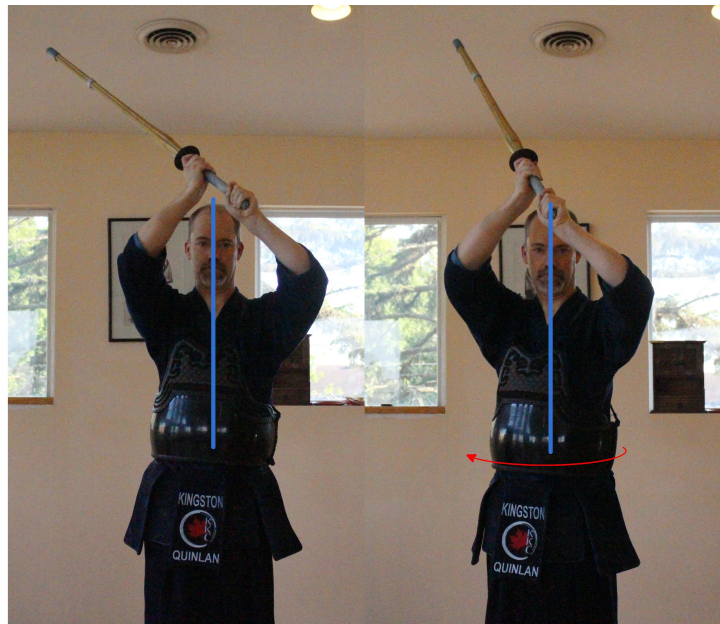


Figure 11: Square posture, hidari shizentai, and positions of the hands relative to the centerline. (Left) Schematic of a (Top) square vs. a (Bottom) hidari shizentai posture showing the head, torso, hip line, left **L** and right **R** hand positions, torso direction, and centerline. (Center) A Square posture and (Right) hidari shizentai with centerlines indicated. Hidari shizentai alters the relative position of the hands to the jōdan player's centerline compared to a square position.

# SWING METHODS FOR KATATE STRIKES

KATATE WAZA ARE THE hallmark of attacking from jōdan and there are several methods one can use to swing the shinai. One method is no more correct than any another but each one does have significant differences giving them each different strengths and weaknesses. The method one uses depends both on how one is taught and on personal preference.

## REVIEW: BASIC MECHANICS OF A STRIKE

WHEN STRIKING WITH TWO hands, poor technique can be somewhat compensated for with the stability from using both hands.<sup>23</sup> This is not the case with katate waza and the effects of poor technique when striking will become amplified. This results in one or more of the following: the strike is unstable or awkward, use of excessive force, not enough force, poor accuracy, strikes without *sae*, the strike slipping off the target, or being unable to stop a missed strike at the proper position.<sup>24</sup>

## Start the Kensen Moving First

With the shinai roughly at a 45° angle overhead a basic men strike, regardless of swing method, is started by squeezing the little, ring, and middle finger(s) of the left hand in sequence, arcing the wrist forward slightly. This forces the kensen to begin moving forward before anything else.<sup>25</sup>

As the kensen begins to move, the shoulder and elbow joints begin to rotate forward as well while also pulling the left hand downward. This is timed such that the arcing of the wrist and te-no-uchi finishes at the same time as the rotation and extension of the shoulder and elbow, with the left hand ending roughly at the lower sternum and the left arm extended forward fully. The kensen ought to be visualized as drawing a large arc or semi-circle as it is *pushed forward* toward the intended target.

This motion is the basis of all strikes in kendō, chūdan or jōdan. Combined with correct te-no-uchi this type of strike will generate *plenty* of power and speed, while also being stable.

### ALTERING SWING TYPES

Depending on the opponent, e.g., the spirit, kamae, waza preference, ability, etc., a jōdan player may choose to use multiple swing types interchangeably during an encounter to make use of the advantage(s) of each method. This makes being familiar with the use of various swing types a *potential* advantage; the downside being that it could also be a source of distraction or hesitation during the encounter giving the opponent a *suki*. See

**KEY POINTS: SŪKI VS. AN "OPENING"**, p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> *Technique* here refers to any combination of swing mechanics, *te-no-uchi*, and timing.

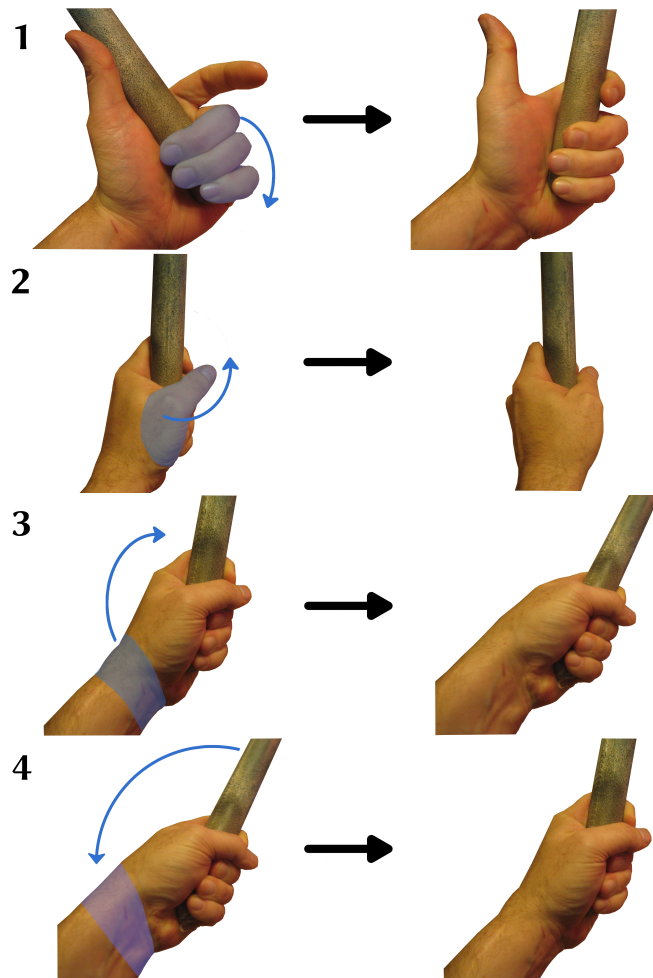
<sup>24</sup> It is not uncommon to see a missed katate kote strike hit the floor. This is a hallmark of improper strike mechanics and/or striking with excess muscle, i.e., using force to strike *quickly*, overwhelming the attacker's inadequate swing mechanics and te-no-uchi ability.

<sup>25</sup> This is the same mechanics for a two-handed chūdan based swing. With one-handed strikes these subtleties become immediately important.

### KEY POINTS: KENSEN FIRST SWING

1. *Suburi* is the best way for *kendōka* to practice this; it is particularly important for jōdan *kendōka*.
2. Using a *bokutō* attempt the *kensen* first swing from jōdan, left hand only and without excess power. Strike men or kote being sure to stop at the target. If done correctly the *bokutō* will make a light whistle as it cuts through the air.

## Te-no-uchi: Gripping the Shinai Upon Striking



## Te-no-uchi Breakdown

1. The little, ring, and middle fingers squeeze in sequence arcing the shinai forward.
2. The thumb squeezes and arcs inward slightly.
3. The wrist arcs forward.
4. **Katate strikes:** The wrist arcs back, moving the shinai to an almost vertical position.

Te-no-uchi for the most part is the same for katate strikes as it is for morote, however there is an extra step at the end unique to katate strikes.

With morote strikes, as the attack lands one performs te-no-uchi, steps #1–3, and then immediately relaxes the motion back to a normal grip. With katate strikes the wrist is arced backward somewhat, step #4, as if to direct the fist toward the opponent before relaxing to a normal grip. This causes the shinai to move back off the target to an almost vertical position. This position is a part of zanshin, see pp. 30, 32 for details on hand position during zanshin.

**Note:** Steps #1–3 are *artificially broken up into separate steps* here to help clarify the motion, but they are actually done as one *subtle* motion.

Figure 12: A breakdown of te-no-uchi for katate strikes.



Figure 13: Example of a katate men strike with te-no-uchi from *Chiba sensei Jodan no Kamae - !!Audio corrected!!* (2015). The shinai is arced backward off of the target before relaxing one's grip to neutral. The shinai can be pulled back less than vertical, vertical, or past vertical, the latter being shown here. This directs the fist toward the opponent and is a part of zanshin for katate strikes.

## Timing of the Shoulder, Elbow, & Wrist

A critical issue for striking is timing the movements of the shoulder, elbow, and wrist.<sup>26</sup>

The wrist begins the motion by arcing forward and is followed by shoulder rotation and extension of the elbow.<sup>27, 28</sup> The difficulty with timing is the arcing of the wrist, motion of the shoulder and elbow, and impact of the shinai on the target *should finish simultaneously*.

This seems simple, however until correct timing of the shoulder, elbow, and wrist is learned, and control over the shinai is gained, there are several errors that can occur, p. 22.

### KEY POINTS: BASIC SWING MECHANICS

1. The wrist begins the swing motion, causing the kensen to move first.
2. The shoulder and elbow motions are timed such that they finish at the same time as the wrist.

<sup>26</sup> This is critical as poorly timed movements create several issues for a strike, most commonly poor stability, accuracy, and sae.

<sup>27</sup> *Arcing forward* of the wrist is initiated by squeezing the little, ring, and middle fingers in sequence. See p. 14

<sup>28</sup> With a square posture the left elbow is brought inward, to place the shinai on the centerline before striking. This is done slightly before or simultaneously with the wrist beginning to arc forward; this is not required when striking from a hidari shizentai position.

## ONE-HANDED STRIKING METHODS

EACH OF THE STRIKE methods outlined below are *artificially* broken down into separate steps to clarify the movement.<sup>29</sup>

### Swing Methods Which Explicitly Use the Right Hand

**Right Hand Throw.** This method has the right hand throw the shinai forward as the left hand swings.

1. The shinai is brought to the centerline if using a square posture.
2. The fingers of the left hand squeeze to start the kensen moving and the arm is pulled down and extended forward.
3. When the right hand is roughly eye level it throws the shinai forward.<sup>30</sup> The right hand is released as the shinai is thrown.
4. The right hand is pulled to the waist covering the navel.

### KEY POINT: RIGHT HAND THROW

Moving the right arm down to the waist helps to redirect the motion of the arms/shinai throw toward the lower body. This prevents the upper body from being “pulled” forward, maintaining posture.

<sup>29</sup> The actual swing should be one smooth, continuous movement.

<sup>30</sup> The throwing motion is done primarily with the wrist. Excessive use of the right arm to throw the shinai results in poor posture and an awkward strike.

**Right Hand Slide.** This is similar to the *right hand throw* but the right hand slides down the tsuka as the strike extends vs. immediate release.<sup>31</sup> As the right hand reaches the left it is pulled down onto the abdomen.

### KEY POINT: RIGHT HAND SLIDE

This method may feel slower than others, but is more stable and can strike through weak deflection attempts.

<sup>31</sup> Unlike the right hand throw, here the right hand pushes the tsuka forward while it slides downward vs. immediately releasing.





*Figure 14:* Katate men using the right hand throw method. The swing is initiated with the left hand and wrist. As the shinai moves down and forward, (Top) when the right hand is roughly eye level the right hand throws the shinai forward. This is done primarily by arcing the wrist forward. (Center) Upon throwing the shinai forward the right hand is fully released from the tsuka and it is brought straight down to the waist. (Bottom) The left arm, in a continuous motion throughout, is fully extended and the strike is completed.





*Figure 15:* Katate men using the right hand slide method. The swing is initiated with the left hand and wrist similar to the right hand throw method. As the shinai moves forward and down (Top) the right hand pushes the shinai forward by sliding down the length of the tsuka. (Center) The right hand maintains contact with the shinai, pushing it forward as it slides, until it reaches the left hand. (Bottom) Once the right hand reaches the left, the right hand releases from the tsuka and is brought downward to the waist. The left arm, in a continuous motion throughout, is fully extended and the strike is completed.

## Swing Methods Which Explicitly Do Not Use the Right Hand

These methods rely almost exclusively on the motion of the left arm to swing the shinai forward for a strike.

**Chiba's Method: Cut & Pull.** This method is probably the most well known as it is the method promoted by [sensei](#) Chiba Masashi, H8D.<sup>32</sup>

1. This method uses hidari shizentai so the shinai is already centered.
2. The left hand is squeezed to begin the kensen moving. The left hand pulls down and is extended forward to strike, [kiri-tsuke](#).
3. As the left extends forward, simultaneously the grip of the right hand is released and it is pulled back and down to the waist, [hiki-tsuke](#).
4. Chiba sensei likens the left hand forward–right hand pull motion to that of drawing a bow. One should have the sensation of widening or laterally expanding the chest.<sup>33</sup>

### KEY POINT: CHIBA'S METHOD

This method explicitly uses hidari shizentai. It also seems to produce the fastest strikes of all four methods. Due to the emphasis on the right hand pulling as the left hand pushes forward it *may* cause one to mistakenly rotate the hips, skewing footwork. Attention to this is crucial.

**Right Hand Brake.** This method relies heavily on correct striking mechanics and the strength of the left arm and wrist.

1. This method uses hidari shizentai making the shinai already centered.
2. While in kamae, continuously squeeze the left fingers and begin to arc the wrist forward slightly as if beginning a strike.
3. As a countermeasure to prevent the kensen from starting to arc forward, the fingers of the right hand hold the shinai in place as if it were a brake. This creates a constant tension between the hands.
4. To strike, the brake is released and the left hand and arm are allowed to extend forward. The right hand, upon releasing the tsuka, is pulled downward and to the right side on the kendōka's waist.

### KEY POINT: RIGHT HAND BRAKE

This method requires excellent strike mechanics and te-no-uchi as it is fully dependent on the left hand and arm for striking. It can put stress on the left wrist, leading to overuse or fatigue injury, until proper striking mechanics and sufficient arm and wrist strength are developed. The upside is that the strike *initiation speed* is very high, but the *striking speed* itself is dependent on the individuals strength and proficiency in their swing technique.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Senior ranks are commonly abbreviated as the first letter of their [shōgō](#) title followed by their numeric [dan-i](#) rank.

<sup>33</sup> The terms [kiri-tsuke](#) and [hiki-tsuke](#), “cutting” and “pulling”, are terms Chiba sensei used in seminars and prominently in his instructional videos, e.g., [Chiba sensei Jodan no Kamae - !!Audio corrected!!](#) (2015) and [Chiba Sensei's 'Kendo Perfect Master' – Jodan](#) (2017).

<sup>34</sup> Here *strike initiation speed* refers to how quickly the kensen and shinai *begin to move forward* from rest in kamae when initiating a strike, while *striking speed* refers to how quickly the shinai moves throughout the entire motion of making a strike.



*Figure 16:* Katate men using Chiba sensei's method. This method explicitly begins in hidari shizentai. The swing is initiated by the left hand and wrist, similar to the previous methods. (Top) As the tsuka-gashira is pressed forward (Center) the left arm pushes forward while simultaneously the right hand releases the tsuka and the right arm is pulled down and to the side of the waist. (Bottom) The left arm is extended forward fully to strike while the right arm is pulled to the side of the waist with the feeling of opening the chest.



*Figure 17:* Opening the chest with Chiba sensei's method from *Chiba sensei Jōdan no Kamae - !!Audio corrected!!* (2015). (Top) Explained as being similar to drawing a (Japanese style) bow, the feeling should be of opening the shoulders or expanding the chest. (Bottom) When striking the left arm pushes forward and the right arm pulls to the rear with the same chest opening sensation.





*Figure 18:* Katate men using the right hand brake method. This method explicitly begins in hidari shizentai. (Top) In kamae the left wrist arcs forward attempting to begin a strike while, simultaneously, the right hand holds the tsuka in place stopping it from moving forward, i.e., it acts as a brake for the shinai. This creates constant tension on the tsuka and between the left and right hands. When one wishes to make an attack, (Center) the right hand releases the tsuka allowing the shinai to travel forward. (Bottom) The left arm extends forward to make the strike while the right hand is pulled down to the waist.

## Katate Striking: Common Errors

*Upward motion.* With this motion the shoulder and elbow motion occur too late after arcing the wrist.

**Note:** The errors shown here are demonstrated with katate men but apply to katate kote as well.



### KEY POINT: UPWARD MOTION

Moving the shoulder and elbow too late causes an awkward upward swing. This results in a weak and poorly positioned strike.

*Figure 19:* An upward moving strike. (Top) From jōdan the strike is initiated but the kensen and shinai begin moving in an upward direction due to the shoulder and elbow being mistimed with the wrist. (Bottom, Left) This causes (Blue) the shinai and (Red) the left hand to travel in a large upward moving arc, instead of a forward motion, causing a weak and awkward strike. (Right) This type of motion can often (Red) leave the left hand in an incorrect position.



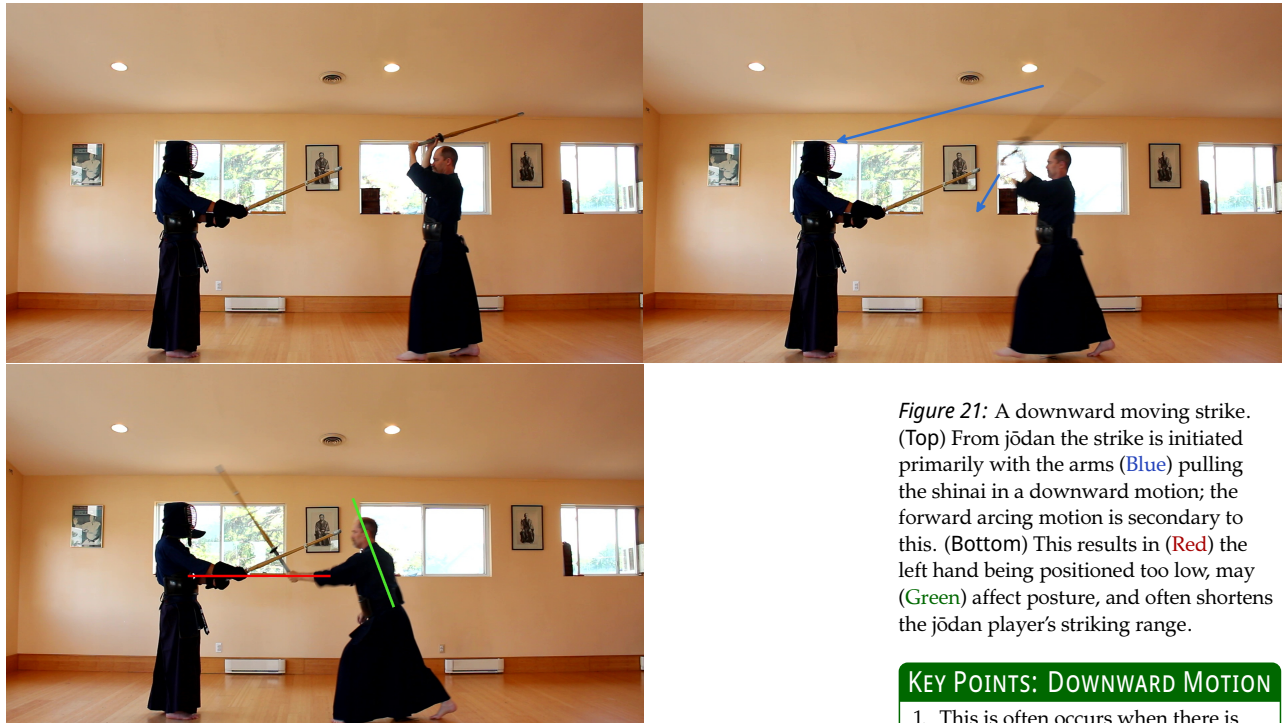
*Figure 20:* Correct arc of the shinai while striking. (Blue) The correct motion moves the shinai in a primarily forward motion when striking, (Red) the left hand is at the correct level, and (Green) the posture is straight.

### KEY POINT: LEFT HAND FINISHING POSITION

Having left hand in an incorrect position, i.e., too high or too low, upon striking affects strike accuracy, power, control, and physical zanshin.



*Downward motion.* A downward motion emphasizes the shoulder and elbow moving down instead of sending the shinai forward.



*Figure 21:* A downward moving strike. (Top) From jōdan the strike is initiated primarily with the arms (Blue) pulling the shinai in a downward motion; the forward arcing motion is secondary to this. (Bottom) This results in (Red) the left hand being positioned too low, may (Green) affect posture, and often shortens the jōdan player's striking range.

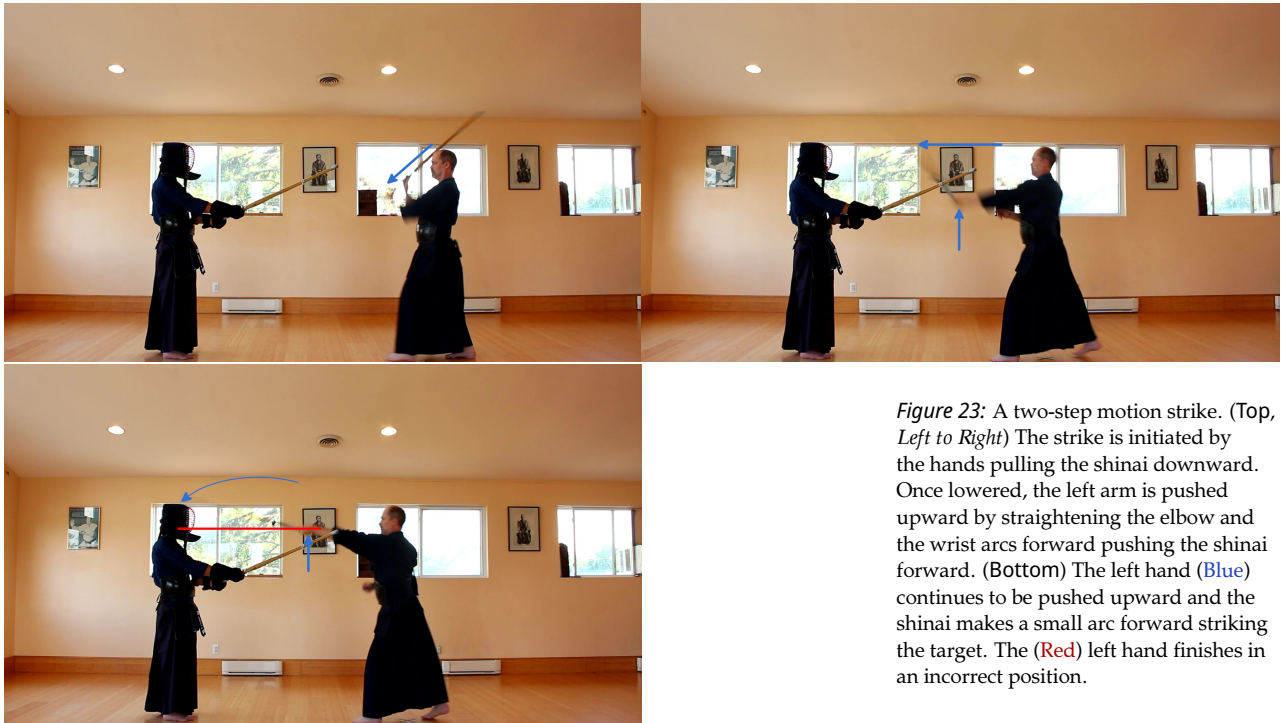
#### KEY POINTS: DOWNWARD MOTION

1. This is often occurs when there is excessive tension in the arms and upper body, often a result of trying to make the strike "faster".
2. The downward motion leaves the left hand in an incorrect position, p. 22, upon striking and can affect posture.
3. The downward motion is most easily seen when striking kote. Often resulting in the shinai moving well past the target, or even hitting the floor, upon missing.
4. A downward motion makes kote & advanced kote strikes difficult.



*Figure 22:* Correct arc of the shinai while striking. (Blue) The correct motion moves the shinai in a primarily forward motion when striking, (Red) the left hand is at the correct level, and (Green) the posture is straight.

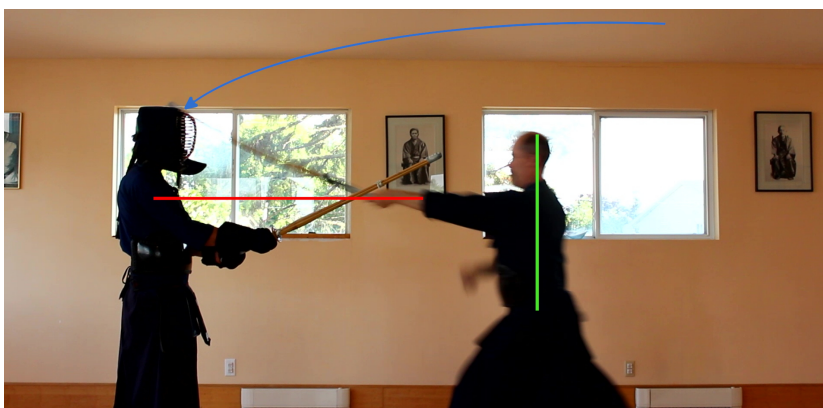
*Two-step motion.* This refers to striking with the elbow and shoulder first, then arcing the wrist. The shinai moves downward and then forward, as the wrist arcs, pushing the strike toward the opponent.



*Figure 23:* A two-step motion strike. (Top, Left to Right) The strike is initiated by the hands pulling the shinai downward. Once lowered, the left arm is pushed upward by straightening the elbow and the wrist arcs forward pushing the shinai forward. (Bottom) The left hand (Blue) continues to be pushed upward and the shinai makes a small arc forward striking the target. The (Red) left hand finishes in an incorrect position.

#### KEY POINT: TWO-STEP MOTION

This movement causes the left elbow to make an awkward down-up motion. This results in the strike being slow, weak, and with poor accuracy. It also leaves the left hand in an incorrect position, p. 22.



*Figure 24:* Correct arc of the shinai while striking. (Blue) The correct motion moves the shinai in a primarily forward motion when striking, (Red) the left hand is at the correct level, and (Green) the posture is straight.

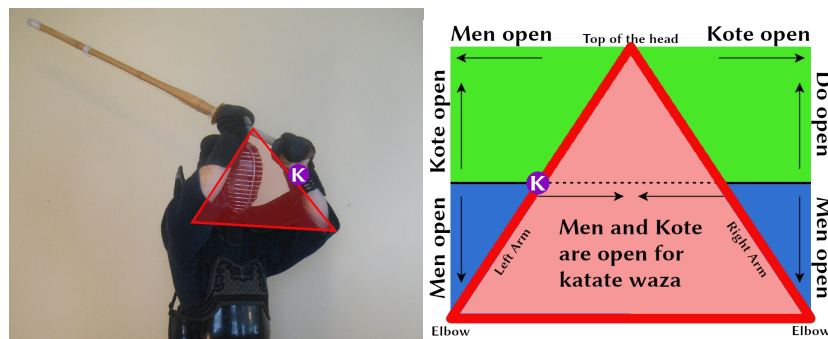
# ATTACKING FROM JŌDAN

## DETERMINING VULNERABLE TARGETS

IN CHŪDAN, IN THE most basic of situations, the position of the opponent's kensen determines whether they are vulnerable to attack. As jōdan has a longer attack range with katate waza, standard chūdan doesn't offer the same defense it does against a chūdan opponent.<sup>35</sup>

Because of this kendōka assume variations of *seigan no kamae* and tend to move their kensen to various positions for both defense and application of seme. Jōdan players are always tracking the position of the opponent's kensen as this will determine where the opponent is vulnerable.<sup>36</sup>

Jōdan has a special targeting area used to determine if the opponent's kensen is in a position that leaves them exposed. This is the triangular area roughly formed by the top of their head and the left and right arms. *The position and height of the opponent's kensen relative to this area will determine if the opponent is exposed.*



## Relative Position of the Kensen Determines Openings

The position of the opponent's kensen, relative to the targeting area boundaries, determines vulnerable targets. The following descriptions are from *the jōdan player's perspective*, i.e., left/right are the jōdan player's left/right.

<sup>35</sup> For chūdan vs. chūdan, if one holds kamae while the other attacks, the incoming strike can be made invalid by the receiver's kensen held on their chest or tsuki, FIK (2017). For a jōdan player, from *their* issoku ittō no maai, against a *standard* chūdan kamae *men* and kote are both wide open to katate strikes and the opponent's kensen can not stop these attacks as before from this range.

<sup>36</sup> The standard *seigan no kamae* vs. jōdan has the kensen directed toward the jōdan player's left fist. This covers kote from basic katate waza, p. 31, but *men* is slightly more exposed. However, the kensen is positioned to better allow application *seme* and more easily make use of *ōji waza*.

*Figure 25: Determining exposed targets from jōdan. (Left) The targeting area, and (Right) a schematic showing opponent vulnerabilities according to the relative position of the opponent's kensen from the jōdan player's perspective. This area is divided into sections: (1) the upper (Green) and lower (Blue) halves with a (Black) horizontal boundary, (2) the internal targeting area (Light Red), and (3) the triangular boundary between the inner and outer areas (Red). The two boundaries intersect roughly at the level of the left kote which is where the opponent's kensen K is directed in a standard *seigan no kamae*. A jōdan player is always monitoring the opponent's kensen position relative to the boundaries of the targeting area to determine vulnerable targets. Should the kensen move far enough from these boundaries, indicated by an up, left, down, or right arrow, then various targets become exposed to attack as labeled. Targets listed on the left of the diagram are against a standard *seigan*, those on the right are (generally) for a reverse *seigan*.*



### Kensen Directed Toward the Left Kote: Standard Seigan no Kamae

- If the kensen is within the targeting area, both men and kote are vulnerable to basic katate waza.
- If the kensen's height is on the upper half, kote is vulnerable regardless of being inside or outside the targeting area.<sup>37</sup>
- If the kensen's height is on the lower half, men is vulnerable regardless of being inside or outside the targeting area.
- If the kensen's height is on the half-way mark, but to the left of the targeting area boundary men is vulnerable.

### Kensen Directed Toward the Right Kote: Reversed Seigan no Kamae

- If the kensen is within the targeting area, men and kote are vulnerable to basic katate waza.
- If the kensen's height is on the upper half, dō is vulnerable regardless of being inside or outside the targeting area.
- If the kensen's height is on the lower half, men is vulnerable regardless of being inside or outside the targeting area.
- If the kensen's height is on the half-way mark, but to the right of the targeting area boundary, kote and men are vulnerable.

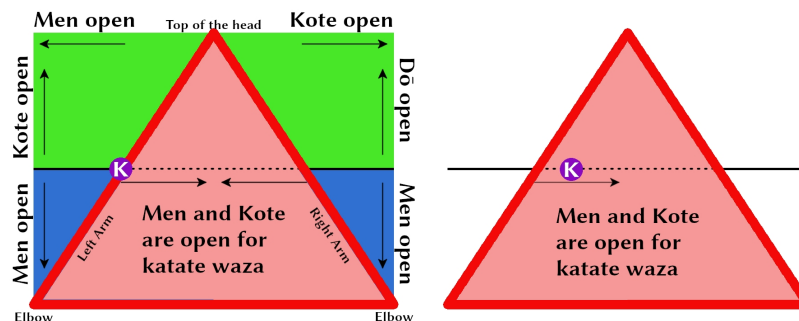
### Basic Usage of the Targeting Area

Jōdan players will attempt to mislead the opponent as to what they are intending to strike. The goal is to cause them to *inappropriately* move their kensen as this will create an opportunity to strike.<sup>38</sup>

The basic scenarios a jōdan player is trying to accomplish are:

1. Opponent moves the kensen to a vulnerable position inadvertently.
2. Force the opponent to move the kensen into a vulnerable position.<sup>39</sup>
3. Move the targeting area, *pushing* the kensen to a vulnerable position.

There are basic and advanced versions of this option.



### BASICS VS. APPLICATION

Understanding basics is not the same as application against an active, engaged opponent. But knowing the basic structure of the opponent's vulnerabilities is needed for the jōdan player to be able create opportunities to strike. By observing the opponent's reactions and habits under pressure, the jōdan player will be able to use seme, movement, distance, etc., to force an opening.

<sup>37</sup> Possibly dō as well depending on the height of the hands.

### REVERSED SEIGAN

Assuming a reversed seigan kamae, i.e., kensen toward the jōdan player's right kote, has a some issues to note. The hands are often higher, allowing the *tsuba* to protect kote, and the wrists rotated to the left making it difficult to strike kote due to the angle. However, done to an extreme, this *may* open the seigan user's left kote as a valid as it may no longer be considered chūdan: "The target area of the kote shall be the right forearm (the left forearm, if the opponent holds the shinai with his or her left hand forward) in the case of chūdan no kamae, or the left and right forearms in the case of other kamae.", FIK (2017).

<sup>38</sup> A simple example is one shows intent to strike kote and, as the opponent moves to defend that area either mentally or physically, men is attacked instead or vice versa. *Explanation of Jōdan Part 1* (2013) and Kiyotsugu (1982)

<sup>39</sup> That is, due to seme, the opponent flinches, blocks, retreats, or attacks.

**Figure 26:** Pushing the opponent's kensen into the vulnerable position. (Left) The opponent's kensen (K) is in the standard seigan position on the boundary of the targeting area. (Right) The jōdan player steps to the left, moving the targeting area with them, and the opponent's kensen is effectively pushed into the vulnerable zone. A common method of striking katate kote is to make a step to the forward-left as one attacks, see p. 31.

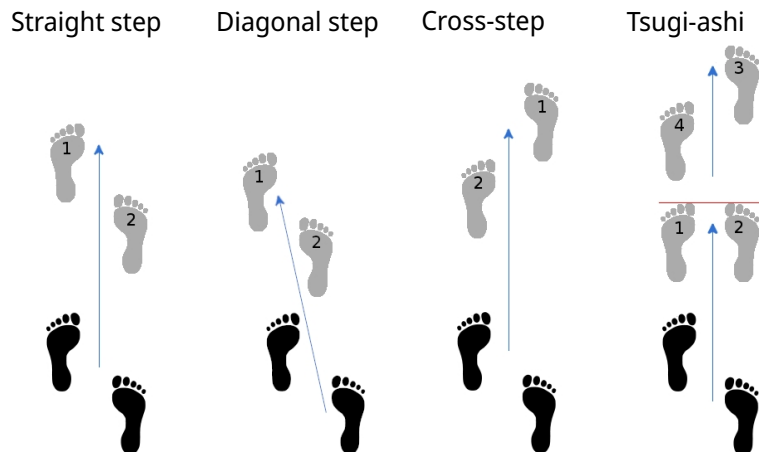
## TWO-HANDED STRIKES

WHILE ONE-HANDED STRIKES are usually the primary attack type from jōdan, two-handed strikes are an important tool and should not be forgotten. They can serve as a follow-up to a missed katate strike, and are the attack used for nearly all ōji waza and several shikake waza.<sup>40</sup> These strikes are needed in particular if the distance to the opponent is too close for katate waza and if the opponent attempts to invade your maai with a strong seigan.<sup>41</sup>

The method for making two-handed attacks from jōdan is similar to a large two-handed attack from chūdan but with the shinai starting in the overhead position. If using a square posture the tsuka-gashira is brought onto the centerline before striking.

### Basic Footwork Combinations for Two-Handed Strikes

Morote strikes from jōdan have a wide range of footwork options. This involves combining okuri-ashi, tsugi-ashi, fumi-komi, and altering which foot is forward by crossing the feet (cross-stepping) while attacking.



### Two-Handed Strike Types

All of the two-handed strikes from chūdan are available from jōdan. Details for these strikes will not be covered save for kote and tsuki.<sup>42</sup>

- Shōmen
- Sayū-men
- Kote
- Dō
- Gyaku-dō
- Tsuki

<sup>40</sup> Debana waza and certain uchi-otoshi waza can be morote or katate. See p. 59.

<sup>41</sup> Kiyotsugu (1982)

### CROSS-STEPPING STRIKES

When attacking with morote waza the jōdan player can strike on the left foot or cross-step forward onto the right. The cross-step can itself act as a form of seme or alter attack direction, but more importantly it allows for the jōdan player to increase their two-handed strike range. This is useful should the opponent attempt to retreat.

*Figure 27:* Footwork combinations for morote strikes. (Left to Right): Straight forward on the left foot, forward-left on the left foot, cross-stepping onto the right foot, and left-footed tsugi-ashi. Tsugi-ashi is uncommon for two-handed strikes from jōdan, save for using the foot motion for seme; the right foot cross-step is much more common. Crossing onto the right foot covers plenty of distance, removing the primary use of tsugi-ashi, and the crossing motion itself can act as seme removing the secondary use. There are several variations of tsugi-ashi for morote waza: (1) the strike, movement 3 and 4, can be made on the right or left foot; the more common right-footed strike is shown here. (2) A left-footed tsugi-ashi can be done without the initial step forward, movement 1 and 2. Instead the rear foot is brought in line with the forward one directly from the starting position and the strike is made from there.

<sup>42</sup> Tsuki is not readily available, however it can still be used against an overtly defensive opponent or against specific kamae. This is an advanced strike and will be discussed on p. 34.

## Morote Kote From Jōdan

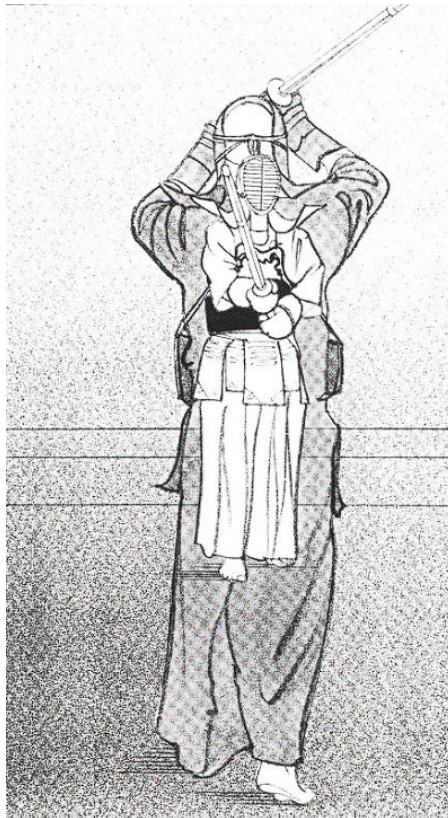
Morote kote is an important tool for jōdan players as it serves two purposes: (1) it aids in attacking an opponent that is *invading the maai* of the jōdan player while in seigan, and (2) helps to bolster the attacking spirit of the jōdan player when faced with a composed, aggressive opponent.

**Basic kote.** This is a basic kote strike similar to a large, chūdan based kote strike save that the shinai begins in the overhead position. The strike can be made on the left foot or by cross-stepping onto the right.

**Tilting kote.** This strike is similar to the basic strike however it is made by leaning the torso to the left slightly *while striking*. By leaning the torso to the left the jōdan player can push the opponent's kensen into a vulnerable position in the jōdan targeting area. This attack is made on the left foot using either a straight or diagonal step. Seme toward the opponent's men is often made prior to this strike in an attempt to have the opponent raise their kensen, making it easier to push their kensen into a vulnerable position.

### TILTING KOTE

This strike is most useful against an opponent that attempts to move in aggressively against a jōdan player while in seigan. By shortening the maai and holding seigan, katate kote becomes difficult or even impossible. This creates a situation where a jōdan player is limited to a men strike, a strike the aggressive opponent is probably attempting to lure out and prepared to counter. This then creates the desire for the jōdan player to retreat in order to "reset". Either option places the jōdan player at a severe disadvantage by giving the opponent a chance to strike and can alter the jōdan player's offensive spirit toward a reactionary or defensive one. See p. 83.



**Figure 28:** Using a tilting kote against an opponent in seigan, Kiyotsugu (1982). (Left) An opponent in seigan facing an opponent in jōdan, and (Right) striking morote kote by tilting the torso and taking a diagonal step to the forward left. When an opponent in seigan invades the jōdan player's maai, katate kote becomes very difficult and a predictable men is vulnerable to counter-attack. By tilting the torso the jōdan player can push the opponent's kensen to a vulnerable position and strike morote kote. Applying seme toward the opponent's men, attempting to cause them to raise their kensen, is often done prior to the using this waza. By having more options to attack, even against an aggressive or composed opponent, the jōdan player can better foster their attack-as-defense mentality and maintain their offensive intent. This attack extends naturally to nidan waza as well.

## BASIC ONE-HANDED STRIKES

METHODS FOR SWINGING THE shinai for katate strikes, as well as te-no-uchi have been given. The following gives details on making a strike.

### Basic Footwork Combinations for One-Handed Strikes

Katate strikes have fewer footwork combinations than morote strikes.

#### Straight step



#### Diagonal step



#### Tsugi-ashi



**Note:** There are other *subtle* variations of one-handed strikes which will not be discussed, e.g., *sashi* style strikes, “*chii-sai waza*”, and variations on the specific movements of the shinai and body. The following are the most basic types with other variants built or adapted from these.

*Figure 29:* Footwork combinations for katate strikes. (Left to Right): Straight forward on the left foot, forward-left on the left foot, and left footed tsugi-ashi. The straight forward step can be used for both men and kote, the diagonal step is primarily used for kote but it is also be used for men in specific situations, and tsugi-ashi is normally used against an opponent that is outside the jōdan player’s reach, or against one that is at the boundary of their striking range and about to defensively retreat.

## Men

*Katate men.* The strike is made using one of the methods on pp. 16–19. The katate men strike finishes with the left hand approximately at the level of the sternum on the centerline of the body, much like with a two-handed strike, with the arm fully extended forward.<sup>43</sup> The right arm is pulled either to the right side of the waist or downward to the front of the waist, again dependent on the method used to swing the shinai.

On impact, the kensen is pulled upward by arcing the wrist back slightly as a part of te-no-uchi, see p. 15. This makes the fist of the left hand face forward toward the opponent. As one moves forward during (basic) zanshin, the fist is directed toward the opponent’s tsuki-dare along their centerline.<sup>44</sup>

### KEY POINT: KATATE MEN

On striking katate men, don’t allow the left hand to drift upward, e.g., face level or higher, while leaving the kensen forward; this is a very weak position.<sup>45</sup> Keep the left hand in the usual cutting position, near chest level, as with two-handed strikes.

*Footwork.* In general, katate men strikes use a straight, left-footed step. However in some situations a forward, diagonal step can be used as well.

<sup>43</sup> Some indicate the left hand ends up at chest level, some at the solar-plexus. Regardless, the position ought to be similar to a two-handed, chūdan based strike; too high or low will make the strike awkward and unbalanced.

<sup>44</sup> This position is a part of zanshin as it allows the jōdan player to control center as they move toward the opponent much like a two-handed strike does. This gives the jōdan player several key options should they need to manage the opponent: (1) it places the shinai in a position where one could prepare for another one or two handed strike, or (2) the shinai is in a position to be used to redirect or block the opponent’s shinai. Obviously the moments after a strike attempt are dynamic and the actions used during one’s zanshin are determined according to the actions of the opponent.

<sup>45</sup> *Chiba Sensei’s ‘Kendo Perfect Master’ – Jōdan* (2017) and *Chiba sensei Jōdan no Kamae - !!Audio corrected!!* (2015)



**Zanshin.** Zanshin is crucial for jōdan when using katate waza: in general you get one chance. Should it miss or be deflected the jōdan player is at a serious disadvantage and, without strong zanshin, will rarely recover without giving the opponent an opportunity to strike.

Jōdan players will often move directly, and *aggressively*, in toward the opponent.<sup>46</sup> This offers the simplest form of protection against a missed strike or a deflection: move toward the opponent, altering the maai, and making their strike or ōji waza ineffective.

#### KEY POINTS: ZANSHIN

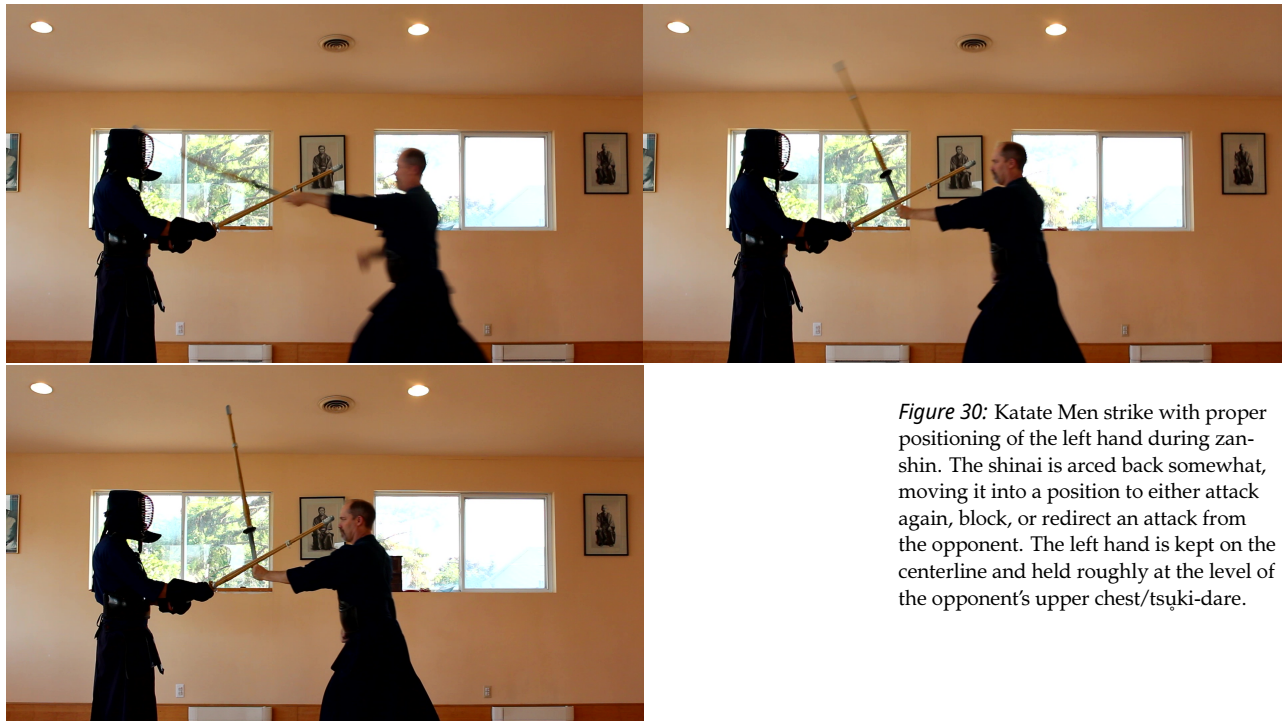
1. Zanshin is crucial for jōdan due to the nature of katate strikes. The simplest motion is to move directly into the opponent *as if to tai-atari or enter tsuba-zeriai*.<sup>47</sup> This motion bolsters the aggressive spirit of the jōdan player and can act as a form of seme; *knowing* the jōdan player will move in aggressively with each strike may force the opponent to rush their waza or play at a pace they do not set.
2. Don't let the left hand drift up or leave the kensen directed forward.
3. Moving the shinai into position to attack, block, or redirect any actions from the opponent after striking is crucial for katate strikes due to their "one chance" nature.

#### ZANSHIN & MOVEMENT

The term zanshin can often be abused in that zanshin is used to refer to the specific movement players use after striking. *It should be clear that zanshin and the movements used after striking are not the same thing*; one can move after striking and have no zanshin, and they can move very little after striking and have full zanshin.

<sup>46</sup> Some players forgo okuri-ashi as they move into the opponent, for the first step or two, and use *ayumi-ashi*. This is not kihon but it is quite common for players in high level *shiai*.

<sup>47</sup> *As if to tai-atari or enter tsuba-zeriai* refers to moving directly toward the opponent. The hand(s) *are not lowered to the abdomen automatically* but are left at the proper cutting position and lowered to the abdomen only if one decides on tai-atari or will enter tsuba-zeriai.



*Figure 30: Katate Men strike with proper positioning of the left hand during zanshin. The shinai is arced back somewhat, moving it into a position to either attack again, block, or redirect an attack from the opponent. The left hand is kept on the centerline and held roughly at the level of the opponent's upper chest/tsuki-dare.*

## Kote

*Katate kote.* The strike is made using one of the methods given on pp. 16–19. The katate kote strike finishes with the left hand approximately at the level of the waist on the centerline of the body, with the arm fully extended forward.<sup>48</sup> The right arm is pulled either to the right side of the waist or downward to the front of the waist, again dependent on the method used to swing the shinai.

<sup>48</sup> The position of the left hand here is the same as that of a two-handed strike.

On impact the kensen is pulled upward by arcing the wrist back, or back and left, as a part of te-no-uchi, see p. 15; the fist of the left hand faces forward toward the opponent. As one moves forward the fist is directed toward the opponent's kote while kept on the centerline.

### KEY POINTS: KATATE KOTE

1. A missed katate kote strike should stop at kote level; dropping far below this, or hitting the floor, indicates poor strike mechanics.
2. Don't let the left hand drift up or leave the kensen directed forward.

*Footwork.* For katate kote the straight, left-footed step or the diagonal, left-footed step are used.

The forward moving step is exactly the same as for katate or morote men: the footwork is in a straight line toward the opponent. The diagonal step is common as it helps expose the opponent's kote to attack, see p. 26. The step is made to the forward diagonal left.



*Figure 31:* Katate Kote strike using a diagonal step. The jōdan player makes a step to their forward left, pushing the opponent's kensen into a vulnerable position on their targeting area, and strikes kote using a straight, basic strike.

*Zanshin.* There are several movements used during zanshin for kote.

1. *Kihon.* The jōdan player moves directly, and aggressively, into the opponent similar to men. Because the kensen is arced back somewhat the shinai is in a position to prepare for another attack or redirect the opponent's shinai. With the left hand directed toward the opponent's kote, the jōdan player can suppress their movements as they close in.



*Figure 32:* Example of a basic movement during zanshin after katate kote. (Top) After striking the jōdan player moves aggressively and directly toward the opponent with the left fist at the level of the kote strike. (Center) As the jōdan player moves forward the shinai is held in a position where one can attack, block, or redirect a strike from the opponent as necessary. (Bottom) Upon reaching the opponent, the left hand is used to suppress the opponent's right hand, hindering further actions.



2. *Advanced*. On striking kote, the kensen being arced back, and the left hand at kote level the jōdan player moves to the forward left or just directly to the left using small, slow steps; the jōdan player keeps themselves facing directly toward the opponent while they move.



#### KEY POINT: MINIMAL MOVEMENT DURING ZANSHIN

There is little physical movement in this example so the jōdan player's expression of zanshin must be visibly strong. They must demonstrate they are in a physical and mental position to cope with any potential attack from the opponent as per the definition of zanshin from FIK (2017).

*Figure 33:* Example of an advanced movement during zanshin after katate kote. This example is of Yamamoto Masahiko sensei, K8D, from *jōdan Yamamoto sensei* (2009). Upon striking kote the jōdan player moves to the forward left in slow, small steps using ayumi-ashi and keeping themselves facing toward the opponent. The shinai is arced back and slightly to their right to bring it into position to either block, redirect the opponent, or attack again as needed.



## ADVANCED STRIKES

THERE ARE SEVERAL STRIKES which can be thought of as advanced for jōdan as these require more control over the shinai, feet, and body. The strikes discussed here are:

- Katate sayū-men
- Morote/katate tsuki
- Katate kote (S-kote)

### Footwork Combinations for Sayu-Men & Tsuki

Straight, left-footed  
right/left sayū-men



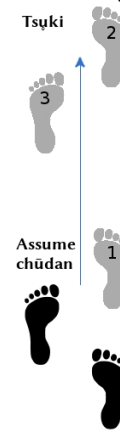
Diagonal, left-footed  
right sayū-men



Left hiraki-ashi, into  
migi sayū-men



Cross-step into a  
right-footed tsuki



### Katate Sayū-Men

Katate sayū-men is considered advanced as it requires a higher level of control over the shinai due to the angle of the strike. Accuracy is needed to ensure one strikes the correct area, as well as te-no-uchi otherwise these strikes will often slip off the target on impact.

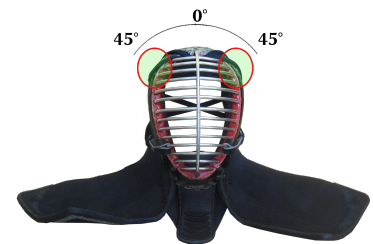
Katate sayū-men is performed similarly to katate shōmen however, as with morote sayū-men in chūdan kendō, the right hand directs the shinai to the right or the left prior to extending the left arm forward.

Katate sayū-men is usually done with a straight or diagonal left-footed step but *hiraki-ashi* to the left can be used for migi sayū-men.

#### KEY POINTS: KATATE SAYŪ-MEN

1. Sayū-men is effective against opponents that *preemptively* attempt ōji waza, e.g., *omote suri-age waza/kaeshi waza*, preemptively block, or alter their kamae. These motions can leave small openings to their right or left men.
2. Migi sayū-men can be visually similar to some kote strikes making this effective against those that reactively protect their kote.

*Figure 34:* Footwork for katate sayū-men and tsuki from jōdan. (Left to Right) Straight, left footed step for right or left sayū-men, diagonal, left-footed step for right sayū-men, left hiraki-ashi for right sayū-men, and cross-stepping into a right footed tsuki. **Note:** Right & left sayū-men refers to the *opponent's* right & left.



*Figure 35:* Sayū-men targets. Sayū-men strikes are allowed anywhere within the area roughly 45° to the left and right of center. FIK (2017) indicates strikes must be “above the temple” to be valid.



*Figure 36: Katate sayū-men, using a diagonal step from a square posture, against an opponent guarding their kote. (Top) The jōdan player applies seme and (Blue) begins a small step to their forward left. The opponent, reacting to this, (Red) moves their kensen slightly to their right in order to protect their kote. (Bottom) As the opponent's kensen moves, (Red) the left arm pulls down and forward while (Blue) the right arm angles the shinai to the jōdan player's left. The left arm is fully extended, the right arm is pulled down to the waist, and the strike is made. Zanshin for sayū-men is similar to that of shōmen.*

## Morote/Katate Tsuki

Tsuki is an uncommon strike, however it does have some specific uses. To strike tsuki from jōdan several actions must occur together, relatively quickly, without unbalancing the jōdan player:

1. The jōdan player must accurately lower their shinai.
2. Simultaneously they cross-step forward onto their right.
3. The thrust is made, either katate or morote, attacking on the right foot.

Tsuki is usually used from jōdan against players who become comfortable blocking with a one-handed, horizontal block or with san-pō-mamori. It is also useful against an opponent who uses a *nitō kamae*.<sup>49</sup>

### KEY POINT: TSUKI FROM JŌDAN

There are two methods for tsuki aside from morote or katate.

1. The shinai is brought to chūdan completely. Tsuki is then made from the chūdan position.
2. Tsuki is made *while* the shinai is being lowered to chūdan.

Method #2 is more difficult as it requires even more control over the shinai and body to perform.

<sup>49</sup> Against jōdan, *nitō* users often alter kamae by raising the *shōtō* slightly and angling the *daitō* overhead to better defend against strikes from above.



*Figure 37: Attempted tsuki from jōdan, 前原正作(鹿児島) - 寺地種寿(東京) 1990 全日本剣道選手権大会 (2014). The jōdan player uses method #1 for tsuki: (1) from jōdan the shinai is lowered to chūdan and, (2) from chūdan the thrust is made by cross-stepping on the right. See **KEY POINT: TSUKI FROM JŌDAN**, p. 35.*

## S-Kote

The S-kote is the most mechanically difficult strike for jōdan and can truly be considered advanced. While the strikes discussed previously can be directly linked to striking from chūdan: motion of the arm, use of the wrist, etc., there is no chūdan analog to the movements used for this waza.

The S-kote, regardless of which swing method one normally uses, is done entirely with the left hand.<sup>50</sup> So not only does it require a completely different style of wrist and arm movement, it also requires slightly more forearm strength to use than the standard strikes.<sup>51</sup>

The purpose of the S-kote is to put the opponent's kensen in a vulnerable position in the targeting area by the jōdan player moving their shinai, *and the targeting area with it*, around the opponent's kensen. Compare this with the usual method(s) where the jōdan player (1) must move their body to push the opponent's kensen into a vulnerable position, or (2) the opponent moves their kensen themselves into a vulnerable position as a reaction to seme. See pp. 25–26, 44–51.

Without having to rely on the usual discernable pattern(s) of having to push or have the opponent move their kensen into a vulnerable position, this waza can be done with either a straight, forward moving step or with a forward, diagonal left step. This makes the strategy of threaten one→ strike the other somewhat less obvious to the opponent, see p. 48, as the jōdan player can now strike kote while threatening to attack either men or kote.<sup>52</sup>

For example, an opponent that attempts to draw out a jōdan player's men strike by purposely defending kote with a wider seigan in response to kote seme from the jōdan player may still have a vulnerable kote through an S-kote. Being struck in this way would likely affect their confidence or spirit for the remainder of the encounter.

<sup>50</sup> Chiba's method, p. 19, is an exception as the right arm motion used in that style can be used here.

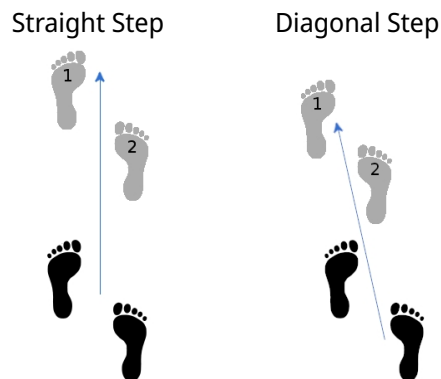
<sup>51</sup> The strength required for this is *much less than what it may seem*. Proper swing mechanics and body movement make up the vast majority of the requirements to use this waza.

### KEY POINTS: S-KOTE ADVANTAGES

1. From seigan kote is not open to katate strikes if attacking with a straight step unless the opponent lifts their kensen; the S-kote removes that need.
2. If also using a diagonal step the opponent's kote can be made vulnerable even if they attempt to protect it by (1) holding a wider seigan or (2) moving to their right using a standard seigan. See figure 42, p. 40 and p. 92 for details.

<sup>52</sup> The *threat* of an attack here is from body motion; in a *basic* scenario moving straight forward implies a men strike, to the left implies kote.

## Footwork Combinations for an S-Kote



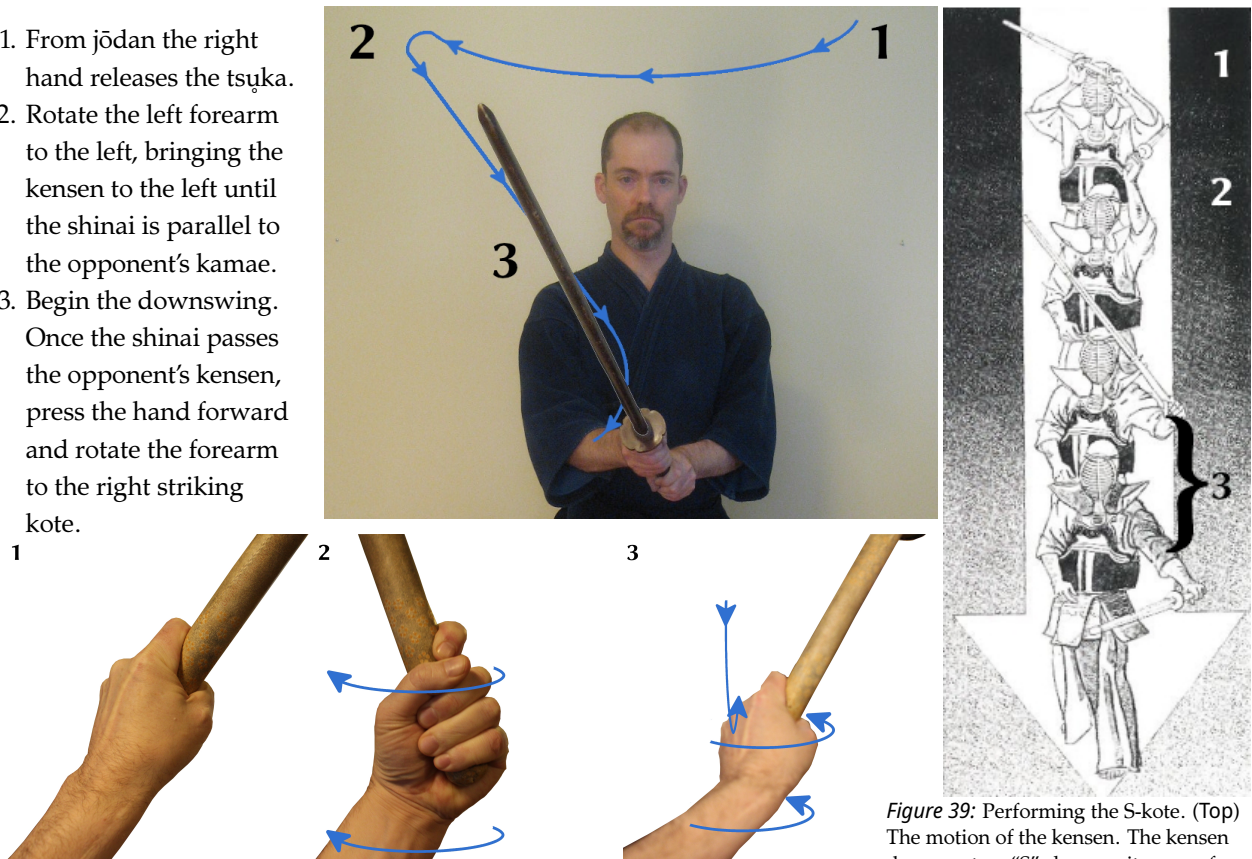
**Figure 38:** Footwork variations for the S-kote. The S-kote can be done using either a straight, forward moving step or with a diagonal step to the forward left. With the straight step the jōdan player can threaten men and still be able to strike kote even if the opponent maintains their seigan no kamae position. With a diagonal step the jōdan player can strike kote on opponents that hold a wider seigan, or that step to the jōdan player's left, as a means to better cover their kote.



## Performing the S-Kote

While the motions here are broken up into separate steps in practice they occur as one smooth, continuous motion.

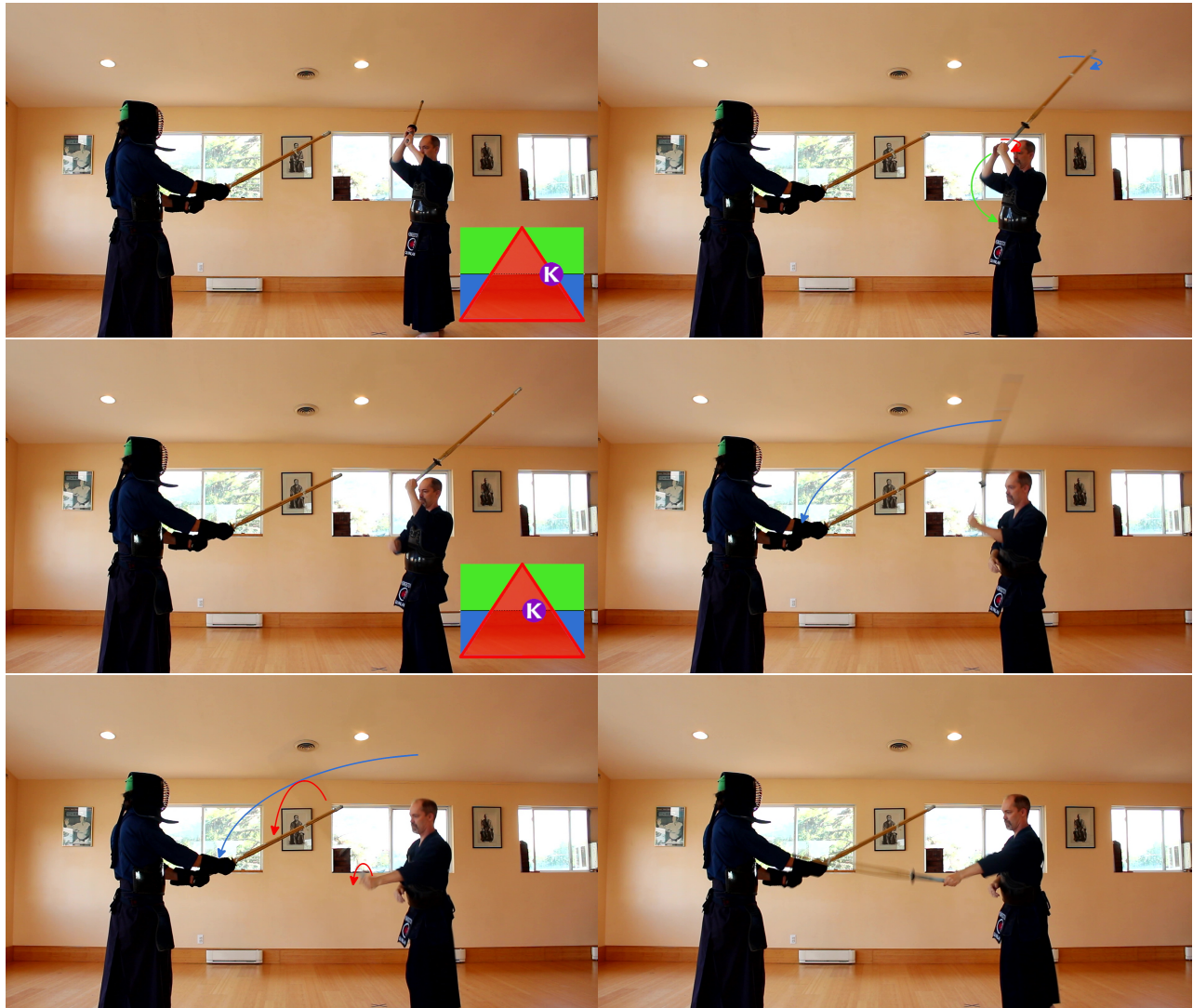
1. From jōdan the right hand releases the tsuka.
2. Rotate the left forearm to the left, bringing the kensen to the left until the shinai is parallel to the opponent's kamae.
3. Begin the downswing. Once the shinai passes the opponent's kensen, press the hand forward and rotate the forearm to the right striking kote.



*Figure 39: Performing the S-kote. (Top) The motion of the kensen. The kensen draws out an "S" shape as it moves from start to finish. (Bottom, Left to Right) Movement of the forearm and wrist for an S-kote, and (Right) an S-kote strike from the opponent's perspective, Kiyotsugu (1982). Upon finishing the S-kote the left shoulder, hand, and kensen of the jōdan player form a triangle; the left hand is outside of the jōdan player's body with the knuckles pointing to their forward left. Steps #1, 2, and 3 in each image correspond to one another.*



*Figure 40: Throwing a right handed shoot pitch. According to Kiyotsugu (1982), the motion for the S-kote is similar to throwing a left handed shoot pitch. As the arm moves forward and down, the hand is turned inward midway through the strike.*



### KEY POINTS: S-KOTE

1. The left forearm is rotated to the left, bringing the jōdan player's kensen to the left, until their shinai is parallel to the *opponent's kamae*. In this position the knuckles of the left hand often face forward toward the opponent.
2. The downswing is begun while the left forearm is still rotated. The left arm is rotated to the right, mid-swing, once the shinai passes the opponent's kensen. See figure 40, p. 38.
3. This strike should feel as though it is made primarily with the wrist. This will help to avoid excessive use of the arm creating a downward strike, p. 23. Correct te-no-uchi is crucial.

*Figure 41: S-kote using a straight forward step. (Top, Left to Right) The opponent's kensen (inset) is on the boundary of the targeting area, protecting their kote. As a forward step is begun the (Green) right hand is removed from the tsuka and lowered to the waist. The (Red) left forearm and the (Blue) shinai is rotated to the left. (Center, Left to Right) The forearm is rotated until the shinai is parallel with the opponent's kamae. As the left forearm is rotated the targeting area is rotated as well, pushing the (inset) opponent's kensen into a vulnerable kote position. From this position the (Blue) downswing is initiated. (Bottom, Left to Right) During the (Blue) downswing, once the shinai passes the opponent's kensen, the (Red) left forearm and shinai are rotated inward to the right. The left arm is fully extended and the kote strike is completed. Upon striking the jōdan player's left hand is outside the width of their body.*



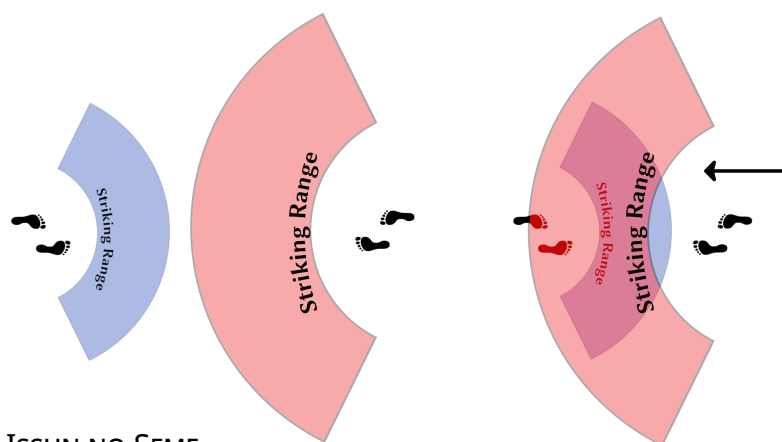


*Figure 42: S-kote using a diagonal step against a wide seigan demonstrated by K8D Asami Yutaka, [Explanation of Jodan Part 1](#) (2013).* (Top) The jōdan player is facing an opponent that holds their kensai just outside of the jōdan targeting area boundary, completely blocking their kote. (Center) The jōdan player begins their step forward and removes their right hand from the tsuka while bringing the left hand to the centerline and turning the left wrist inward. (Bottom) Once the shinai is parallel to the opponent's, the downward swing is made and the step direction is altered to be diagonal instead of straight. Midway through the swing the left arm and wrist is rotated, turning the shinai inward, striking the opponent's kote. The kote was made to be vulnerable to attack even though (1) the opponent's kensai was not moved or pressed into a vulnerable position, and (2) the opponent's kamae was in a position such that a diagonal step with a standard katate kote would not have landed.

## APPLYING SEME FROM JŌDAN

APPLICATION OF SEME IS at the heart of kendō. While the application of seme is the same for jōdan and chūdan, due to physical differences, the mechanics of applying it are often somewhat different.

The general idea is to establish with the opponent the jōdan player's striking radius is a "keep out" region, i.e., if entered you *will* be hit.<sup>53</sup> Once done, and the opponent is hesitant to enter directly into the jōdan player's striking range, the goal is to force the opponent into this range by pushing the striking range onto them.<sup>54</sup> The starting point here is *issun no seme*, i.e., moving the opponent into your *uchi-ma*, while threatening a strike.<sup>55</sup>



### ISSUN NO SEME

ISSUN NO SEME IS when the player slowly moves forward toward the opponent into striking range. There are two ways in which this is done:<sup>56</sup>

*Taking a small, but complete, step forward.* With this method of approach, the player literally takes a full but very short okuri-ashi step, i.e., front foot immediately followed by the rear foot. This step is usually done quickly in order to have the rear foot returned to an attacking position as soon as possible, but also the sudden, quick motion of the body moving forward while already having the opponent effectively under pressure, may itself be enough to work as *seme-kuzushi*.<sup>57</sup>

<sup>53</sup> This will fail if the jōdan player's attacks are predictable; the attacks will be lured out and countered. Jōdan relies heavily on disguising intent, such as threaten one→ strike the other, p. 48, to help prevent this.

<sup>54</sup> Some opponents attempt to enter this range *indirectly* by distorting the perception of distance first or moving in discreetly from an angle. See p. 94.

<sup>55</sup> An important distinction: the opponent moving into vs. moving the opponent into your uchi-ma.

*Figure 43:* Schematic of moving the opponent into the jōdan uchi-ma. (Left) The chūdan player's (Blue) striking range and the jōdan player's (Red) striking range; at *tō-ma* neither are close enough to make a strike. (Right) The jōdan player moves forward, pushing the chūdan player into their striking range. Jōdan players must establish that moving into their striking range will be met with an attack before a chūdan opponent is able to make one. Once done, and the chūdan player is hesitant to enter this range directly, the jōdan player forces them to enter it by stepping forward, pushing them into it.

<sup>56</sup> It may seem like splitting hairs to break this up into two separate methods of approach, but they really are quite different, and each has their uses.

<sup>57</sup> The key for a single *issun no seme* step to be *seme-kuzushi* is that the opponent must *already feel pressured*; moving in on the opponent, threatening targets, disrupting kamae, launching prior attacks, etc., are all part of this buildup. Like all forms of *seme*, *issun no seme* is often required to be repeated many times over an encounter for a cumulative effect.



*Stepping forward on the front foot with a delay.* This is a slightly different form of *issun no seme* where the forward motion is paused slightly before bringing up the rear foot.<sup>58</sup> During this delay one determines the effect this forward movement is having on the opponent and whether to use additional methods of *seme* or disruption, e.g., begin a *harai waza*, pressure their *kamae*, threaten a specific target, etc.

From this position, with the front foot extended slightly, the player can then attack directly, draw up the rear foot completing an *issun no seme* step, retract the forward foot, etc.

The key idea for this movement is it shouldn't seem like the forward foot moves and then everything stops; the movement pauses but spiritually one keeps pressing while observing the opponent.<sup>59</sup> The motion of the front foot, from the opponent's perspective, should look like the start of an attack. A decision is made during the delay on how to make use of the opponent's reaction(s).<sup>60</sup>

### Temporarily Widened Stance & Limited Footwork

There are times when a *jōdan* player will adopt a noticeably widened foot stance while applying *seme* with a delayed step and attack from this position. While this widened foot position limits movement capability, there are reasons why it is sometimes used regardless.<sup>61</sup>

#### Situations Where a Wide Stance is Often Used

1. The *jōdan* player is in range to strike *katate waza* with a small step.<sup>62</sup>
2. The *jōdan* player and the opponent are in a tense *seme-ai*.<sup>63</sup>
3. The opponent is on the verge of succumbing to the *jōdan* player's *seme*, e.g., they will attack or break *kamae* to defend.

#### KEY POINT: WHY USE A WIDENED STANCE

*Jōdan* players don't always bring up their rear foot into position after extending their forward foot during *seme*. This is done so as not to lose the ability to strike immediately in a tense *seme-ai* vs. having to momentarily alter focus toward moving the feet while facing an engaged opponent. As *katate waza* have increased reach the *jōdan* player can take a limited *fumi-komi* step and strike with *katate waza* which makes up for the shortened step. The gauging of correct *maai* is obviously crucial here.

If applied *seme* fails to elicit a reaction from the opponent from this position, this may leave the *jōdan* player *at a disadvantage*. There are several options that must be decided upon by the *jōdan* player, *quickly*, so as to minimize their exposure. This depends on the opponent, but the following are some basic examples.

<sup>58</sup> The forward motion can be done in several ways. The most basic is to extend the forward foot slightly, but it can also be done by just shifting one's weight forward and bending the front knee somewhat. In either case an opponent under pressure will detect the *body* moving forward and potentially react.

<sup>59</sup> This calm observation of the opponent's reactions is a part of *tame*.

<sup>60</sup> Depending on experience level and the amount of control one has over the opponent a decision may already have been made and this motion, instead of being used to probe the opponent, is a component of a set-up or lure.

<sup>61</sup> Hereafter a *fumi-komi* step from this widened position is referred to as a *limited fumi-komi*.

<sup>62</sup> That is they are closer than their maximum *issoku ittō no maai*.

<sup>63</sup> *Tense seme-ai* refers to the situation similar to *tachi kata #1*: a strike is now inevitable and any form of hesitation, delay, retreat, etc. will result in being struck.

### Recovering From a Widened Stance

1. Retract the forward foot assuming proper foot position. The application of seme then begins again immediately.
2. Retract the forward foot to proper position followed by an okuri-ashi step backward. Application of seme begins again.
3. Make a katate strike or pull up the rear foot and attack with a morote strike. As there was no controlled opportunity to strike, this is often used to move into *tsuba-zeriai*, distract the opponent, etc.
4. Pull up the rear foot, and attempt morote *harai-otoshi*. This is used to either create an opening to attack or disrupt the opponent's shinai to allow the distance, feet, and positioning to be adjusted.

#### KEY POINT: FAILED SEME & WIDE STANCE RECOVERY

In these examples the jōdan player must move or attack *in a situation where they may be disadvantaged*, due to foot position or lack of seme inhibiting the opponent, leaving them exposed to (counter-)attack.

#### WHEN TO ATTACK?

Each of these scenarios are a risk to the jōdan player. The most basic instruction given to *all* kendōka early on in their training regarding when to attack is to strike when the opponent moves: forward, back, left, or right. A bit more advanced is to strike the opponent if they stop moving, i.e., become rigid. These can easily happen in this wide-stance scenario. If the jōdan player's seme is not affecting the opponent, keeping them at bay, they can give the opponent an easy opportunity to strike.



*Figure 44:* Attacking from a widened foot position while applying seme by H8D Chiba Masashi. (Top) Normal foot position for hidari jōdan, (Bottom-left) the forward foot is extended, while applying seme, without bringing the rear foot up into place. This position is held for several seconds while pressuring the opponent to determine the effect on the opponent. (Bottom-right) A katate kote strike from the widened stance using a limited step as the opponent reacts defensively.

## THREATENING TARGETS

JŌDAN THREATENS TARGETS SIMILARLY to chūdan however the mechanics are different due to the absence of a forward positioned kensen.

While also true of chūdan, jōdan makes use of the body, i.e., movement and positioning, to apply seme but also makes use of the tsuka-gashira and/or the direction and position of the shinai. Specifically the jōdan player presses the tsuka-gashira, move the position of the shinai left or right, tilt the torso, etc., toward a target. Combined with moving the feet and body is how a jōdan player can apply physical seme.

**Kihon: Threatening Men.** The jōdan player begins by starting an issun no seme step with delay, see p. 41. While the jōdan player advances their forward foot, they also press their tsuka-gashira forward:

1. The shinai is first moved in line with the centerline if not using a hidari shizentai posture for kamae. See p. 13.
2. While maintaining the angle of the shinai, the left hand *slightly* presses the tsuka-gashira forward and down as if beginning a strike with the feeling the tsuka-gashira is pressed toward the opponent's centerline.

Much like the issun no seme delayed step, the pressed tsuka-gashira is *held for a moment* to gauge opponent response. *If there is no reaction, the press is retracted and the step is either completed, held, or retracted.*

### KEY POINT: FOCUS WHILE PRESSING THE TSUKA-GASHIRA

Jōdan players must be focused here as pressing the tsuka-gashira can give an alert opponent an opportunity to strike, in particular when retracting the press.

### KEY POINT: SPECIFIC MOTIONS FOR APPLYING MEN SEME

How to apply seme is *not set in stone*. The motions given here are a starting point. Altering the motions, footwork, the order they occur, etc. are all valid. Movements to apply seme only result in true “pressure” *if it garners a reaction from the opponent*. This is the key idea to keep in mind throughout any description of how to apply seme. *If the opponent does not perceive an attack is imminent, and/or are not threatened by this potential attack, then it is not seme.*

### KEY POINT: OPPONENT REACTION — MENTAL OR PHYSICAL

There doesn't need to be a *physical* reaction before one strikes. A mental reaction is in fact the goal; physical reactions follow from this. If the opponent is hesitant, defensive, etc. and the target is vulnerable a basic shikake waza is valid. Probing the opponent will allow one to make this determination.

**Note:** Unless indicated the following descriptions on threatening targets is for both katate and morote strikes.

### FUNDAMENTAL JŌDAN: MEN

Katate men, and by extension the ability to threaten the opponent's men, makes up the fundamentals, **kihon**, of striking from jōdan. The strength of one's ability to threaten and strike men will directly affect one's ability to strike kote, Kiyotsugu (1982).

### PRESSING THE TSUKA-GASHIRA

Common methods of pressing the tsuka-gashira to apply seme are (1) the left hand presses forward and down while maintaining the 30°–45° angle of the shinai, (2) one begins the squeezing of the fingers to start the kensen moving up and forward, altering the angle of the shinai slightly, and (3) a hybrid of the two. Jōdan players will often mix the various methods during an encounter so as not to be predictable. The example given for threatening men is specifically using the first method.

### BUILDING PRESSURE

As with all aspects of applying seme, regardless of whether one uses jōdan or chūdan, pressuring and probing the opponent will often have to be done *several* times before a pattern, habit, or weakness can be exposed. Rarely does application of seme affect the opponent enough to control the exchange on the first attempt; seme is tailored to each opponent at each encounter.

**Note:** Hereafter *delayed step*, *issun no seme step with delay*, and *delayed issun no seme step* are used interchangeably.





**Advanced: Threatening Men.** The advanced method is not labeled advanced as it is more difficult, but more so that it alters one's usual grip on the tsuka. The benefit of this is when one is attempting to confuse, distract, or set up lures for the opponent during seme-ai. See p. 48.

### Sliding the Right Hand on the Tsuka

1. Bring the tsuka-gashira to center if using a square posture.
2. Press the tsuka-gashira forward and down.
3. As the tsuka-gashira is pressed forward, slide the right hand down the tsuka until it meets the left.

As with the basic method of threatening men, this is done with a delayed step. The effect on the opponent is observed and whether to proceed or retract is then decided on. The right hand is returned to the proper position if the tsuka-gashira press is retracted.

*Figure 45:* Threatening men from jōdan. As a delayed step is made the tsuka-gashira is pressed along the centerline.

### KEY POINTS: SLIDING THE HAND

1. In addition to the tsuka-gashira being pressed the visual cue of the right hand moving, which simulates releasing the tsuka, helps imply a strike is being launched.
2. This method *should not* be used if the jōdan player only uses a swing method that specifically uses the right hand to throw the shinai forward, p. 16, as the right hand will no longer be in position to do so.
3. This method can be adapted to threaten kote by using footwork or altering posture and shinai position.



*Figure 46:* Alternate method of threatening men from jōdan. Moving the right hand simulates the visual cue of releasing the right hand from the tsuka, implying a strike is being made.



*Threatening Kote.* Similar to threatening men, the jōdan player begins issun no seme with a delay and moves the tsuka-gashira.

1. The shinai is *not* brought to the center first if using a square posture.
2. The body and feet move slightly to the forward left for the delayed step, moving the opponent's kensen into a vulnerable kote position.
3. As the body moves, the shinai is then brought to the centerline and the tsuka-gashira is pressed forward and down toward the kote.

As with men the pressed tsuka-gashira is *held for a moment* to gauge opponent reaction. If there is none, the tsuka-gashira press is retracted and the issun no seme step is either completed, maintained, or retracted.



*Figure 47:* Threatening kote from jōdan. (Top) From jōdan a delayed step to the forward left is made without moving the shinai. (Bottom) Once the step begins, the shinai is brought to the centerline and the tsuka-gashira is pressed.

#### KEY POINT: MEN & KOTE RELATIONSHIP

The ability to threaten men directly affects the success of threatening kote, and vice versa; one's men strengthens kote and one's kote strengthens men. However men is the most important and the threat of a men strike must be established with the opponent first.

*Advanced: Threatening Kote* These methods are labeled as advanced as they alter one's kamae and/or posture. These are done with a delayed issun no seme step. The effect is observed and whether to proceed or retract is decided accordingly.

#### Pressing the Shinai Toward Kote

1. The tsuka-gashira is pressed down and slightly to the left.
2. As the tsuka-gashira is pressed down and left, the right hand is moved toward the left. Visually this is similar starting a *katsugi waza*.

<sup>64</sup> Pressing the tsuka-gashira to the left may aid in applying seme toward a more composed opponent as it is a more visually obvious threat to kote.

#### Tilting the Torso

1. The tsuka-gashira can be pressed to the left or on the centerline.<sup>64</sup>
2. While pressing, the jōdan player tilts their torso slightly left as if pushing the opponent's kensen into a vulnerable kote position.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>65</sup> The tilt of the body is *slight* and on its own is usually not enough to push the opponent's kensen into a vulnerable position. However with a step, or in particular if the opponent reacts to the movement, e.g., moves their kensen as if to defend momentarily, it is enough.

#### Angling the Shinai

1. The tsuka-gashira is brought to the center if using a square posture.
2. The right hand is moved to the left similar to a sayū-men strike.<sup>66</sup>
3. The tsuka-gashira is pressed forward and down as if starting a strike.

<sup>66</sup> As with tilting the torso and pressing the tsuka-gashira to the left, combining this angling with tilting the torso may help apply pressure as it is more obvious visually.



*Figure 48: Alternate methods of threatening kote from jōdan. (Top, Left to Right) Pressing the shinai toward the opponent's kote, tilting the torso toward kote and pressing the tsuka-gashira along the centerline. (Bottom) Angling the shinai toward kote, similar to performing a sayū-men strike. Each of these methods, and variations of them, are used to apply pressure by giving the opponent obvious visual cues.*

#### KEY POINT: ALTERNATE METHODS OF APPLYING SEME TO KOTE

Outside of striking an opponent caught off-guard, the value of these motions is found in distracting the opponent during seme-ai in order to strike men. See p. 48.

## THREATEN ONE TO STRIKE THE OTHER

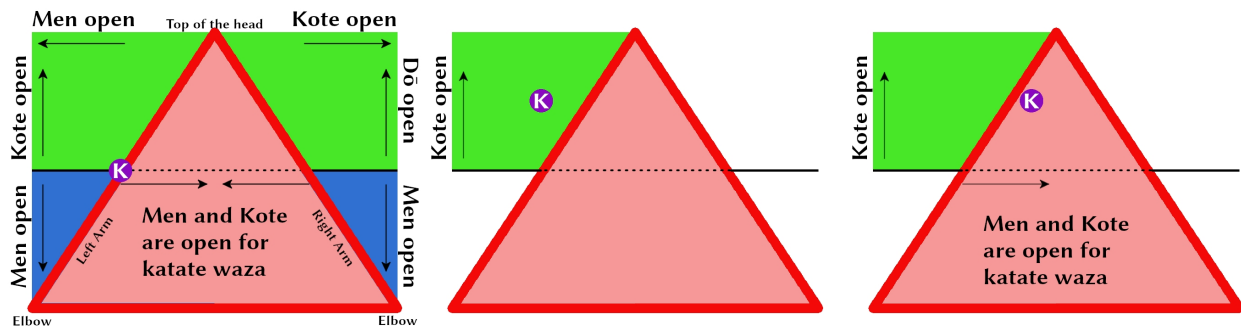
ONCE ONE CAN SUCCESSFULLY project intent toward the opponent, the jōdan player can make use of the opponent's reactions to create openings. Specifically, a central approach is to threaten one target on the opponent and then strike a different one as their focus is drawn toward the threatened target, e.g., threaten men and then strike kote.<sup>67</sup>

This is when a jōdan player can make use of the advanced methods to threaten a target, as opponents will respond to visual cues differently. At the same time the jōdan player is able to maintain their offensive spirit by applying seme and continually probing the opponent, who is under threat of attack, as they look for patterns, habits, etc.

### Threaten Men, Strike Kote

This is the most important method of striking as it forms the basis of all other combinations of threatening one target and striking another.<sup>68</sup>

1. The jōdan player threatens men using the basic or advanced method.
2. The opponent perceives the threat, composure is briefly lost, and their hands lift up moving their kensen to a vulnerable kote position.
3. As their hands rise, the jōdan player attacks kote moving to the forward left, pressing the their kensen further into the targeting area.<sup>69</sup>



<sup>67</sup> The timing is similar to certain ōji waza: the strike is made knowing where the opening *will be*. Waiting to see the full opening before attacking allows the opponent to recover and react. *The strike is made as their focus is drawn (defensively) toward a target, not after.* Understanding jōdan's targeting area is essential to knowing where and how to attack.

<sup>68</sup> There are *many* ways of accomplishing this. The selected methods shown here, or the ones considered advanced or basic, will most certainly differ between jōdan users.

*Figure 49:* Threatening men then striking kote. (Left) The opponent's kensen (K) is in the standard seigan position. (Center) The jōdan player threatens men with a small *issun* no *seme* step with delay; the opponent moves their kensen up to protect it, placing it into the vulnerable kote position. (Right) The jōdan player, moving to the forward left, and pushing the opponent's kensen fully into the vulnerable position, attacks kote.

### Threaten Kote, Strike Men

This is also an important method of striking for a jōdan player and goes hand in hand with threatening men → strike kote.

1. The jōdan player threatens kote using a basic or advanced method.
2. The opponent perceives the threat, composure is lost, and their kensen moves to the left, into a vulnerable men position, to protect kote.
3. As the opponent's kensen moves, the jōdan player ends their delayed step and attacks men.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> The opponent's kensen is raised above the targeting area boundary making their kote vulnerable. Stepping to the forward left to push the kensen into the targeting area is helpful but not mandatory; kote could be hit by moving straight forward depending on kensen height.

<sup>70</sup> This attack method re-enforces why the delayed step need not be large. As the step is slightly to the left if it is too large and the feet too far apart this limits one's ability to alter directions and make an effective attack.

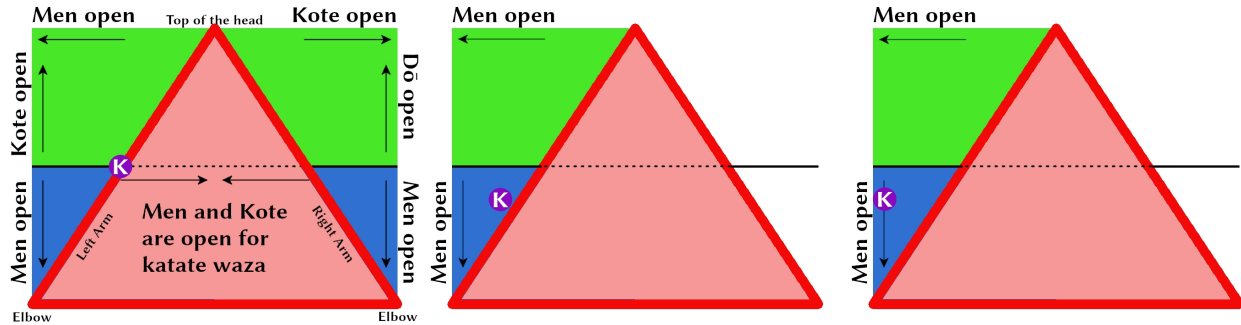


Figure 50: Threatening kote and striking men. (Left) The opponent's kensen (K) is in seigan. (Center) The jōdan player threatens kote with a delayed step to the left; the opponent moves their kensen down and left to protect it, making men vulnerable. (Right) The jōdan player, altering their step direction to the right, pushes the opponent's kensen further into the vulnerable position and attacks men.

### KEY POINT: THREATEN KOTE, STRIKE MEN

Threaten kote → strike men can be done by stepping diagonally left to threaten kote then changing direction to strike men on the centerline. Or the men can be done by continuing the diagonal step. Altering directions keeps the usual range, but requires enough control to change one's step. Striking on the diagonal can shorten the range of a men strike, but doesn't require a direction change. Which is used depends on both the jōdan player's ability and opponent reactions.

### KEY POINTS: THREATEN ONE, STRIKE THE OTHER

1. This strategy is at the core of jōdan: apply seme, draw the opponent's focus, then strike a different area.
2. Seme must be applied many times to read patterns and reactions in order to know which target will open. Patience is needed.
3. Applying seme may also cause the opponent to attack. The delayed step doubles as seme to probe the opponent and as the start of an attack, giving the jōdan player an advantage against reactionary offense. Jōdan players must be ready to strike any opening they force from a reaction based, offensive or defensive opponent.<sup>71, 72</sup>
4. The issun no seme step with delay should be small so as not to hinder movement or make it awkward to change direction as needed.

### KEY POINT: EFFECTIVE USE OF THIS STRATEGY

Jōdan players combine basic attacks, movement, and seme to keep the opponent from determining patterns or intent, e.g., a mix of:

#### Basic Seme

Threaten men → strike men  
Threaten kote → strike kote

#### Advanced Seme

Threaten men → strike kote  
Threaten kote → strike men

#### Movement<sup>73</sup>

Move right drawing focus → opponent pivots → strike/threaten kote  
Move left drawing focus → opponent pivots → strike/threaten men

### DRAWING THE OPPONENT'S FOCUS

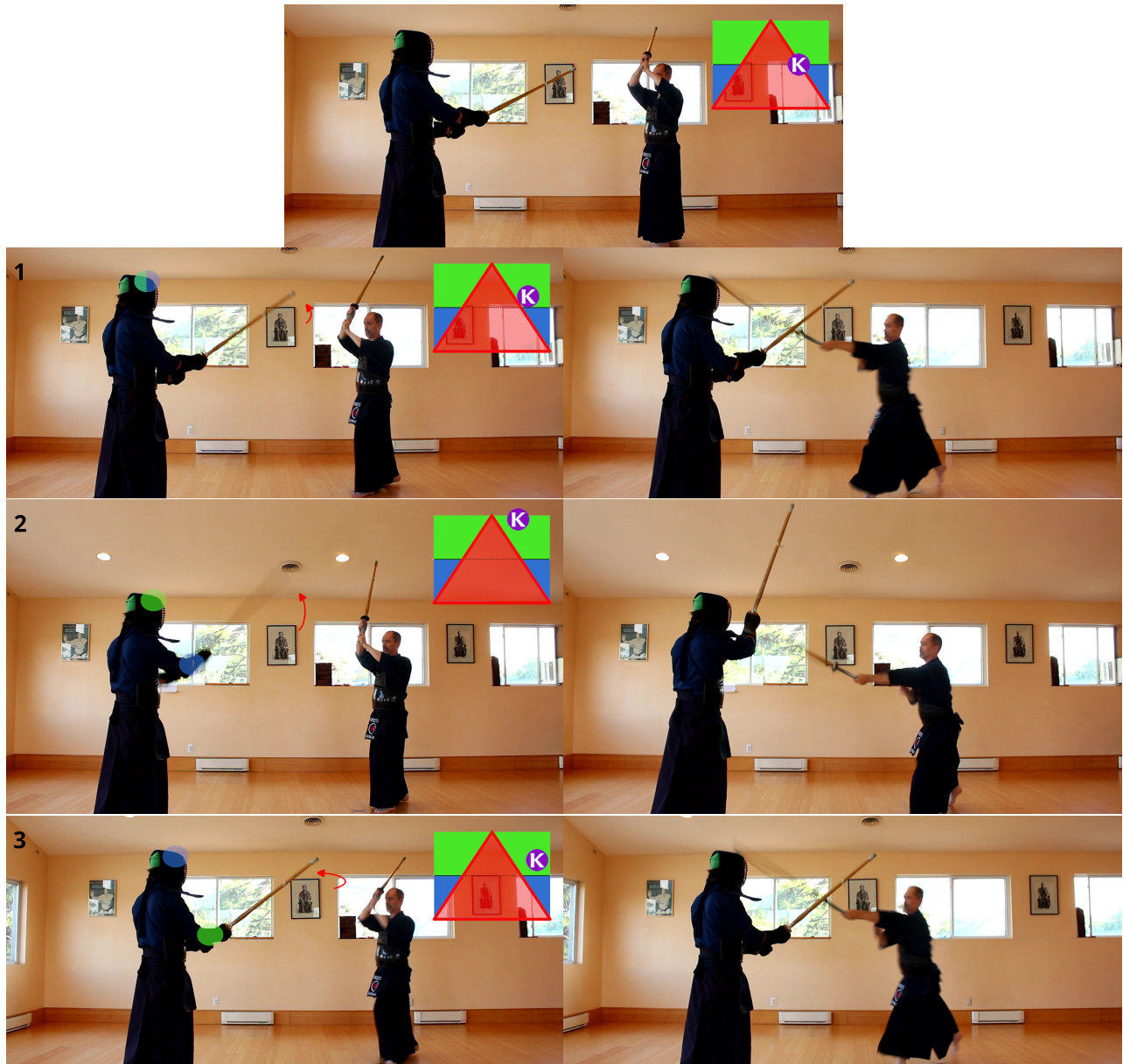
Drawing the opponent's focus isn't only done by inducing defense via threat of attack, it can be anything that distracts from offensive readiness, e.g., movement. If the jōdan player steps right, opponents focused on position will pivot to re-align their seigan position. The moment they begin to pivot kote can be made vulnerable by taking a diagonal step to the left, using an S-kote, or both. See *kendo Kurasawa hai-Barcelona* (2006). Similarly, men can be made vulnerable by the jōdan player first stepping to the left. However focus is drawn, it creates a mental *suki* during which the opponent's kensen can be pushed into the vulnerable portion. See **KEY POINTS: SŪKI VS. AN "OPENING"**, p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> E.g., initiating basic men or kote, using debana, uchi-otoshi, or nuki waza. In the very least, ai-uchi.

<sup>72</sup> This preparedness to attack is a key aspect of jōdan and will not adequately develop passively; it must be *intentionally* practiced. This is hindered by any defensive intent and is part of the reason why blocking, retreating, etc., is discouraged for jōdan. See p. 9.

<sup>73</sup> Strike/threaten in these examples implies one can threaten a target, instead of striking directly, and choose an action according to the opponent reaction(s).





### KEY POINTS: SEME & MOVEMENT CREATE OPPORTUNITIES

1. If the opponent's kensen moves, due to offensive or defensive reactions to seme, the jōdan player can strike a target that opens.
2. If the jōdan player moves, the opponent will pivot to face them. Immediately moving back to their original position, the jōdan player forces the opponent's moving kensen into a vulnerable position, e.g., step to the right to force a pivot. During their pivot step back to the left, pushing the kensen into a vulnerable kote position, and strike.
3. Combining these two methods is fundamental to creating openings.

*Figure 51:* Basic examples of threatening one, striking the other. The jōdan player begins at issoku-ittō no maei, the opponent's kensen on the targeting area boundary (inset). (1) A basic strike: the jōdan player (Green) threatens men and (Blue) strikes men. (2) Threaten men, strike kote: the jōdan player (Green) threatens men. As the opponent (Red) reacts their (Blue & inset) kote opens which the jōdan player strikes. (3) Threaten kote, strike men: the jōdan player (Green) threatens kote. As the opponent (Red) reacts their (Blue & inset) men opens which the jōdan player strikes.

## Making use of Applied Seme

Using a mix of threaten men→ strike kote, threaten kote→ strike men combined with threaten men→ strike men, threaten kote→ strike kote, as well as movement to draw focus is an effective method to create opportunities. See **KEY POINTS: EFFECTIVE USE OF THIS STRATEGY**, p. 49.

The idea is to place the opponent in a position where they can't protect both targets and at the same time don't know which target the jōdan player will strike.<sup>74, 75</sup> This creates a situation where the opponent will be forced to react: they will either retreat, alter their kamae to try and protect themselves, defensively wait to attempt an ōji waza, or initiate a rushed attack.<sup>76</sup>

When the opponent is put into this position, the jōdan player must be prepared to deal with these reactions from the opponent.

*Opponent retreats.* The jōdan player can simply follow them continuing their pressure or attack if an opening appears.<sup>77</sup>

*Opponent alters kamae.* If the opponent begins to alter their kamae to attempt to protect themselves, e.g., right and left seigan, a temporary katate kamae, pre-emptive blocking, etc., this then opens up additional targets for the jōdan player to strike, e.g., dō, gyaku-dō, or even tsuki.

*Opponent intends ōji waza.* By becoming defensive and waiting to attempt ōji waza the opponent has placed themselves into an even more dangerous position.<sup>78</sup> The jōdan player can feign an attack, forcing a reactionary ōji attempt, and striking any exposed targets.

*Opponent rushes to attack.* Under effective pressure an opponent may become impatient enough to attack at improper opportunities.<sup>79</sup> The jōdan player can strike ai-uchi or use one of several waza: debana waza, uchi-otoshi waza, nuki waza, etc.

### KEY POINT: OFFENSE EXTENDS STRIKING OPTIONS

Once the the opponent is affected by seme, i.e., pushed toward a defensive or reactionary mindset, more targets and opportunities become available. But the threat of katate men and kote *must be established first*.

<sup>74</sup> Both targets refers to the primary targets for jōdan: katate men & kote.

<sup>75</sup> This requires the opponent to already be somewhat affected by seme, i.e., they are being pushed toward a defensive or reactionary mindset.

<sup>76</sup> This is the general outcome of effective seme regardless of kamae, however it is of central importance to jōdan due to the kamae's inherent disadvantage, i.e., exposed targets and no forward positioned kensen.

<sup>77</sup> This is a prime example of when a jōdan player can use tsugi-ashi: the opponent is set on defense and/or retreat. The initial foot motion can serve as seme to induce the opponent to retreat or block, at which point the jōdan player can attack with extended range from the tsugi-ashi. See pp. 27–29.

<sup>78</sup> Defensively *waiting* to attempt an ōji waza vs. *inviting* or *luring* the opponent to attack via seme and responding with an ōji waza are very different. The success of the former is based more on luck, while the latter is based on controlling the opponent, i.e., [katsujin-ken](#).

<sup>79</sup> A rushed attack, attacking at a moment when they are not in control, attacking when lured by the opponent, etc., are all examples of this. When under effective pressure kendōka will often desperately initiate an attack, or be baited by a lure or false opportunity, to try and exit their opponent's seme or reestablish some control. This is the scenario shidachi creates in tachi kata: ropponme, p. 83.

# WAZA FROM JŌDAN

ASIDE FROM BASIC MEN and kote the majority of jōdan waza are shikake waza however there are a few ōji waza which are central.

## SHIKAKE WAZA

### Basic Shikake Waza

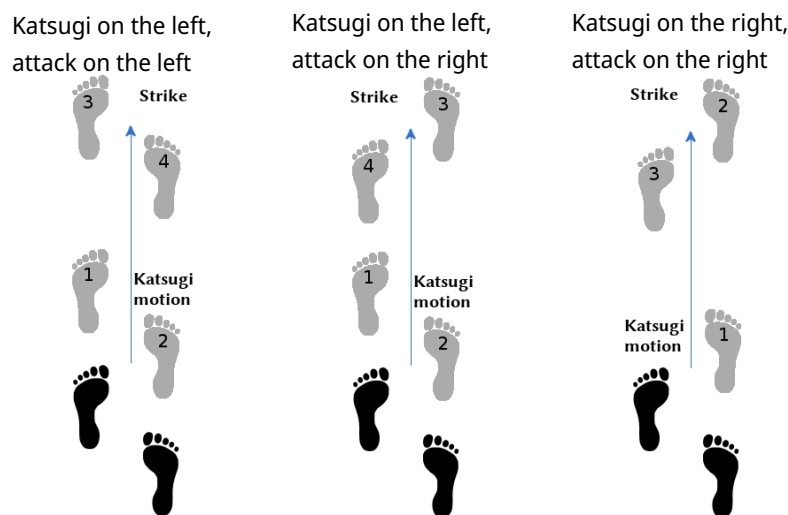
*Ai-uchi.* Ai-uchi, *simultaneous strikes*, while not a specific waza, should be a *primary intent* when attacking until one gains the ability to use debana waza correctly.<sup>80</sup> As jōdan is an aggressive kamae the intent is, *at a minimum*, to strike at the same time the opponent attacks.

#### KEY POINT: AI-UCHI

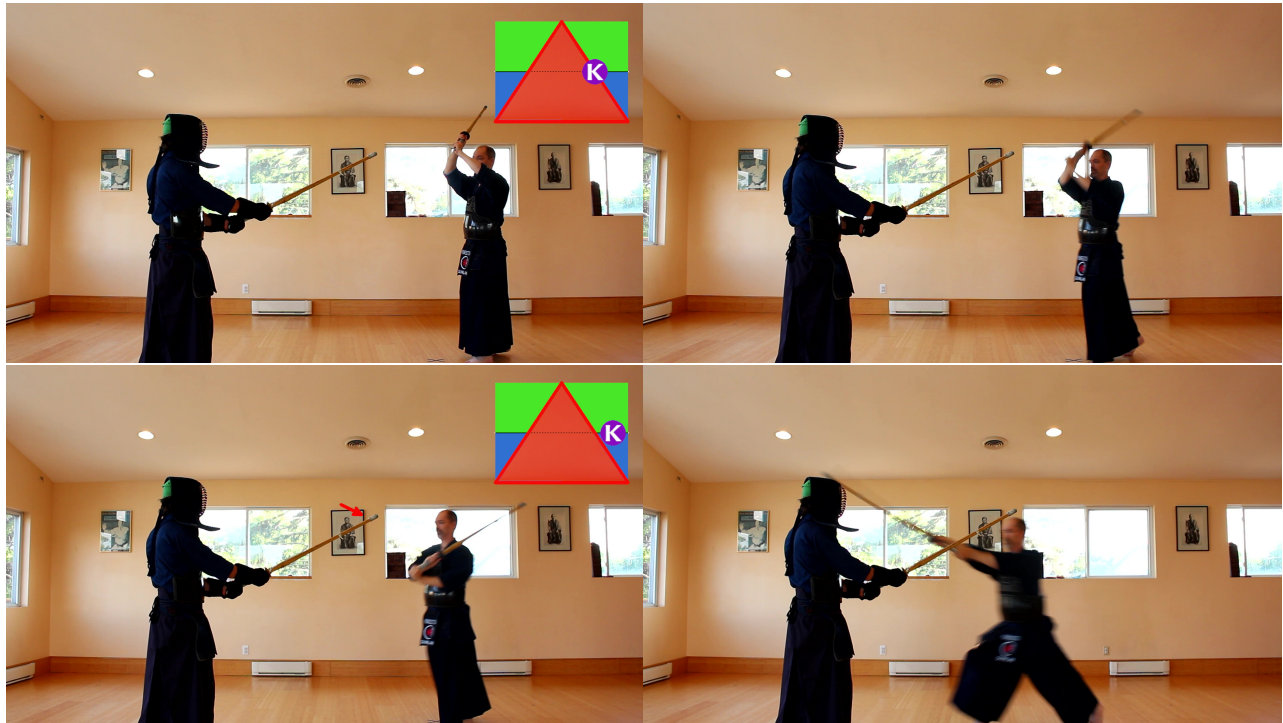
*Intending ai-uchi* is a mindset that must be fostered early for jōdan players as it builds the mentality of offense as defense.

<sup>80</sup> Ai-uchi is not a particular type of waza. However it has purposely, and admittedly incorrectly, been listed under shikake waza due to the important mentality of initiating an attack with jōdan. Ai-uchi can, and should, occur attempting either shikake or ōji waza from jōdan.

*Katsugi waza.* Katsugi waza is easily used from jōdan. It creates a large physical motion similar to certain kote strikes, p. 47, pressuring the opponent during seme-ai. There are several footwork variations.



*Figure 52:* Common variations for katsugi waza from jōdan. (Left) The katsugi motion is done during a forward, left-footed step and the attack is also made on the left. (Center) The katsugi motion is made during a left-footed step but the attack is made by cross-stepping onto the right. (Right) The katsugi motion is made by cross-stepping onto the right foot and the attack is then made again on the right.



#### KEY POINTS: KATSUGI WAZA

1. The goal of katsugi waza is producing some type of reaction, usually momentary hesitation, loss of focus, or a defensive action, from the opponent by providing an explicit visual cue during seme. Because of the dependence on the katsugi motion, this waza will often only be effective once during an encounter with a given opponent and *usually only against one that is already defensive or affected by seme.*
2. The amount of time between the katsugi motion and when one transitions to an attack may be longer or shorter depending on how reactionary the opponent is. Too short and it may not be enough time for the visual cue to register with the opponent, too long and the jōdan player exposes themselves to counter-attack. During this time the jōdan player must decide whether or not the attempt should be made.
3. The side on which the katsugi motion is performed, the height and angle of the shinai, etc., create different visual cues in order to shift the opponent's focus to specific targets, e.g., to specifically make them defend their kote.

*Figure 53: Attacking men using a left side katsugi waza and attacking with a cross-step. (Top) The opponent's kensen (inset) is on the border of the targeting area, protecting their kote. Seme is applied by beginning a step forward on the left foot and pressing the tsuka-gashira on the centerline. (Bottom) The shinai is brought over the left shoulder mimicking a threat to the opponent's kote. This overt visual cue causes the opponent to become defensive and (Red) move their kensen to protect kote. This places it (inset) into a vulnerable men position. The jōdan player then cross-steps onto the right foot and strikes morote men.*



## Nidan Waza

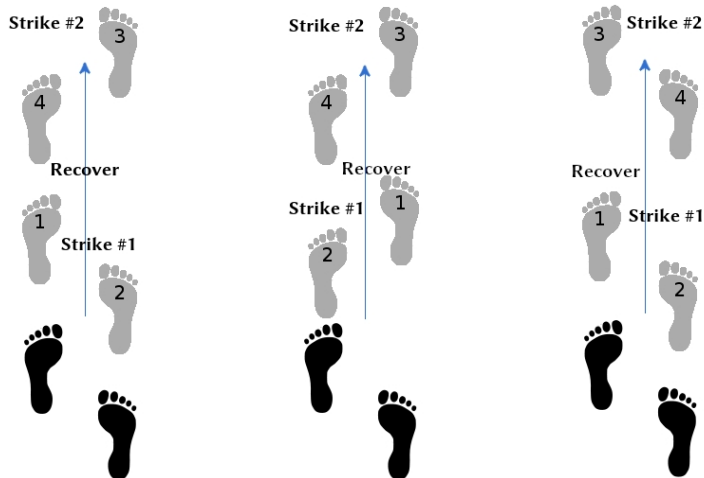
**Nidan waza** allows the jōdan player to have more offensive options to help avoid pattern recognition, and adapt to the opponent's reactions.

*Morote kote* → *men* & *men* → *dō*. These are done in the same way as for chūdan however there are several footwork variations.

Strike #1: left foot  
Strike #2: cross-step

Strike #1: cross-step  
Strike #2: right foot

Strike #1: left foot  
Strike #2: left foot



**Figure 54:** Common footwork variations for *morote kote* → *men* and *men* → *dō*. (Left) Strike #1 is done on the left foot, strike #2 is done by cross-stepping onto the right. (Center) Strike #1 is done by cross-stepping on the right followed by strike #2 which is done on the right as well, and (Right) strike #1 is done on the left foot, strike #2 is on the left as well. **Note:** Recover indicates the feet should come fully to their finish position before beginning the next strike. This is a common feature for all multi-step waza.

### KEY POINT: STRIKING ON THE LEFT FOOT OR CROSS-STEPPING

A cross-step onto the right can be used to cover large distances, but is slower to initiate than attacking on the left foot.



**Figure 55:** *Morote kote* → *men* using a left foot → right cross-step. The jōdan player steps forward on the left foot and attacks with *morote kote*. Then, cross-stepping onto the right, they attack *morote men*.



*Figure 56:* Morote men→ dō using a left foot→ right cross-step. The jōdan player steps forward on the left foot attacking morote men. As the opponent blocks the attack the jōdan player cross-steps onto their right and attacks morote dō.

## Advanced Waza

Strike #1: left foot  
Strike #2: cross-step



Strike #1: left foot  
Strike #2: diagonal cross-step



Strike #1: diagonal left  
Strike #2: cross-step



Strike #1: diagonal left  
Strike #2: diagonal cross-step



### KEY POINT: FOOTWORK FOR ADVANCED MOROTE WAZA

Stepping diagonally left for a tilting kote is common against opponents who invade the jōdan player's maai in seigan, straight kote for those who react defensively attempting the same. Diagonal cross-stepping is best used after a large step to the left for kote, for hidari sayū-men strikes, or as a visual cue to elicit a reaction, e.g., for gyaku-dō.

*Figure 57:* Footwork variations for advanced morote nidan waza. (Left to Right) Strike #1 on the left foot, strike #2 by cross-stepping; strike #1 on the left foot, strike #2 by diagonal cross-stepping; strike #1 by stepping diagonally on the left foot, strike #2 by cross-stepping; and strike #1 by stepping diagonally on the left foot, strike #2 by diagonal cross-stepping. Note: The motions here are schematics only; the ranges and angles will differ in practice.

*Tilting kote*→ *men*. Extending the tilting kote, p. 28, into a kote→ *men* waza is done in a similar way to the basic morote kote→ *men*.

#### KEY POINT: TILTING KOTE→ MEN

The footwork can be more complex than the basic kote→ *men* as one can use a straight or diagonal step *with the first and/or second strike*, as well as combining cross-stepping *with the first and/or second strike*.

*Men*→ *gyaku-dō*. This is often used against defensive opponents or those attempting to invade the jōdan player's maei but with a defensively reactionary mindset. The jōdan player mimics a *men* attack and the opponent reacts with an uncertain ōji waza, or by blocking, exposing their *gyaku-dō*.



#### KEY POINT: MEN→ GYAKU-DŌ & OPPONENT REACTION

As san-pō-mamori is a common tactic against jōdan, *gyaku-dō* is regularly exposed by opponents that react defensively. However the initial strike or motion from the jōdan player must be done such that it forces an *overt* defensive reaction from the opponent that fully exposes their *gyaku-dō*, otherwise it may not be considered a valid strike.

*Figure 58: Morote men*→ *gyaku-dō* using a left foot→ right cross-step. (Top) Against a defensive opponent the jōdan player implies a *men* strike by beginning the attack on the left foot. The opponent attempts to block or intercept the *men* strike. (Bottom) As the opponent reacts the jōdan player withdraws the false *men* strike, cross-steps onto their right foot, and instead strikes the opponent's exposed *gyaku-dō*.



Harai-otoshi into a cross-step strike



Harai-otoshi into a left-footed strike



Katate strike into a cross-step morote strike



*Figure 59:* Common footwork for harai-otoshi into a morote strike and a nidan waza stemming from a katate strike. (Left to Right) Harai-otoshi followed with a strike by cross-stepping forward onto the right foot or by attacking on the left foot. The harai-otoshi is indicated by an H. After a missed or blocked katate strike, strike #1, the jōdan player can recover the shinai and immediately cross-step forward onto the right and strike with a morote waza, strike #2.

*Harai-otoshi waza.* **Harai-otoshi** is used to disrupt the opponent's kamae and create openings to strike.<sup>81</sup> The timing of the harai-otoshi into an attack is similar to that of a standard kote → men waza.

<sup>81</sup> Harai-otoshi is explicitly indicated here vs. harai waza as **harai-ageru** is not possible from jōdan.



#### KEY POINTS: HARAI-OTOSHI

1. The jōdan player's shinai should go no lower than hip level as this would make a follow-up attack too slow to take advantage of the opponent's disrupted kamae.
2. When a defensive opponent's kamae is disrupted they may retreat and/or block, if given the opportunity; pausing slightly, allowing the opponent to react, can create several openings.

#### KEY POINT: HARAI-OTOSHI – OPPORTUNITIES TO ATTACK OR REDIRECT

Rather than attack after harai-otoshi one can reposition themselves. This is used to proactively disrupt an aggressive opponent's advance.<sup>82</sup>

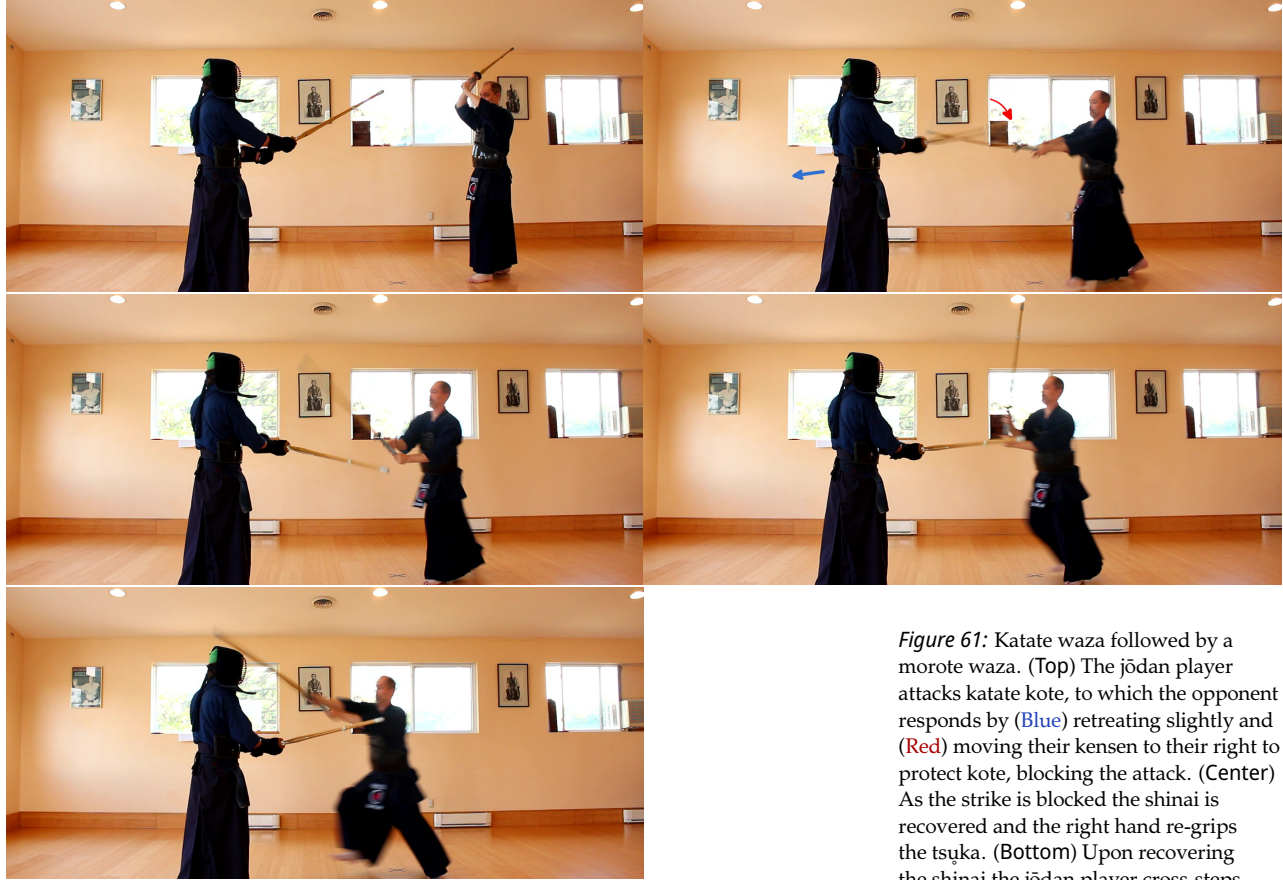
*Figure 60:* Harai-otoshi → morote men. (Top) The jōdan player, at the opponent's issoku ittō no maai, strikes the opponent's shinai downward disrupting their kamae. (Bottom) The jōdan player cross-steps onto the right foot and attacks morote men.

<sup>82</sup> See 前原正作(鹿兒島) - 寺地種寿(東京) 1990 全日本剣道選手権大会 (2014) for examples of frequent use of harai-otoshi.



*Katate strikes as nidan waza.* It is rare to see *nidan* or any *renzoku* katate strikes.<sup>83</sup> However katate waza can be mixed with morote waza; a common follow-up to a missed or blocked katate strike is to recover the shinai and make a morote strike. Common examples would be katate kote → morote men and katate men → morote dō.

<sup>83</sup> There are always exceptions. A high level jōdan player and 2008 AJKF champion, Shodai Kenji, was well known for his *renzoku* katate strikes. In one particular match, he makes four katate men attacks in roughly two seconds, *Shodai Kenji vs Hara at 51. AJKF (2010)*.



*Figure 61: Katate waza followed by a morote waza. (Top) The jōdan player attacks katate kote, to which the opponent responds by (Blue) retreating slightly and (Red) moving their kensen to their right to protect kote, blocking the attack. (Center) As the strike is blocked the shinai is recovered and the right hand re-grips the tsuka. (Bottom) Upon recovering the shinai the jōdan player cross-steps onto the right foot, to cover the increased distance from the opponent's retreat, and attacks morote men.*

#### KEY POINT: KATATE STRIKES & NIDAN WAZA

Recovering the shinai is the most difficult aspect of this waza as it must be done quickly enough to make another attack before the opponent recovers but not in such a way that the initial strike is ambivalent. This requires strong *zanshin* in the most general sense of the term: mental *zanshin* after making the initial strike to determine if there is an opportunity for this waza, and strong physical *zanshin* to recover the shinai and be in a proper position, e.g., posture, feet, grip, to make a second attack.

## ŌJI WAZA

WHILE JŌDAN WILL PRIMARILY use shikake waza, there are a number of ōji waza that are central to strengthening jōdan's offensive capabilities by unifying shikake and ōji waza in a way that seems unique to jōdan.<sup>84</sup>

As there are only a few ōji waza available to jōdan, and because of the importance they play, more detail will be given to these than to the shikake waza listed previously.

### Debana waza

Debana waza, along with basic attacks and the intent of ai-uchi, make up the most important attack options for jōdan. Once experience with jōdan is gained, debana waza becomes the major focus and *ideally* replaces the occurrence of ai-uchi.

Debana katate men or kote plays into the strengths of jōdan, however morote debana waza is equally useful should the maai become too close.

With morote debana waza one can use a left-footed step or cross onto the right while with katate debana waza the footwork is with a left-footed step. See pp. 27 and 29 respectively.



<sup>84</sup> Aside from the fact that they both originate from applied seme, *unifying shikake and ōji waza* here refers to unifying the two into one motion. See p. 72.

### MINIMUM KATATE ISSOKU ITTŌ

Jōdan has a very special maai that must be learned in order to make the most out of ōji waza: the minimum katate waza issoku ittō no maai. This is where the jōdan player can strike katate waza without being cramped or awkward while still at a range where a *chūdan* opponent is able to make an attack. Knowing this distance allows the jōdan player to use katate waza in some of their important ōji waza. The jōdan player must shorten their usual step size somewhat at this closer maai in order to strike correctly with the longer reaching katate waza. This is also why jōdan players will often use a temporarily widened foot position, p. 42; by hindering their mobility with a widened stance at their minimum katate issoku ittō they in effect can automatically adjust their footwork size. Finding this distance and being able to adjust the length of one's step requires practice.

### KEY POINTS: DEBANA WAZA

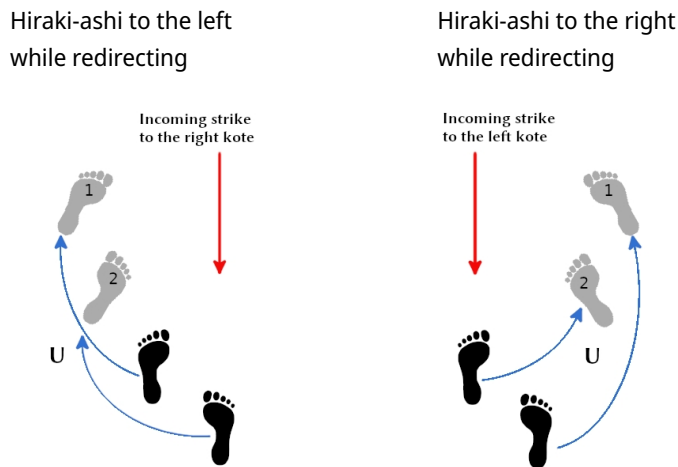
1. As with all ōji waza, debana waza success relies on controlling the opponent, i.e., dictating when they attack; *they must actively be forced or invited to attack a target at a time dictated to them.*
2. A *very well timed* debana waza will result in the opponent's attack being disrupted without a deflection, their attack often appearing as a motion that begins, "stutters", and stops; their attack motion never fully occurs.

*Figure 62: Kote, (katate) debana men. (Top) From seme-ai, the jōdan player is prepared to strike from their minimum issoku ittō no maai. (Bottom) The jōdan player invites the opponent to attack through seme. The opponent responds and begins to make a hidari kote strike. Prepared for this action, the jōdan player initiates a (katate) attack, striking with debana men. In this example the opponent's attack is disrupted before it fully initiates.*

## Uchi-otoshi waza.

This is an important waza as it offers multiple options: it can disrupt a strike allowing counter-attacks, or be used to redirect and move into an advantageous position.<sup>85</sup>

*Uchi-otoshi purely for redirection.* When using uchi-otoshi to redirect an attack and reposition oneself, i.e., no counter-attack is made, it is often done using *hiraki-ashi*.<sup>86</sup> Movement is to the right for an attack made to the left kote; toward the left for an attack made to the right kote.

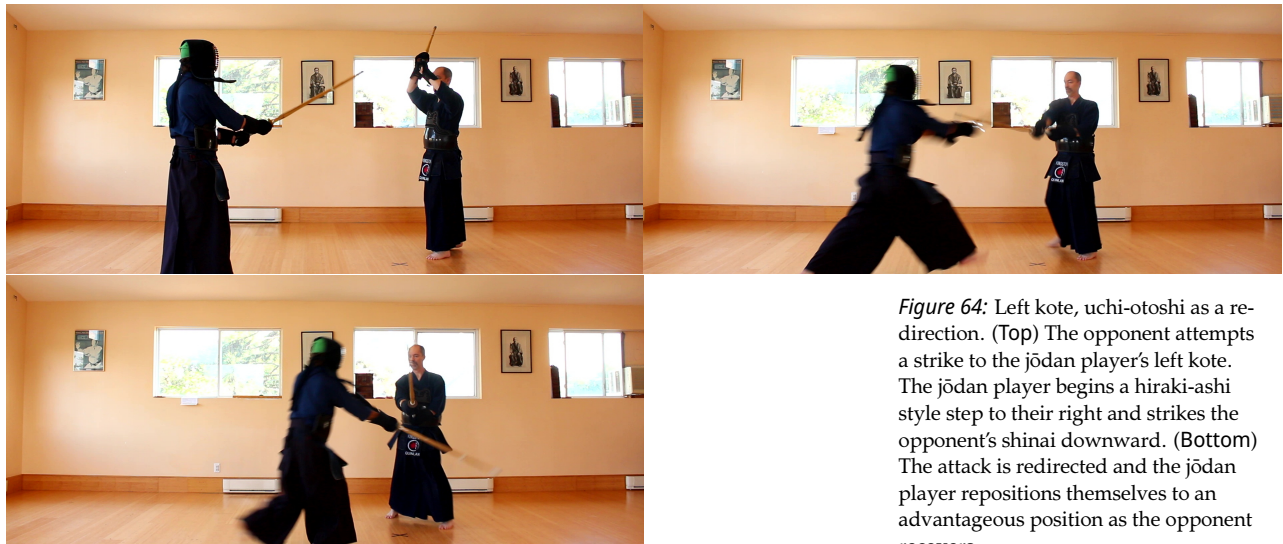


**Note:** All uchi-otoshi waza are morote waza save for tsuki→ uchi-otoshi men which can be morote or katate. See p. 63

<sup>85</sup> The two most common uchi-otoshi waza with jōdan to make a counter-attack are kote→ uchi-otoshi men and tsuki→ uchi-otoshi men.

<sup>86</sup> The term *redirect* implies the strike and/or opponent is moved in another direction. At the same time one moves the body off of the original line of attack and repositions themselves to an advantageous position ready to attack.

*Figure 63:* Hiraki-ashi to the left and to the right during uchi-otoshi as redirection. When the opponent attempts to (Left) strike the right kote hiraki-ashi to the left is used during uchi-otoshi. When an attack (Right) to the left kote is made hiraki-ashi to the right is used. This redirects the opponent's strike while also moving the jōdan player off the line of attack, giving them an opportunity to reposition themselves into an advantageous position as the opponent recovers. The point at which the uchi-otoshi roughly occurs is indicated by a U.



*Figure 64:* Left kote, uchi-otoshi as a redirection. (Top) The opponent attempts a strike to the jōdan player's left kote. The jōdan player begins a hiraki-ashi style step to their right and strikes the opponent's shinai downward. (Bottom) The attack is redirected and the jōdan player repositions themselves to an advantageous position as the opponent recovers.

### KEY POINT: UCHI-OTOSHI

For attacks to the left kote uchi-otoshi is done by striking their shinai down and to the left; down and to the right for attacks to the right kote.



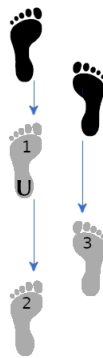


*Kote*→ *uchi-otoshi men*. Shinai motion is the same as with redirection but there are several footwork options when a counter-attack is attempted. Which is used is based on preference, timing, distance, etc.

Cross-step back,  
forward strike



Cross-step back,  
hiki-waza



Stationary uchi-otoshi,  
forward strike



With an attack to the left kote, cross-stepping back on the left foot gives the jōdan player more room to perform the counter-attack. The following men strike can then be done on the right foot, either as a forward moving men or as a hiki-men.<sup>87, 88</sup> The options are the same with attacks to the right kote but the timing is more strict as the opponent often closer.

#### KEY POINT: FOOTWORK FOR UCHI-OTOSHI→ COUNTER-ATTACK

Hiraki-ashi as shown above for redirection, p. 60, can be used for counter-attacking as well as the footwork given here.

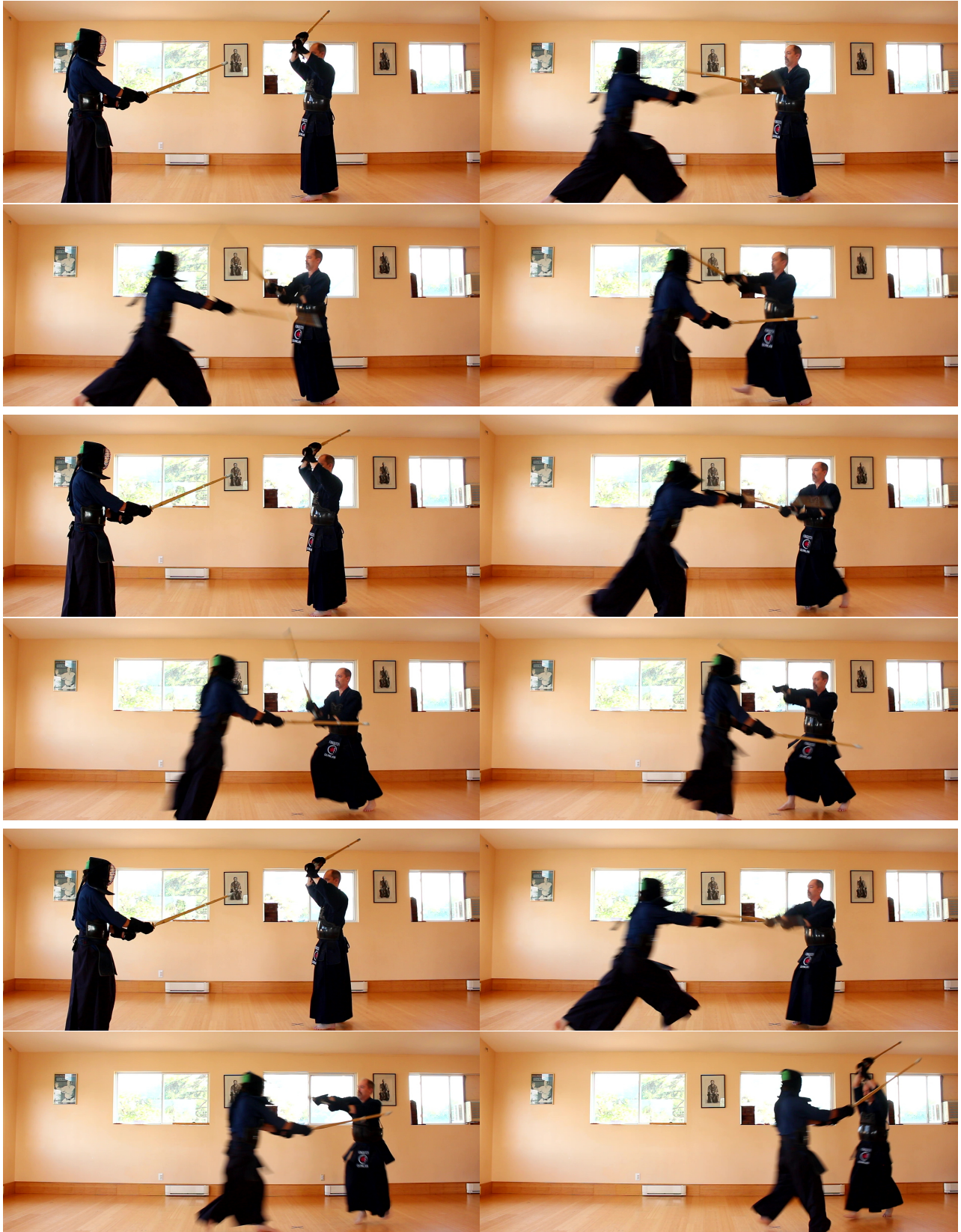
*Figure 65:* Right kote, uchi-otoshi as a re-direction. (Top) The opponent attempts a strike to the jōdan player's right kote. The jōdan player begins a hiraki-ashi style step to their left. (Bottom) The jōdan player strikes the opponent's shinai downward. The attack is redirected and the jōdan player repositions themselves to an advantageous position as the opponent recovers.

*Figure 66:* Basic footwork and counter-attack combinations for kote→ uchi-otoshi men. (Left) Uchi-otoshi while cross-stepping back on the left foot then attacking by moving forward on the right foot, (Center) uchi-otoshi while cross-stepping back on the left foot then attacking with a hiki-waza on the right foot, (Right) uchi-otoshi while stationary and then attacking by moving forward on the left foot. The point at which the uchi-otoshi roughly occurs is indicated by a U. The footwork shown here are the most basic, linear versions. Diagonal motions to the left or right can be used as well as hiraki-ashi.

<sup>87</sup> Which attack depends on distance, speed of the opponent, etc.

<sup>88</sup> The uchi-otoshi and following attack, forward moving or with hiki-waza, can be done with the left or right foot forward.





*Figure 67: Left kote, uchi-otoshi men with various footwork. Uchi-otoshi men with (Top) a forward cross-step, (Center) a cross-step back and forward strike, (Bottom) a cross-step back into hiki-waza.*

*Tsuki, uchi-otoshi* → *redirection/counter-attack*. Tsuki can be redirected and/or counter-attacked with uchi-otoshi much like with kote attacks using any of the kote→ uchi-otoshi men footwork variations. But this is a *wasted opportunity* as jōdan has a more efficient method: attack men. To understand this consider:

1. Tsuki is a relatively unstable attack in that it is easily deflected regardless as to whether it is done as katate or morote.
2. Against jōdan tsuki has almost no variation allowing the jōdan player to always know the angle of the thrust.<sup>89</sup>
3. When a jōdan player attacks men, from a shizentai or square posture, *the left hand travels on the centerline in front of their tsuki-dare*.

Given the above, a well timed attack to the opponent's men *acts as an automatic uchi-otoshi waza* with the bottom of the left fist knocking the tsuki downward as a men strike is made. *This is a crucial waza for jōdan*.

### Jōdan's Specialized Tsuki→ Uchi-Otoshi Men

When the opponent attacks tsuki, the uchi-otoshi motion is done by using the bottom of the left hand to hit the attack downward as the jōdan player attacks men. *The timing for this is critical*.

<sup>89</sup> In chūdan vs. chūdan there are *ura* and *omote* tsuki which are slightly angled to attack from either side of the opponent's shinai. However these don't readily apply to jōdan as there is no forward positioned shinai.

#### ONE MOTION VS. TWO

The jōdan specific version of uchi-otoshi used against tsuki is more efficient as the standard version is a *nidan waza*, i.e., it has two distinct actions, the uchi-otoshi motion followed by a strike. Because the standard uchi-otoshi counter-attack occurs on the second motion (1) there is an extra window in which the opponent *could* defend themselves, and (2) the forward motion of the opponent during the first and second motions can interfere with the timing and accuracy of the counter-attack. The jōdan specific uchi-otoshi bypasses these issues.



Left-footed strike



Cross-step & strike

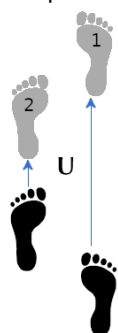


Figure 68: Katate tsuki, uchi-otoshi (katate) men. From *Chiba Sensei's 'Kendo Perfect Master' – Jōdan* (2017), the bottom of the left hand is used to perform uchi-otoshi waza against tsuki by making a katate men strike from jōdan.

Figure 69: Footwork combinations for the jōdan specific tsuki→ uchi-otoshi men. For this style of uchi-otoshi the waza can be done by attacking on the left foot or by cross-stepping onto the right. The timing of the uchi-otoshi is different than the standard uchi-otoshi waza; the uchi-otoshi occurs *during* the men strike for the jōdan specific version vs. before in the standard. The point at which the uchi-otoshi roughly occurs is indicated by a U.



*Katate tsuki*→ *uchi-otoshi men*. If the opponent attacks with katate tsuki, the jōdan player can respond with uchi-otoshi men with a katate or morote men strike.

If using morote men, the jōdan player will usually have to use a cross-step on the right foot in order to reach the opponent due to katate tsuki's increased range. With katate men, the standard left footed step is used.

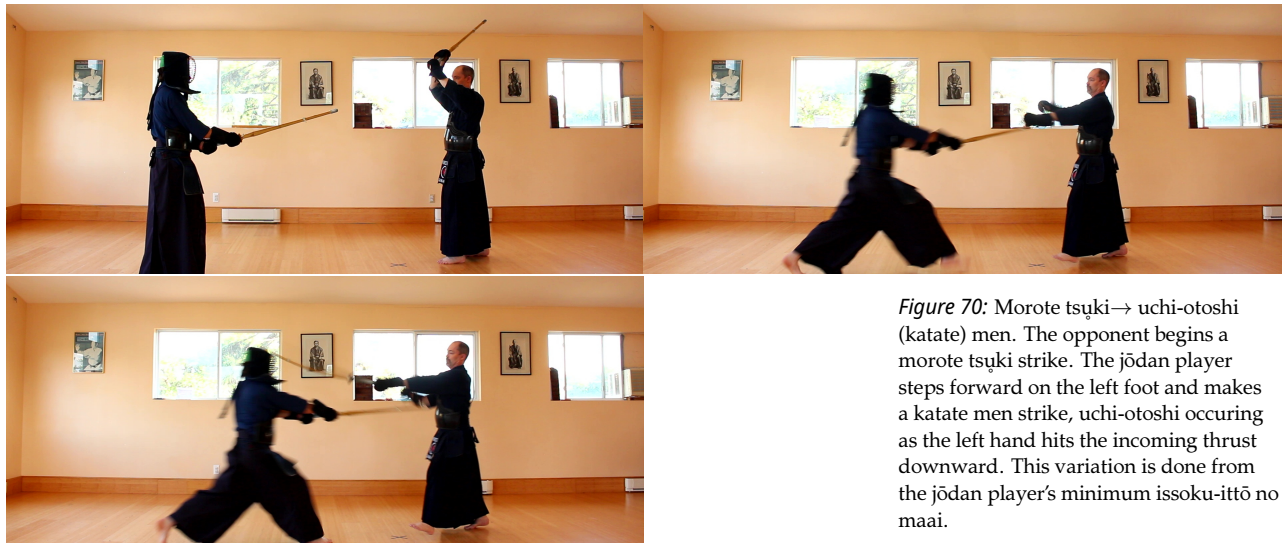
*Morote tsuki*→ *uchi-otoshi men*. If attacked with morote tsuki, uchi-otoshi is usually done with a morote men as it is easier than katate men. However if the jōdan player is at their minimum katate issoku ittō, see p. 59, then katate men could be used effectively. Morote men can be done using a left-footed step or a cross-step onto the right.

#### KEY POINTS: TSUKI→ UCHI-OTOSHI MEN

1. Katate tsuki is deflected easily. Even if the uchi-otoshi timing isn't perfect, often it is enough to disrupt the attempt.
2. The opponent should never be so close to make katate men for tsuki→ uchi-otoshi men nonviable. A jōdan player should preemptively attack, use harai-otoshi, etc., before allowing the opponent to move this close.

#### STEPPING INTO TSUKI

A basic method for jōdan players to learn to deal with tsuki early on is to forcefully *step into it* with the intention of collapsing the thrust. By stepping in the kensen connects early; the opponent will not have done te-no-uchi and their elbow(s) are still bent. This impact against an improperly supported shinai mid-thrust will disrupt it at the weakest point: the wrists. The attacker's hands will be pushed down or off to the side at an odd angle, especially katate tsuki, collapsing the thrust. This will (1) never be *yūkō-datotsu*, and (2) fosters a fearlessness against tsuki. This is a natural stepping stone to learning the specialized tsuki→ uchi-otoshi men.



*Figure 70:* Morote tsuki→ uchi-otoshi (katate) men. The opponent begins a morote tsuki strike. The jōdan player steps forward on the left foot and makes a katate men strike, uchi-otoshi occurring as the left hand hits the incoming thrust downward. This variation is done from the jōdan player's minimum issoku-ittō no maai.



*Figure 71:* Morote tsuki→ uchi-otoshi (morote) men. The opponent begins a morote tsuki strike. The jōdan player cross-steps forward on the right foot and makes a morote men strike, uchi-otoshi occurring as the left hand hits the incoming thrust downward.

## Nuki Waza

Nuki waza is another important waza for jōdan as it allows one to evade attacks to the most common targets: left kote, right kote, and tsuki.

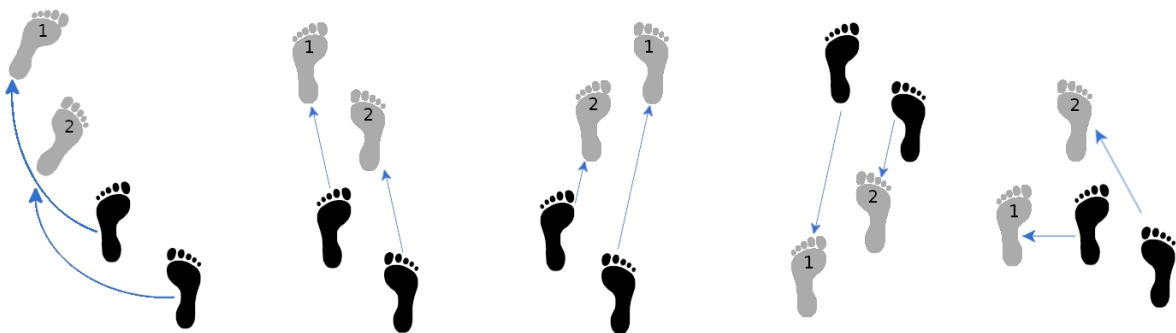
Hiraki-ashi to the forward-left

Diagonal step to the forward-left

Diagonal cross-step to the forward-right

Diagonal cross-step to the rear-left

Half-step to the left into a cross-step



*Tsuki→ nuki men.* This waza can be used against morote or katate tsuki, however against morote tsuki the timing is strict and the jōdan player must be familiar with their minimum issoku ittō distance, see p. 59.

When the opponent attacks with tsuki the jōdan player responds by attacking with katate migi sayū-men using hiraki-ashi, or a diagonal step, to the forward left. This step moves the tsuki-dare off of the line of attack allowing the jōdan player to avoid the thrust.

### KEY POINT: MOROTE MIGI SAYŪ-MEN

Morote migi sayū-men can be used but often ends with the tsuki and the right sleeve of the gi entangled unless a large step is taken.

*Figure 72:* Footwork variations for tsuki→ nuki men and kote→ nuki dō/gyaku-dō. (Left to Right) Hiraki-ashi to the forward left, diagonal step to the forward left, diagonal cross-stepping to the forward right, cross-stepping back on the left foot, and taking a half-step to the left into a cross-step. Hiraki-ashi and the diagonal step to the forward left are used for tsuki→ nuki men, the diagonal step to the forward right is for hidari kote→ nuki dō, while the diagonal cross-step rearward and the half-step left into a cross-step are for migi kote→ nuki gyaku-dō.





*Figure 73:* Nuki waza against tsuki. The jōdan player is at their minimum issoku-ittō no maei and the opponent attempts a morote tsuki. Using hiraki-ashi their left the jōdan player strikes a katate migi sayū-men while also moving off of the line of attack. This same technique works against katate tsuki as well, with obvious changes to distance(s) and step size.

*Kote*→ *nuki dō*. This waza is often considered secondary to the other waza available to deal with kote strikes. There are two nuki dō waza available: hidari kote→ morote nuki dō and migi kote→ morote nuki gyaku-dō.



**KEY POINT: HIDARI KOTE, NUKI DŌ /MIGI KOTE, NUKI GYAKU-DŌ**

Nuki dō is best used against hidari kote while nuki gyaku-dō for migi kote. Interchanging these puts the jōdan player's men on the opponent's line of attack.

*Figure 74:* Kote, Nuki dō. (Top) As the opponent attacks hidari kote the jōdan player cross-steps to the right and strikes nuki dō. (Bottom) As the opponent attacks migi kote the jōdan player steps to the left and strikes nuki gyaku-dō.

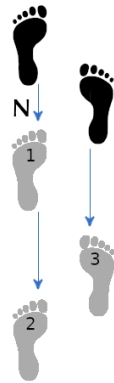
*Kote*→ *nuki men* There are two types of *kote*→ *nuki men* available to the *jōdan* player. Each has their own advantages and disadvantages.

As with *tsuki*→ *uchi-otoshi men*, *jōdan* has its own unique version of *kote*→ *nuki men* which is more efficient than the standard methods and plays into the strengths of the *kamae*.

Cross-step back into a forward strike



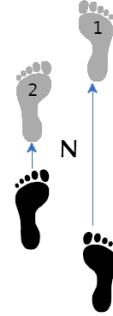
Cross-step back into a hiki-waza



Straight, left-footed strike



Cross-step forward & strike



*Figure 75:* Footwork combinations for *kote*→ *nuki men*. (Left to Right) Cross-stepping back on the left foot then moving forward attacking on the right, cross-stepping back on the left then attacking with *hiki-waza* from the right foot, attacking by stepping forward on the left foot, and attacking by cross-stepping forward on the right foot. The point at which the *nuki* roughly occurs is indicated by an N.

**Method #1: Pivoting the left *kote* backward.** The first method is well known, however the drawbacks to this method make it potentially the most risky against an opponent familiar with it.

The *jōdan* player, using the right hand as a pivot, rotates their left arm toward their left side, moving the *kote* away from the incoming strike.<sup>90</sup> This is often combined with a step to the rear. Once the strike misses, the hands return to center and the counter-attack to *men* immediately follows either by stepping forward or using a *hiki-waza*.

The specific drawback to this method is (1) it is only useful against an attack to the left *kote*, and (2) it explicitly opens the right *kote* to the opponent.<sup>91</sup> The advantage is that it is easy to perform and often effective.

**Method #2: Raising the hands.** This is the same style of *nuki waza* used in the *kata*.<sup>92</sup> It is the better of the two standard style *nuki waza* as it has none of the additional drawbacks the other method has and works for attacks made against either *kote*.

As the *kote* is attacked the hands are raised up and back, maintaining the proper *jōdan* angle, while taking a step to the rear. Once the strike misses the hands are returned to their proper position and the counter-attack follows immediately by stepping forward or using a *hiki-waza*.

#### KEY POINTS: ALTERING NUKI MEN TO OTHER TARGETS

1. Methods #1 and 2 for *kote*→ *nuki men* can easily be adapted to strike *kote*, *dō*, or *gyaku-dō*.

<sup>90</sup> This style of *nuki waza* becomes the motion for the false *nuki waza*, p. 10, when the *jōdan* player's intent becomes defensive.

<sup>91</sup> A common tactic for *chūdan* players is to force a *jōdan* opponent to attempt this *waza*, or induce a false *nuki*, via *seme*. The goal being to expose the right *kote* for an easy strike. See p. 98.

<sup>92</sup> *Tachi kata*: *ipponme*. See p. 76.

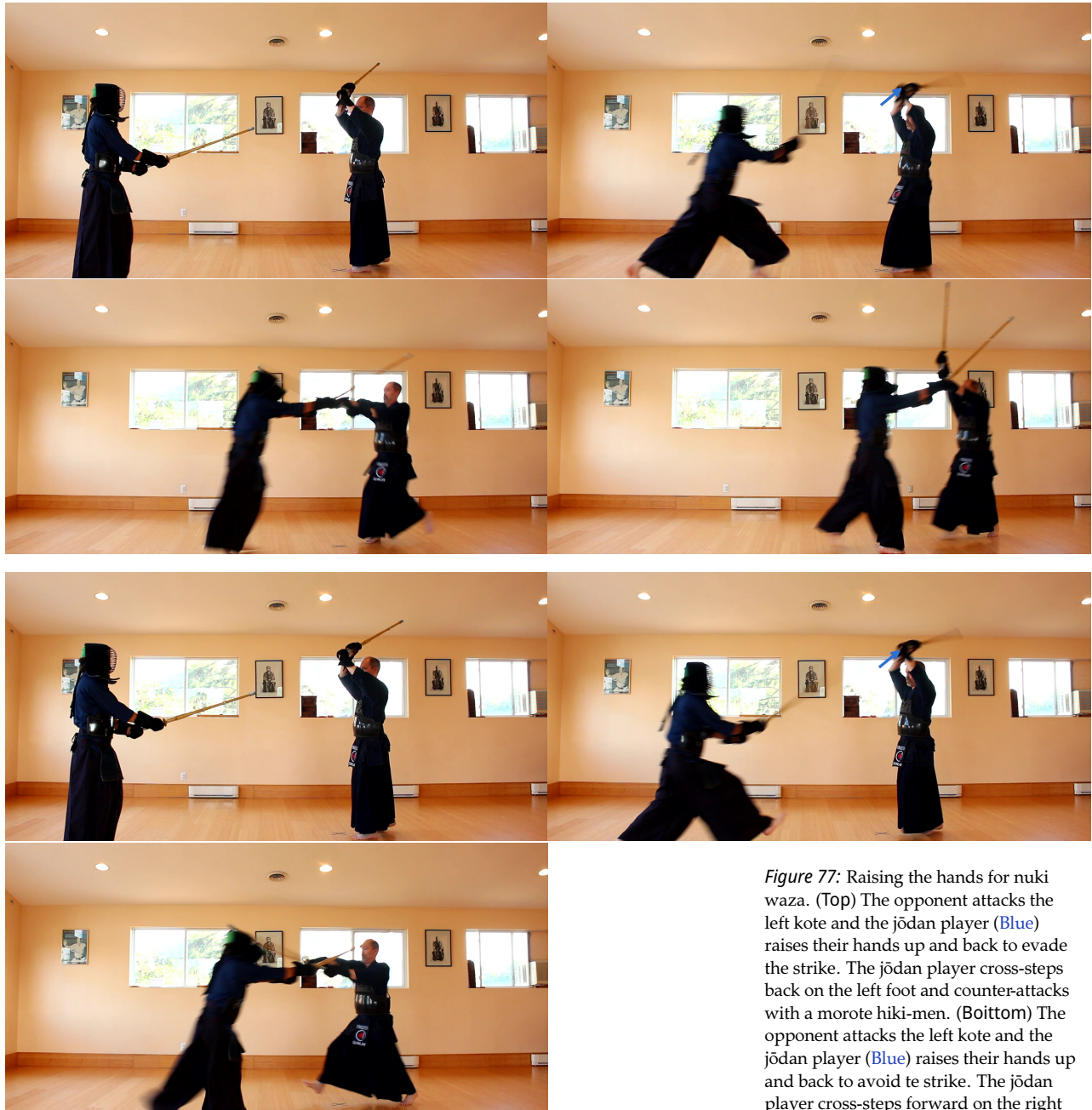


*Figure 76: Pivoting the kote for nuki waza. (Top) The opponent attacks left kote and the jōdan player (Blue) pivots the kote backward to evade the strike. The jōdan player cross-steps back on the left foot and counter-attacks with a morote hiki-men. (Bottom) The opponent attacks left kote and the jōdan player (Blue) pivots the kote backward to evade the strike. The jōdan player then cross-steps forward on the right and strikes morote men.*

#### KEY POINT: PIVOTING THE KOTE

This waza is the origin of the false nuki defensive motion, p. 10. Care must be taken as most chūdan players will recognize this style of nuki waza as an opportunity to strike the right kote by drawing out the pivot through applied seme toward the left kote.





*Figure 77: Raising the hands for nuki waza. (Top) The opponent attacks the left kote and the jōdan player (Blue) raises their hands up and back to evade the strike. The jōdan player cross-steps back on the left foot and counter-attacks with a morote hiki-men. (Bottom) The opponent attacks the left kote and the jōdan player (Blue) raises their hands up and back to avoid the strike. The jōdan player cross-steps forward on the right foot and counter-attacks with morote men.*

#### KEY POINT: RAISING THE HANDS

This style of nuki waza evades attacks to both the left and right kote.

#### KEY POINT: PIVOT & RAISING NUKI WAZA VULNERABILITY

Both of these methods for nuki waza are effective, however both leave tsuki open to attack. If a nuki waza is drawn out by the opponent's seme they can create an opportunity for a thrust.



## Jōdan's Specialized Kote→ Nuki Men

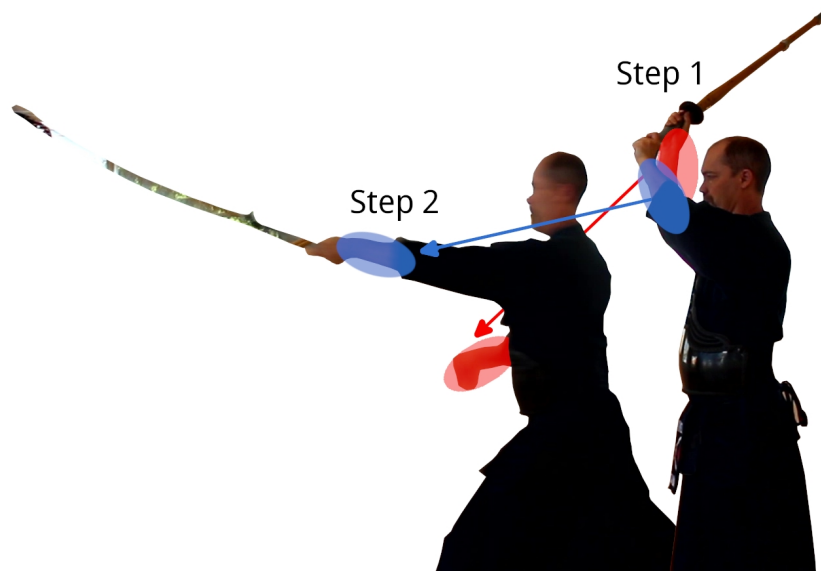
Like the tsuki→ uchi-otoshi men, jōdan has a unique version of kote→ nuki men that is more efficient than the other methods: step forward and attack with katate or morote men.<sup>93</sup> To understand this consider:

1. When either kote is attacked, the opponent aims at a certain position; roughly the level of sayū-men. With nuki waza the target moves from that position, evading the strike, and a counter-attack is then made before the opponent can recover.
2. When a jōdan player attacks men, the left hand moves roughly to chest height and the right moves either to the waist (katate) or roughly shoulder level (morote). In each both kote move from the opponent's intended target area(s) resulting in an *automatic nuki waza*.

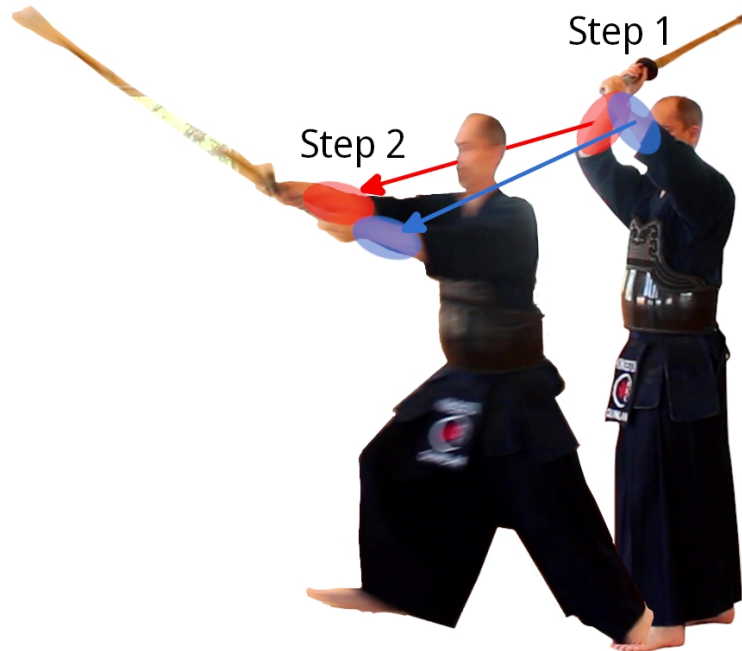
<sup>93</sup> The size of the step and the timing will have to be adjusted according to the distance and the opponent. For katate men in particular, the jōdan player must be familiar with their minimum issoku itto no maai, p. 59

### KEY POINT: HAND POSITION & KATATE STRIKES AS NUKI WAZA

Using katate men strikes as a nuki waza becomes exceedingly more difficult the lower the jōdan player positions their hands while in kamae. *The lower the hands, the smaller the distance they move away from the opponent's intended target area when striking.* This makes the timing of the katate strike much more strict if one intends to perform it as a nuki waza. Using a katate men strike as a nuki waza against an attack to the left kote becomes ineffective if the hands are too low, i.e., if the right hand is held (roughly) at the level of the right eyebrow. The change in position of the left hand, from this low positioned kamae to the strike position, is no longer large enough to evade a strike.



*Figure 78: Striking katate men to act as kote, nuki men. (Step 1) If the opponent attacks the jōdan player's (Red) right or (Blue) left kote, they aim their attack at a specific target area. (Step 2) If the jōdan player attacks with katate men in response to the opponent's attack, the right and left kote both move to a different position creating an automatic nuki waza.*



#### KEY POINTS: ATTACKS ACTING AS NUKI WAZA

1. If the opponent attacks kote and the jōdan player is at their minimum issoku ittō no maai they can use katate men for kote→ nuki men. If the opponent is closer, very fast, or the jōdan player is late in their timing, morote men should be used.
2. When performing this attack, if timed well, the opponent's strike will either miss completely or slip off/graze the moving target.
3. If the jōdan player attempts this type of strike in a hesitant or ambivalent way the strike, and evasive motion, will most likely be too late allowing the opponent to simply strike the target. The jōdan player, like all of their attacks, must strike with full spirit and commitment; they must trust that the attack will act as defense.

*Figure 79: Striking morote men to act as kote, nuki men. (Step 1) If the opponent attacks the jōdan player's (Red) right or (Blue) left kote, they aim their attack at a specific target area. (Step 2) If the jōdan player attacks with morote men in response to the opponent's attack, the right and left kote both move to a different position creating an automatic nuki waza.*

## JŌDAN'S "KŌBŌ-ITCHI" WAZA

THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF [kenjutsu](#) various sword schools were always attempting to find an invincible technique, a technique that would allow the user to *simultaneously attack the opponent and defend against their attacks* while in a life or death situation; a *literal* "kōbō-itchi" waza. While some schools claim they had found such techniques it is not difficult to see why so much effort was placed in finding them.<sup>94</sup>

Jōdan in modern kendō has its own "kōbō-itchi" waza, and while it isn't an invincible technique, it does unify attacking the opponent and defending the user from attacks to the primary target areas.<sup>95</sup>

This has a major effect on a jōdan player: the existence of this unified waza, once learned, serves to bolster the jōdan player's confidence and increases their ability to maintain an aggressive spirit as it limits the need for defensive actions.<sup>96</sup>

### Performing the "Kōbō-Itchi" Waza

The most important technique for jōdan is striking men, whether striking men as a shikake waza with an opening made through seme, striking debana men as an ōji waza, or striking men in ai-uchi.

As discussed, jōdan has unique methods for tsuki→uchi-otoshi men and kote→nuki men: stepping forward and attacking. See pp. 63, 70.

The common thread is that all of these strikes: ai-uchi, debana, specialized uchi-otoshi and nuki, are all attacks made by stepping forward and making a katate or morote men strike. *In effect, a men strike is jōdan's "kōbō-itchi" waza.*<sup>97</sup>

### Bolstering the Spirit of Jōdan Through the "Kōbō-Itchi" Waza

The effect of having access to this waza is a strengthening the jōdan player's confidence in attacking by *knowing* that their attack truly is their defense. Once this trust is obtained, a jōdan player *wants the opponent to attempt an attack* as it gives the jōdan player a free opportunity to strike.<sup>98</sup> This completes the offensive mentality needed for jōdan.<sup>99</sup>

If the opponent attacks, strike men. The outcomes with a well timed attack from the jōdan player will result in:

1. Kote and tsuki attacks will be avoided even if the men fails to connect.
2. Kote and tsuki will be avoided and the counter will be successful.
3. With correct timing the jōdan player can land debana men as the opponent begins a strike. With slightly late timing, ai-uchi.

#### ABUSE OF TERMINOLOGY

Using "kōbō-itchi" to refer to a *literal*, unified offense/defense waza is likely an abuse of terminology. However as this waza requires a physical attack combined with a specific spiritual intent, and confidence in the defensive effect, the abuse seems appropriate. To acknowledge this abuse the term "kōbō-itchi" appears in quotes throughout.

<sup>94</sup> Kiri-otoshi is such a technique present in the [Ittō-Ryū](#) and subsequent offshoots.

<sup>95</sup> Left kote, right kote, and tsuki. See p. 91 for details on target priorities.

<sup>96</sup> Learning the waza is relatively simple. Learning to trust and make use of it over our instincts to defend, flinch, hesitate, etc., is a different matter.

<sup>97</sup> Obviously the *timing* differs between the various types of strikes listed strikes, e.g., ōji vs. shikake

<sup>98</sup> This mentality is often explained as the jōdan player having the attitude of "come and try to strike me!", *Chiba sensei Jōdan no Kamae - !!Audio corrected!!* (2015).

<sup>99</sup> That is the jōdan user is confident in their ability to initiate an attack and equally confident in dealing with an incoming attack, both in an offense based manner. This can be expressed succinctly in a quote from Kipling (2004): "If you move, I will strike. If you do not move, I will strike."



Once confidence in men due to the above is established, and demonstrated to the opponent, the threat of a men strike from jōdan becomes much more effective, i.e., it can shift the opponent to a defensive mindset. If this is accomplished the jōdan player can now, e.g., after threatening men (1) strike kote, (2) strike any vulnerable or exposed target if the opponent blocks, (3) use ōji waza to counter a rushed or desperate attack, or (4) induce an early or mistimed ōji waza, then strike whatever opens.

#### KEY POINTS: USING THE “KŌBŌ-ITCHI” WAZA

1. *This waza is by no means a mindless technique with guaranteed immunity from attack.* Effective use requires a certain amount of control in the encounter, timing, and judgement. This is dependent on the jōdan player having a connection with the opponent while also having effective seme→tame, all while maintaining expression of sen, ki-ken-tai-itchi, zanshin, etc., in the general sense.
2. Done too late, the uchi-otoshi or nuki aspects of this waza won't deflect or evade the attack. Too early and the opponent can adapt.
3. Effectiveness is dependent on the specifics of the jōdan player's kamae itself, p. 11. If the hands are too low the nuki becomes less effective as the hands do not move as much during a strike. If the kamae is flat, p. 12, attacks are slowed altering the timing.
4. Square or shizentai posture, p. 13, also affects the timing. Nuki waza become easier from a square posture as the kote moves more during the swing; a hidari shizentai posture makes the uchi-otoshi easier as the left hand is already positioned on the centerline.
5. Foot position affects the timing with regards to cross-stepping for morote variations. If the feet are in a wide stance, pp. 11, 42, cross-stepping becomes much slower making morote waza slower.
6. Maai must also be considered. If the maai is close, or one's timing is late, morote strikes are the only options. If the jōdan player is at their minimum issoku ittō or farther, p. 59, katate strikes can be used.

#### DEFENSIVE VS. ENGAGED OPPONENTS

It is an important distinction to make between a defensive opponent and one that proactively attempts to use ōji waza. The difference between the two is essentially being in a position where one can effectively initiate a strike against the opponent or being in a situation where one's attack is likely to be countered. When the opponent becomes defensive this implies that they are likely to block, retreat, or make a desperate attack. If the opponent is induced into these actions, one has an opportunity to strike with shikake or ōji waza. If the opponent is attempting to use ōji waza there is another important distinction to be made. If they are *waiting* to use ōji waza as a *reaction* to the jōdan player's attacks, this is again being defensive and they are ceding control of the encounter to their opponent. If however the opponent maintains their calm and is *actively applying seme* in order to create the opportunity for ōji waza, this is a *proactively, engaged opponent* and not defensive; they are still vying for control of the encounter in mutual seme-ai. Interpreting the opponent's intent and mindset, e.g., defensive, reactive, proactive, aggressive, etc., allows one to adapt how they approach the opponent and indicates what strategies or techniques can be used effectively. *The goal of seme is to push the opponent into a defensive or reactive mindset, even for just a moment, as this allows one to control the opponent and creates opportunities to strike.* This is a fundamental aspect of kendō regardless of kamae.

# FACING AN OPPONENT WITH JŌDAN

## THEORY & PRINCIPLES: NIHON KENDŌ NO KATA

WHILE THE USE OF jōdan appears different in the kendō kata than that seen in shinai kendō, this is superficial as the spiritual intent demonstrated in the kata forms the basis for its use.<sup>100</sup>

**Zanshin.** Jōdan is used often in the kata to show zanshin, the intent being to show control over the opponent and readiness to deal with potential attacks through a “*move and I will cut you down*” mentality.<sup>101</sup> This mentality is the starting point for using jōdan.

**Tachi kata: ipponme.** Ipponme shows two central ideas: (1) expressing sen, and (2) **ki (w)o mite**: “*seeing the correct moment*”.<sup>102</sup>

Uchidachi and shidachi assume hidari and migi jōdan, respectively, with the singular intent to kill; the one with superior skill lives.<sup>103</sup> During the initial approach both opponents have the feeling of the combative pressure between them building with each step, reaching the apex upon entering issoku ittō no maai.<sup>104</sup> Here they are literally at the point of no return, and the next exchange determines life or death. Hesitation or doubt will create an opportunity for the opponent, and retreat is not an option for the same reasons.<sup>105</sup>

**Tachi kata: sanbonme.** While sanbonme uses **gedan no kamae** it's how shidachi overcomes uchidachi that is relevant: kurai-zume.

After shidachi counter thrusts, uchidachi deflects and takes control of center. Shidachi presses forward to invade uchidachi's maai, and is parried again with uchidachi still in control of center. At this point uchidachi's defenses crumble, *even though they control center*, and shidachi presses forward causing uchidachi to retreat. Why?

Shidachi is said to embody kurai-zume as they press forward after their counter-thrust. Shidachi is able to invade uchidachi's maai, overwhelm their defenses and their control of center through strength of spirit. It is this strength of spirit, confidence, or willpower that is required by a jōdan player.

### SEME IN THE KATA

In the kata descriptions, pp. 76–79 & 85–86, the point where seme is applied inducing an action *or* attack is highlighted for both uchidachi and shidachi. Both appear similar to the following:

#### REASON → INTENT

##### 1. Description.

In each case *Reason* and *Intent* are described from the perspective of uchidachi and shidachi. As the mitsu no sen are not made explicit for **kodachi** kata, *Intent* is marked as “*Sen*” and left to the individual to interpret.

<sup>100</sup> Jōdan in the kata is limited to morale strikes and for physically expressing zanshin.

<sup>101</sup> Taking jōdan for zanshin is not just a pose. **Shidachi** must feel as though they are on the verge of cutting uchidachi, should they need to, otherwise the motion is meaningless. This is directly applicable to shinai kendō; FIK (2017) defines zanshin as “*the state of alertness both mental and physical, against the opponent's counterattack*” which shidachi demonstrates. Jōdan is explicitly used for zanshin in tachi: ipponme, gohonme, and ropponme, as well as a variation in kodachi: ipponme.

<sup>102</sup> These ideas are prevalent throughout kendō, however they are particularly emphasized in jōdan. See p. 9.

<sup>103</sup> Y. Inoue (2003)

<sup>104</sup> Y. Inoue (2016)

<sup>105</sup> Uchidachi's intent is to cut through shidachi's tsūka, AJKF (2002) and Y. Inoue (2003), indicating a powerful and committed strike. By embodying sen and understanding ki (w)o mite, a retreat attempt by shidachi would create a chance for uchidachi to attack and vice versa.

*Kodachi kata: nihonme.* While shidachi uses a kodachi and doesn't explicitly use jōdan, kodachi kata: nihonme shows a direct application of the spiritual intent for successful jōdan: pressuring the opponent, forcing a defensive and/or offensive action, and attacking as an opening is created.<sup>106</sup>

Uchidachi moves from gedan to chūdan for *defensive* purposes due to pressure from shidachi.<sup>107</sup> Just before uchidachi reaches chūdan, shidachi physically advances forward in *iri-mi no kamae* forcing uchidachi to retreat and to launch an immediate, desperate attack.

This type of pressure and advance is used throughout kendō, however it is of critical importance for jōdan due to the offense based nature of the kamae. Jōdan players generally use issun no seme, p. 41, which, when used at an opportune moment, can be likened to the *seme-komu* used in kodachi kata: nihonme. Once the opponent is forced further toward defensive actions, or to make a desperate attack, the jōdan player will have created an opportunity to attack.<sup>108</sup>

The steps for the kata are given on pp. 76–79.<sup>109</sup>

#### KEY POINTS: KENDO KATA & FIGHTING WITH JŌDAN

1. Tachi Kata: Ipponme shows several ideas: (1) expressing sen, (2) ki (w)o mite, (3) committed strikes, and (4) application of seme.<sup>110</sup> It also implicitly indicates a defensive mindset, especially for a jōdan player, is inappropriate against a spiritually engaged opponent.
2. Tachi Kata: Sanbonme introduces a *fundamental* spiritual aspect for jōdan: the willpower to unrelentingly press forward with the spirit of attack regardless of the opponent's offensive or defensive ability. This is one of the most important, *and difficult*, aspects of jōdan, particularly when faced with a skilled opponent as demonstrated in tachi: sanbonme.

**Note:** The term *willpower* is used here discussing sanbonme instead of the term *confidence* which is usually used discussing jōdan.<sup>111</sup> This is done because (1) willpower is more appropriate in the context of facing a skilled opponent and (2) in kendō (self-)confidence is only attained *after* expending sufficient willpower through practice.<sup>112</sup> Stressing the need for fostering this type of mindset in practice (for jōdan) is maintained throughout these notes.

3. Kodachi Kata: Nihonme makes explicit two ideas that are critical for using jōdan: (1) pressuring the opponent into a defensive mindset, and (2) creating an opportunity to strike by physically advancing, at the correct moment, to induce a desperate attack or (further) defensive actions.

<sup>106</sup> Shidachi uses hanmi chūdan in kodachi kata #1–2, and hanmi gedan in #3, but does assume a katate migi jōdan during zanshin for kodachi kata #1.

<sup>107</sup> AJKF (2002) and Y. Inoue (2003). Compare this to tachi kata: ropponme where shidachi alters kamae from gedan to chūdan for *offensive* purposes.

<sup>108</sup> Recall that, outside of blatant openings, debana waza is the major intent for jōdan. See pp. 7, 9, and 59.

<sup>109</sup> The specific details and explanations for the steps of the kata have been cut short. For more information see AJKF (2002), Y. Inoue (2003), Budden (2000), Shigeoka (1977), or our club Kata Study Guide [here](#).

<sup>110</sup> While uchidachi loses to shidachi's counter-attack the mentality behind the attack is correct. It is important to note that shidachi's intent is not defensive; their opportunity to strike is created through offensive pressure.

<sup>111</sup> Kiyotsugu (1982), Ogawa (2001), and AJKF (2002)

<sup>112</sup> From Merriam-Webster Incorporated (2022):  
Willpower: "the ability to control one's own actions, emotions, or urges" or "strong determination that allows one to do something difficult."

Confidence: "a feeling or consciousness of one's powers or of reliance on one's circumstances"

Self-Confidence: "someone's confidence in himself or herself and in his or her own abilities."

## Tachi Kata: Ipponme

## Uchidachi

1. From chūdan cross-step forward on the left foot into hidari jōdan.
2. Starting on the left foot take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi, into issoku ittō no maai.

## PERCEIVE SENTE→ SEN NO SEN

3. Attack shidachi with the feeling of *sutemi*.
  - (i) Seeing the chance to act, cross-step forward on the right foot and, with strong *kiai*, strike shōmen; aim to cut through shidachi's tsuba and torso down to the navel.
  - (ii) The strike misses, due to shidachi's dodge, and is overextended with the kensen ending up below gedan level. This causes the torso to lean forward 15°–20°.
4. Retreat from shidachi.
  - (i) Retreat taking a small step back; maintain the forward lean from step #3(ii).
  - (ii) Retreat again taking small step back while still maintaining the forward lean.
  - (iii) Shidachi exerts zanshin.
5. Re-assume kamae.
  - (i) Verify shidachi's zanshin.
  - (ii) Straighten the torso and assume chūdan.
6. *Kamae (w)o toku* and, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to tachi-ai no maai.

## Shidachi

1. From chūdan assume migi jōdan.

## SEME→ INDUCE SEN NO SEN

2. On the right foot take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi, meeting uchidachi in seme-ai.
3. Dodge uchidachi's strike and counter-attack.
  - (i) Raise the hands up and back, maintaining the jōdan angle of the bokutō.
  - (ii) Take a step backward, dodging the strike.
  - (iii) Upon dodging, immediately step forward and strike shōmen with strong *kiai*.
4. Maintain control over uchidachi and exert zanshin.
  - (i) Lower the kensen to uchidachi's eyes as they retreat.
  - (ii) Stop the second retreat by cross-stepping forward on the left foot into hidari jōdan.
  - (iii) Exert zanshin.
5. Return to center and re-assume kamae.
  - (i) As uchidachi returns to chūdan, cross-step back on your left foot.
  - (ii) While moving back to center, lower the bokutō to chūdan.
  - (iii) Assume ai-chūdan at *yokote-kōsa*.
6. *Kamae (w)o toku* and, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to *tachi-ai no maai*.



## Tachi Kata: Sanbonme

## Uchidachi

1. From chūdan assume gedan.
2. Starting on the right foot take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi, to issoku ittō no maai.
3. Slowly raise the kensen up from gedan to chūdan.

## PERCEIVE SŪKI→SENTE

4. Attack shidachi with a thrust.
  - (i) Reaching chūdan just before shidachi does, and seeing the chance to act, turn your hands *slightly* to the left.
  - (ii) Step forward on the right foot and, with strong kiai, thrust toward the solar plexus.
  - (iii) Use the curve of the bokutō to thrust around shidachi's kensen and over their bokutō.
5. Shidachi, after parrying, immediately counter-attacks. Parry shidachi's thrust taking center.
  - (i) Cross-step back on the right foot into hidari shizentai.
  - (ii) In a small circular motion, bring the bokutō under and to the left of shidachi's bokutō.
  - (iii) Deflect shidachi's thrust with the right shinogi, your kensen stopping on shidachi's center-line angled at the throat. The blade of your bokutō is angled downward and to the right.

## Shidachi

1. From chūdan assume gedan.
2. Starting on the right foot take three steps forward with ayumi-ashi. Meet uchidachi in seme-ai.

## OFFER SŪKI→INDUCE SENTE

3. Responding to uchidachi, slowly raise the kensen from gedan to chūdan.
4. Parry the thrust: *nayashi*.
  - (i) Using okuri-ashi step back on the left foot.
  - (ii) Pull the hands back turning them slightly to the left. Use the left *shinogi* to press uchidachi's thrust slightly down and left.
  - (iii) Deflect the thrust without moving the left hand off center, ensuring their kensen is moved *outside* the width of the body.
5. Immediately counter thrust: *irezuki*.
  - (i) Straighten your blade: the bokutō returns to a chūdan position, with the blade facing straight down.
  - (ii) Step forward on the right foot with okuri-ashi and, with strong kiai, thrust to uchidachi's chest.

## Uchidachi

6. Shidachi threatens your maai by advancing forward. Deflect their kensen and take center.
  - (i) Cross-step back on the left foot into *migi shizentai* and, in a small circular motion, bring the *bokutō* under and to the right of the shidachi's *bokutō*.
  - (ii) Deflect on the left *shinogi*, kensen stopping on shidachi's center-line aimed at the throat, the blade angled down and to the left.
7. Due to shidachi's spirit your kamae crumbles; retreat.
  - (i) Lower the *bokutō*, kensen *slightly* outside the body, the blade angled downward and to the left.
  - (ii) Take three steps back, starting on the left foot using *ayumi-ashi*, attempting to escape.
8. Shidachi exerts *zanshin*.
9. Re-assume kamae and return to center.
  - (i) Verify shidachi's *zanshin*.
  - (ii) Slowly re-assume *chūdan*. Shidachi begins to retreat.
  - (iii) Reaching *ai-chūdan* take three steps forward, using *ayumi-ashi*, returning to center.
10. Kamae (w)o *toku* then, with *ayumi-ashi*, take five steps back to *tachi-ai no maai*.

## Shidachi

6. Pressure uchidachi's maai.
  - (i) Cross-step forward powerfully on the left foot; move forward with the feeling of being unstoppable, *kurai-zume*.
  - (ii) The arms are left extended from the previous thrust as you take this step forward.
7. Uchidachi's kamae crumbles; invade their maai.
  - (i) Starting on the right, take three steps forward with *ayumi-ashi*.
  - (ii) Raise the kensen with each step until, at the end of the third step, it's between uchidachi's eyes.
8. Exert *zanshin*.
9. Re-assume kamae and return to center.
  - (i) Uchidachi raises their *bokutō*, returning to kamae. Take five steps back, using *ayumi-ashi*.
  - (ii) As you begin to move lower the *bokutō*, assuming *ai-chūdan* at the end of the second step.
  - (iii) Finish the remaining three steps in *ai-chūdan*, returning to the center at *yokote-kōsa*.
10. Kamae (w)o *toku* then, with *ayumi-ashi*, take five steps back to *tachi-ai no maai*.

## Kodachi Kata: Nihonme

## Uchidachi

1. From chūdan no kamae assume gedan no kamae.
2. Starting on the right foot, take three steps forward to issoku ittō no maai.
3. Slowly attempt to raise the bokutō from gedan to chūdan.
4. Attempt to regain control.
  - (i) Shidachi shifts to iri-mi kamae. Cross-step back on the right foot and assume waki-gamae.

## IRI-MI SEME→ "SEN"

5. Shidachi threatens your maai with iri-mi; attack their shōmen.
  - (i) From waki-gamae raise the bokutō straight overhead into hidari jōdan.
  - (ii) Cross-step forward on the right foot and, with strong kiai, strike shidachi's men. Have the intent to cut all the way through to their navel.
  - (iii) Due to shidachi's parry the strike is overextended, becoming dead, the kensen ending up at gedan level and uchidachi leaning forward slightly. Shidachi counter attacks.

## Shidachi

1. From chūdan assume chūdan hanmi no kamae, kensen at chest level of uchidachi, the blade angled down and to the right.
2. On the right foot take three steps forward; meet uchidachi in seme-ai.
3. Control uchidachi's rising bokutō by lowering the kodachi and assuming iri-mi no kamae, kensen angled to the throat.

## IRI-MI→ INDUCE "SEN"

4. While in iri-mi no kamae, seme-komu: step forward pressuring uchidachi with iri-mi.
5. Parry and counter uchidachi's strike.
  - (i) With hiraki-ashi, take a step to the forward left.
  - (ii) Open your torso to the right and raise the kodachi overhead.
  - (iii) As you lift, turn the bokutō so the kensen points right, blade facing you.
  - (iv) Deflect the strike using uke-nagashi on the right shinogi.
  - (v) Having parried the strike complete your step and, with strong kiai, strike a left-footed shōmen.

## Uchidachi

6. Shidachi exerts zanshin.

7. Return to center and re-assume kamae.

(i) Verify shidachi's zanshin.

(ii) Take a step back to center and assume chūdan.

8. Kamae (w)o toku then, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to tachi-ai no maai.

## Shidachi

6. Exert zanshin:

(i) Grab uchidachi's right forearm with your left hand just above their elbow, palm facing forward.

(ii) Turn your grip to the left slightly, rotating uchidachi's forearm arm outward.

(iii) As you rotate uchidachi's arm outward, pull it toward you slightly.

(iv) Assume hidari shizentai.

(v) Move the bokutō to the hip and aim the kensen toward uchidachi's throat, the blade angled down and to the right.

7. Return to center and re-assume kamae.

(i) Release the grip on uchidachi's arm.

(ii) Return your left hand back to the proper position on the hip for kodachi kamae.

(iii) Controlling uchidachi's blade from above and, starting on the right foot, return to center using ayumi-ashi.

(iv) Assume ai-chūdan at yokote-kōsa.

8. Kamae (w)o toku then, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to tachi-ai no maai.



## A JŌDAN PLAYER'S GENERAL APPROACH

IT IS IMPORTANT TO understand what a jōdan player must focus on specifically in order to be effective. The following is a short summary.

**Spiritual aggression.** The fundamentals of jōdan is that it is an aggressive kamae.<sup>113</sup> Defensive abilities have been given up to strengthen offensive ones.<sup>114</sup> Jōdan must then always be *spiritually* on the offensive. This does not mean repeated, wild attacks. Rather, a jōdan player must retain their readiness to strike, have the patience to do so at the correct moment, and to use striking as a form of defense.<sup>115</sup>

Hesitation, defensiveness, the need to block, or the need to retreat are the spiritual opposite of what is required for successful jōdan.<sup>116</sup> *Overcoming these is the most difficult aspect of using jōdan.*

**Establishing a “Do not Cross” line.** Establishing that the opponent may not move directly into a jōdan player's attack range unchallenged, p. 41, is a fundamental idea.<sup>117</sup> However, a jōdan player cannot just mindlessly attack as this gives the opponent ōji waza opportunities.<sup>118</sup> At the same time if they do nothing for too long the opponent becomes emboldened and will test if the jōdan player's spirit matches their kamae. Taking the initiative according to the opponent is critical.

*Jōdan players must force hesitation about moving directly into their range and force opponents to feel they need to move in subtly.*

**Observation of movement and maai.** Jōdan players will continuously monitor the opponent's movements, position of the kensen, and maai as these determine striking opportunities.<sup>119</sup>

**Observation and manipulation of kensen position.** Jōdan players closely observe the position of the opponent's kensen relative to their targeting area. Through seme, their own movement, movement of the opponent, or by a combination of each the jōdan player is looking for when the opponent's kensen enters, or will enter, the targeting area or moves too far above, below, or to the left & right of the targeting area boundaries as this will determine, or allow the prediction of, striking opportunities.

**Application of seme.** By probing and observing the opponent a jōdan player can form a strategy, based on opponent rhythm, to create an opening either by manipulating them or attacking if they are defensive or hesitant. This is done through movement, threatening specific targets, or threatening one and striking another. See pp. 26, 44, and 48.

<sup>113</sup> [Jōdan is] “The posture where the sword is held above the head, the most offensive posture among the Kendō postures.” AJKF (2002)

<sup>114</sup> There are defensive waza, but spiritually jōdan is used as if there weren't.

<sup>115</sup> This doesn't just mean ōji waza, but using shikake waza as a proactive form of defense.

<sup>116</sup> Feeling the need to block or retreat refers to being overcome by the opponent's seme so much so that the ability to attack is overwhelmed by the need to defend. Take for example a jōdan player that makes an unsuccessful katate strike. During zanshin, as they recover their shinai, they block an attempted attack made by the opponent. Compare this to a jōdan player that *preemptively* blocks as their opponent moves in and applies seme. In the former, defense was a part of zanshin and the jōdan player is still engaged with the opponent. In the latter, the opponent overwhelmed the jōdan player's offensive mindset forcing them to (1) defend before an attack was actually made and (2) forego a fundamental opportunity to strike. See note #119 below.

<sup>117</sup> Move directly here refers to advancing straight in along the centerline.

<sup>118</sup> This doesn't mean attacking to establish the “do not cross” line is wrong, just that it must be done according to the rhythm of the opponent. See the initial strike in 千葉 仁 Chiba sensei (kyōshi Zdan) and 東 一良 Higashi sensei (kyōshi 6.dan) [1980's] (2011).

<sup>119</sup> The fundamental approach for jōdan is to “try to strike him at the moment when he is about to step forward, to the rear, or is beginning a strike”, AJKF (1973). Debana waza against an attacking opponent aside, the opponent moving into or out of attack range is a fundamental opportunity to strike. Which target, e.g., men or kote, depends on the opponent's kensen position, maai determines footwork, etc.

**Probing the opponent.** Jōdan players initially face chūdan players with a distance advantage as their uchi-ma is *usually* longer.<sup>120</sup> From this distance a jōdan player can observe the opponent, apply pressure, and gain information about them. Until the chūdan player can close this gap they are in a position where they can be struck while the jōdan player cannot.<sup>121</sup> Jōdan players should maintain this range advantage to gather information on opponent habits, reactions, etc.

**Patience, composure, and tempo.** As discussed with the kendō kata, p. 74, *ki (w)o mite, or seizing the [correct] opportunity*, is essential with jōdan due to the “one chance” nature of katate strikes. The jōdan player will be spiritually aggressive, continuously pressuring for an opening, but must also have the patience and composure to attack at the correct moment. Jōdan players may initially choose a *slow attack tempo*, as they probe the opponent, which increases as the encounter progresses.<sup>122</sup>

**Aggressive and/or confident opponents.** When unsure of how to deal with an aggressive opponent, or one with experience against jōdan, outside of the basic ai-uchi or debana waza, p. 7, there are two good options: (1) use harai-otoshi or uchi-otoshi to reposition, pp. 57–60, and (2) initiate an attack.<sup>123, 124</sup>

While attacking may open the jōdan player to ōji waza, especially if the opponent forces the attack, this is better than resorting to blocking or retreating, pp. 9–10, as this will develop and maintain offensive intent.

**Zanshin.** Zanshin is critical for both protection and for spiritual offense, see p. 30 for details. Focus on the opponent at all times, maintaining eye contact, and always being ready to strike are hallmarks of effective jōdan.

#### KEY POINT: JŌDAN VS. CHŪDAN STRATEGIES RELY ON THE SAN-SAPPŌ

The primary strength of chūdan vs. jōdan is the presence of a forward positioned kensen for both offense and defense. Jōdan players specifically need to make use of the *san-sappō* to remove this advantage. The entire approach of a jōdan player against a chūdan player is centered around removing the advantage of their kensen.

##### Basic Application

1. Use harai-otoshi to disrupt stationary or stagnant kamae.
2. Use uchi-otoshi, debana, and nuki waza or ai-uchi to disrupt, deflect, or counter *all* strike attempts; *avoid pre-emptive or general blocking*.
3. Use consistent, offensive intent and attack-as-defense to disrupt their spirit or confidence.

The san-sappō are central ideas in all of kendō, however jōdan's *reliance* on them becomes apparent immediately.

#### EXPLOITING REACTION

One of the strengths of jōdan is the range and *speed* of katate waza. In any type of jōdan match-up, chūdan vs. jōdan or ai-jōdan, katate waza used against an opponent caught unaware or unready is often too fast to defend against *logically*, making the defender's *reactionary* habits exploitable. Probing the opponent through offensive intent and footwork, while maintaining focus and composure are the tools used to accomplish this.

<sup>120</sup> *Usually* is the key word here as the, e.g., strength, speed, timing, etc., of both players have to be taken into account.

<sup>121</sup> Save for katate tsūki. This is one reason why katate tsūki is such an important waza: an attack to a primary target with similar range as a jōdan player's katate strikes. Of course jōdan players know this waza can reach them so a blind attempt, e.g., without first applying some form of seme, from a far distance will almost certainly be countered by a prepared and focused jōdan opponent.

<sup>122</sup> There are always exceptions. Personal style, skill, perception, etc., are all factors affecting the definition of *slow attack tempo* for each individual.

<sup>123</sup> This often occurs if the opponent is invading the jōdan player's maai. Briefly applying seme then using a tilting kote, p. 28, or the “kōbō-itchi” waza, p. 72, can be useful here.

<sup>124</sup> Some may add another option: (3) move into *tsuba-zeriai*. In shiai, depending on context, this could result in a penalty so has not been included here.

# FACING AN OPPONENT THAT USES JŌDAN

## THEORY & PRINCIPLES: NIHON KENDŌ NO KATA

TO UNDERSTAND FIGHTING AGAINST jōdan it is helpful to first look at the kendō kata as this information is explicitly encoded into them. While the kata will often not immediately resemble shinai kendō, the ideas underlying the movements and techniques in them *are the basis for the strategies used in shinai kendō*.

**Tachi kata: gohonme.** This kata introduces two core ideas for fighting against jōdan: (1) the use of seigan no kamae and (2) using seme to entice or invite an attack.

The purpose of seigan is to reduce the availability of the chūdan player's kote as a target while at the same time being able to directly apply pressure toward the jōdan player's left kote; a primary target.

The second idea, that of inducing an attack through seme, is of critical importance. Gohonme progresses when the uchidachi reacts to the shidachi's seme and attacks men. Knowing uchidachi's intent the shidachi performs suri-age and counter-attacks to their men.

**Tachi kata: ropponme.** Ropponme shows two additional ideas: (1) aggressively invading the maai of the jōdan player and (2) pressuring the jōdan player to retreat and/or alter their kamae.

Jōdan has an increased attack range relative to chūdan due to the use of katate waza. If one is able to aggressively enter into this maai (1) katate waza becomes less advantageous and (2) jōdan has many exposed targets which can now be attacked. This vulnerability increases the effect applied seme has against the jōdan player.

Jōdan heavily depends on the user maintaining their offensive intent. By forcing them to retreat they forgo the offensive mentality, and hence any strengths, of the kamae itself. Retreating or altering kamae produce similar results: defensively reacting to the opponent's seme removes the jōdan player's ability to attack or apply seme of their own, and creates opportunities for the opponent to strike.<sup>125</sup>

## STRATEGY IN THE KATA

In very simple terms the underlying strategy in the kata is shidachi uses seme to set up opportunities to strike uchidachi by luring, forcing, or predicting their attack. The opportunities where uchidachi strikes are when they attempt *sente* and *sen no sen*, while the opportunities for shidachi are *go no sen* and *sen sen no sen*. Collectively *sen no sen*, *go no sen*, and *sen sen no sen* are known as the *mitsu no sen*.

### SEME & THE MITSU NO SEN

Tachi Kata		
Kata	Uchidachi	Shidachi
#1	Sen no sen	Sen sen no sen
#2	Sen no sen	Sen sen no sen
#3	Sente	Sen sen no sen
#4	Sente	Go no sen
#5	Sen no sen	Sen sen no sen
#6	Sen no sen	Go no sen
#7	Sente	Go no sen

Kodachi Kata		
Kata	Uchidachi	Shidachi
#1	"Sen"	Iri-mi / Shin
#2	"Sen"	Iri-mi / Gyo
#3	"Sen"	Iri-mi / So

**Table 1:** The mitsu no sen are encoded into the kendō kata. Uchidachi attempts sente or sen no sen throughout while shidachi performs sen sen no sen in tachi kata #1, 2, 3, and 5 and go no sen in #4, 6, and 7. In the kodachi kata, the mitsu no sen are not specified so uchidachi's attack is left as "Sen". Regardless, shidachi draws this action out through iri-mi seme.

<sup>125</sup> Removes... the ability to attack here refers to the jōdan player attacking while in control and through an offensive mindset. The jōdan player can obviously still attack, but in this situation the attack(s) will be more desperate and/or reactionary vs. proactive, leaving the jōdan player potentially exposed to ōji waza set-ups.

*Tachi kata: nanahonme.* Nanahonme shows a fundamental, although difficult, aspect of fighting against jōdan: how to resist seme, and how to use an opponent's offense against them.

Uchidachi attempts to pressure shidachi with a thrust, *ki-atari*, when their spirit is low. Shidachi holds them off in a stalemate, matching their spirit, and returns to seme-ai. From this now equal seme-ai, shidachi lures a strike from the aggressive uchidachi and counter-attacks.

The steps for the kata are given on pp. 85–88.<sup>126</sup>

#### KEY POINTS: KENDŌ KATA – FIGHTING AGAINST JŌDAN

1. Gohonme introduces two ideas. (1) The use of seigan no kamae against a jōdan opponent instead of chūdan.<sup>127</sup> This allows for a more effective offense and defense. (2) Shidachi defeats the uchidachi by enticing, or perceiving, a specific attack through seme towards a primary target on the jōdan opponent. Shidachi then capitalizes on the induced opening when the jōdan opponent makes an attack.<sup>128</sup>
2. Ropponme introduces several ideas applicable to facing a jōdan opponent. (1) Forcing the opponent to retreat, (2) forcing the opponent to defensively alter or break kamae, (3) *continuous* application of seme in accordance with the opponent's actions, intents, or rhythm, and (4) maintaining focus and readiness to attack, with shikake or ōji waza, while at the same time continuously pressuring the opponent. In essence uchidachi's intent is pushed toward a defensive and/or reactionary one, forcing a desperate attack, giving shidachi an opportunity to strike.<sup>129</sup>
3. Nanahonme introduces four key ideas: (1) mentally and physically resisting the opponent's spiritual and physical seme denying them easy openings, (2) matching the opponent's spirit and focus, (3) creating a temporary stalemate, i.e., stopping or delaying the opponent's attack which then increases their desire initiate another, and (4) using the opponent's established desire to take the initiative against them by luring out an aggressive attack, creating an opportunity to strike.<sup>130, 131</sup>

<sup>126</sup> The specific details and explanations for the steps of the kata have been cut short. For more information see AJKF (2002), Y. Inoue (2003), Budden (2000), Shigeoka (1977), or our club Kata Study Guide [here](#).

<sup>127</sup> The kamae referred to here is one particular variant of several kamae, all historically called seigan. AJKF (2002) now officially refers to this kamae as “a chūdan position”.

<sup>128</sup> Sen sen no sen. See table 1, p. 83.

<sup>129</sup> Go no sen. See table 1, p. 83.

<sup>130</sup> In (3) the opponent is already aggressively initiating an attack. By effectively stalling or delaying their attacks, an aggressive opponent can be made to be impatient. This affects their composure in that an impatient opponent will attack when invited, in a similar way to a defensive opponent attacking out of desperation.

<sup>131</sup> Go no sen. See table 1, p. 83.



## Tachi Kata: Gohonme

## Uchidachi

1. From chūdan cross-step forward on the left foot into hidari jōdan.
2. Starting on the left foot take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi, into issoku ittō no maai.

## PERCEIVE SENTE→ SEN NO SEN

3. Attack shidachi's shōmen.
  - (i) On seeing the chance to act, cross-step forward on the right foot.
  - (ii) With strong *kiai* make a large strike toward shidachi's *shōmen* with the intent to cut downward to chin level.
  - (iii) Shidachi parries the strike.
4. The bokutō becomes *dead* due to being parried and is lowered to *gedan no kamae* level, kensen *outside* shidachi's body. Shidachi attacks.
5. Shidachi exerts zanshin.

## Shidachi

1. From chūdan assume seigan.

## SEME→ INDUCE SEN NO SEN

2. Starting on the right foot take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi, meeting uchidachi in seme-ai.
3. Use *suri-age* to deflect uchidachi's strike.
  - (i) As uchidachi strikes step back starting on the left foot.
  - (ii) With the left hand raise the bokutō overhead, while the right hand moves the kensen to the left.
  - (iii) Receive uchidachi's strike on the *omote* shinogi. Continue raising upward sliding the bokutō along the opponent's deflecting it.
  - (iv) Continue to raise the bokutō overhead returning the kensen to a centered position. During the deflection while raising the bokutō overhead, the path of your kensen should resemble a crescent moon.
4. Upon parrying immediately step forward on the right foot and, with strong *kiai*, strike shōmen.
5. Exert zanshin.
  - (i) Cross-step backward on the right foot.
  - (ii) Lower the kensen to eye level of uchidachi.
  - (iii) Keeping the left foot forward raise the bokutō and assume hidari jōdan.

## Uchidachi

6. Return to kamae.
  - (i) Verify shidachi's zanshin.
  - (ii) Raise the kensen to chūdan, and take a small step forward.
7. Return to center.
  - (i) Verify ai-chūdan.
  - (ii) Take three small steps back, using ayumi-ashi, to the center position.
8. Kamae (w)o toku and, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to tachi-ai no maai.

## Shidachi

6. Return to kamae.
  - (i) Cross-step backward on the left foot.
  - (ii) Lower the bokutō and meet uchidachi in ai-chūdan.
7. Return to center.
  - (i) Using ayumi-ashi, take three small steps forward to center at yokote-kōsa.
  - (ii) Maintain contact with uchidachi's bokutō throughout.
8. Kamae (w)o toku and, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to tachi-ai no maai.

## Tachi Kata: Ropponme

## Uchidachi

1. Assume chūdan no kamae.
2. Starting on the right foot take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi, into issoku ittō no maai.
3. Attempt to control shidachi.
  - (i) Shidachi raises their kensen, pressuring with a thrust.
  - (ii) Attempt to control them, pressing your kensen *slightly* downward.

## SEME→ REGAIN CONTROL

4. Attempt to gain control of shidachi.
  - (i) Unable to stop shidachi's pressure, *before* the bokutō connect, cross-step back on the right foot.
  - (ii) Raise the bokutō and assume hidari jōdan.

## Shidachi

1. From chūdan assume gedan.
2. Starting on the right foot take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi; meet uchidachi in seme-ai.

## SEME→ FORCE AN ACTION

3. Pressure uchidachi.
  - (i) Seeing the chance to act, raise your kensen to chūdan.
  - (ii) Press it forward slightly toward uchidachi's hands, with the feeling of a thrust.

## SEME→ FORCE AN ACTION

4. Pressure uchidachi again.
  - (i) Uchidachi attempts to assert control with hidari jōdan. Assume seigan.
  - (ii) Step forward powerfully re-establishing seme-ai, partially invading their maai, and threatening to strike kote.

## Uchidachi

SEME→ REGAIN CONTROL
5. Forgo jōdan due to seme. <i>(i)</i> Shidachi pressures with another potential attack. <i>(ii)</i> Cross-step back on the left foot, foregoing jōdan, and assume chūdan.

PERCEIVE SENTE→ SEN NO SEN
6. Attack shidachi. <i>(i)</i> Step forward on your right foot and, with strong kiai, attack with a small kote.

7. Shidachi parries and counters with a small kote. The bokutō, now dead, is kept at kote level.
8. Retreat from shidachi.
  - (i)* Drop your kensen slightly below gedan level.
  - (ii)* Angle the blade of the bokutō to the right toward shidachi.
  - (iii)* Take a step to the diagonal back left *without* turning the body toward shidachi. Shidachi exerts zanshin.
9. Re-assume kamae and return to center.
  - (i)* Verify shidachi's zanshin.
  - (ii)* Turn the body to face shidachi, assuming chūdan.
  - (iii)* Move to center in ai-chūdan using ayumi-ashi.
10. Kamae (w)o toku then, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to tachi-ai no maai.

## Shidachi

SEME→ INDUCE SEN NO SEN
5. Pressure uchidachi again. <i>(i)</i> Due to the threat of your kensen uchidachi forgoes jōdan and retreats into chūdan. <i>(ii)</i> Assume ai-chūdan re-establishing seme-ai.

6. Parry uchidachi's kote strike.
  - (i)* Take a small half-step to the rear left on the left foot.
  - (ii)* Use the right shinogi to perform suri-age waza.
7. Immediately after the suri-age, with strong kiai, step forward on the right foot and strike small kote.
8. Exert zanshin.
  - (i)* Direct the kensen toward uchidachi's eyes.
  - (ii)* Cross-step forward on the left foot.
  - (iii)* Assume hidari jōdan as you finish the step forward.
9. Re-assume kamae and return to center.
  - (i)* Responding to uchidachi, cross-step back on the left foot into ai-chūdan.
  - (ii)* Move back to center with ayumi-ashi; meet at yokote-kōsa.
10. Kamae (w)o toku then, with ayumi-ashi, take five steps back to tachi-ai no maai.

## Tachi Kata: Nanahonme

## Uchidachi

1. Assume chūdan. Take three steps forward, with ayumi-ashi, on the right foot into issoku ittō no maai.

## SEME→ KI-ATARI

2. Thrust at shidachi.
  - (i) Seizing the opportunity, step forward on the right foot.
  - (ii) Turn the hands slightly to the left and thrust toward shidachi's chest (ki-atari).
  - (iii) Shidachi parries.

3. Return to chūdan.

## PERCEIVE SŪKI→ SENTE

4. Seeing the chance to act, attack shidachi with a large men.
  - (i) Take two cross-steps forward: cross with the left then the right.
  - (ii) On the first cross-step (left foot), attempt to take center and raise the bokutō straight overhead, preparing to strike the shōmen of the shidachi.
  - (iii) On the second cross-step (right foot), with strong kiai, strike shidachi's shōmen with a feeling of sūtemi; strike with the intent to cut through the men down to the navel.
  - (iv) Your gaze momentarily leaves shidachi as the cut overextends due to their nuki waza.

## Shidachi

1. Assume chūdan. Take three steps forward on the right foot, with ayumi-ashi, meeting uchidachi in seme-ai.

## PARRY→ RESIST SEME

2. Parry uchidachi's thrust.
  - (i) Turn your hands slightly to the right.
  - (ii) Step back on your left foot and extend your arms in a thrust.
  - (iii) Receive uchidachi's thrust with the left shinogi pressing it slightly upward.

## OFFER SŪKI→ INDUCE SENTE

3. Assume ai-chūdan matching uchidachi's spirit in seme-ai.
4. Respond to uchidachi's attack with nuki waza.
  - (i) Step forward to the diagonal right on the right foot, bringing the bokutō to your left shoulder.
  - (ii) With strong kiai, cross-step on the left foot to the diagonal forward right cutting uchidachi's dō.
  - (iii) Cross-step on the right foot to the forward right and, using your left as a pivot, turn toward the uchidachi as you drop down on your right knee completing the cut.
  - (iv) Maintain your gaze on uchidachi throughout the waza.



## Uchidachi

5. After shidachi completes their counter attack, turn your gaze to the left to look directly at them.
6. Face shidachi and re-assume chūdan kamae.
  - (i) Verify shidachi's zanshin.
  - (ii) Straighten up from your lean.
  - (iii) In a large swing, bring the bokutō straight overhead as with migi jōdan.
  - (iv) Pivot to the left on both feet to face shidachi. The left foot is now forward.
  - (v) Cross-step back on the left; lower the bokutō to chūdan.
  - (vi) Take another step back on the left foot.
7. Return to center.
  - (i) Verify ai-chūdan. With ayumi-ashi, take seven steps in a semi-circle to the left returning to center.

## Shidachi

5. As uchidachi returns their gaze to you, assume waki-gamae while crouching; exert zanshin.
6. Face uchidachi and re-assume chūdan kamae.
  - (i) Using the right knee as a pivot, shift the legs and hips to fully align with uchidachi.
  - (ii) Match uchidachi's movement; raise the bokutō overhead.
  - (iii) Lower the bokutō with uchidachi, assuming a crouched ai-chūdan.
  - (iv) Uchidachi steps back again. Maintain posture, stand, and cross-step forward on the right foot in ai-chūdan.
7. Return to center.
  - (i) Take seven steps, with ayumi-ashi, in a semi-circle to the left returning to center at yokote-kōsa.

## CHŪDAN VS. JŌDAN OVERVIEW

THERE ARE SEVERAL THINGS a chūdan player should be aware of in order to effectively fight against a jōdan player: (1) the chūdan player must alter their kamae and movement when against a jōdan player in order to provide better defense, (2) the targets available to attack on a jōdan player are slightly different, and (3) the priority of the targets are different against a jōdan player than when facing a chūdan player.

### Kamae Against Jōdan: Seigan no Kamae

When facing a chūdan player from chūdan one directs their kensen to either the opponent's throat or toward their left eye. This position, while it most definitely does not make one immune from being hit, offers a lot more protection from the opponent's strikes than one may realize.<sup>132</sup>

However, when facing a jōdan player, due to their use of katate waza, this innate protection disappears and leaves the chūdan player *completely open to attack*. With jōdan, a target is vulnerable to katate waza if it is within the jōdan targeting area, or too far above or to the side of the boundary. From a standard chūdan position, directed at the throat or left eye, the kensen is already within the targeting area making both men and kote open to a katate strike.<sup>133</sup> Because of the increased range of katate waza, these targets can be hit well before the chūdan player's kensen could touch the jōdan player, let alone block them with the kensen.

To compensate, and remove the 50/50 situation, when facing a jōdan player one assumes seigan no kamae. Chūdan is altered such that the left hand is an additional fist width in front of and one fist above the navel, with the kensen directed toward the opponent's left kote.

#### KEY POINT: SEIGAN NO KAMAE

Seigan is the standard kamae used when facing jōdan as it gives better protection against kote strikes and allows one to easily apply pressure to the primary targets of the jōdan player.

### Available Targets & Target Priority

When fighting against a jōdan player, all of the usual targets are available as well as the jōdan player's left kote.<sup>134</sup> However the priority of the targets are different than the priorities against a chūdan player.



**Figure 80:** Chūdan and seigan no kamae. With chūdan the kensen is directed at the opponent's throat or left eye. With seigan vs. jōdan, the kensen is directed to the opponent's left kote; the left fist is positioned an extra fist width above and in front of the navel compared to standard chūdan.

<sup>132</sup> If the player intentionally holds their kamae effectively on the opponent's center-line any attacks made will result in the opponent being held by the kensen on their *dō-mune* or *tsuki*. If done "...in high spirits, and in the right posture..." the strike will not be considered a *yūkō-datotsu*, FIK (2017).

<sup>133</sup> Worst case scenario, the chūdan player has a 50/50 chance to guess which target to defend; not good odds.

<sup>134</sup> "The target area of the kote shall be the right forearm (the left, forearm if the opponent holds their shinai with the left hand forward) in the case of *chūdan no kamae*, or the left and right forearms in the case of other kamae", FIK (*ibid.*).

## Primary Targets

**Left kote & tsuki.** These targets are both equally top priority: left kote as it is the closest target and consistently exposed, tsuki as it is consistently exposed, can be struck with a long range katate waza, and is an effective spiritual attack against the jōdan player.

**Right kote.** Right kote is the next in the group of primary targets. It is consistently exposed, but slightly more distant than left kote.

## Secondary Targets

**Men.** A jōdan player's men is fully protected by their kamae and cannot be hit unless the jōdan player moves to block or attack. If either occurs a shikake or ōji waza, respectively, can be used to strike the exposed men.

## Tertiary Targets

**Gyaku-dō.** Gyaku-dō is consistently exposed and can also be hit with ōji waza against morote and katate strikes.

**Dō.** Dō is prioritized less than gyaku-dō as a jōdan player brings their right arm to their waist with katate waza covering their dō. This makes ōji waza used to strike dō viable only against jōdan morote strikes. San-pō-mamori also covers dō if used.

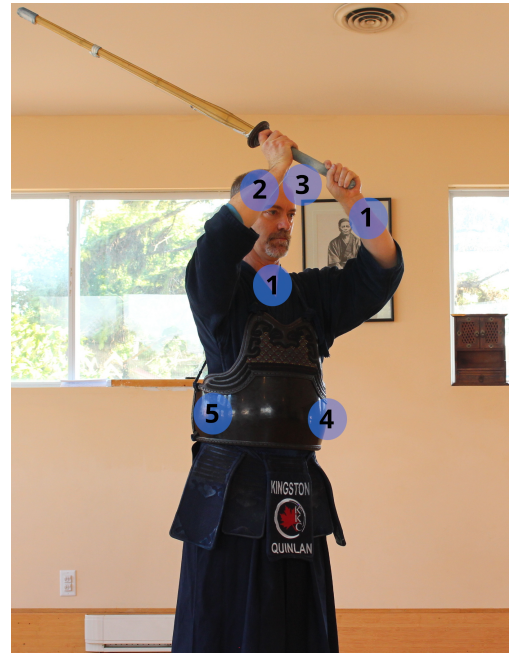


Figure 81: Target priority against jōdan. In order of importance: left kote & tsuki, right kote, shōmen & sayū-men, gyaku-dō, and migi dō.

## KEY POINTS: TARGET PRIORITIES

1. Tsuki is important for the spiritual aspect it has when fighting jōdan. The jōdan player is purposely exposing all of their targets with the intent of attacking as defense. *This mindset must be continuously challenged*, and tsuki is the perfect attack to do so.<sup>135</sup> It requires the player to move directly onto the jōdan player's center-line and, ignoring the threat of attack, make an attack of their own. The thrust itself spiritually, and often literally, stops the jōdan player's advance.<sup>136</sup>
2. Men cannot be struck unless the jōdan player breaks their kamae.
3. Unless the jōdan player can be made to become defensive or lose track of the maai, dō and gyaku-dō are infrequently attacked as (1) it requires one to be well inside the jōdan player's striking range, (2) attacking either dō further exposes one's men to attack from the jōdan player, and (3) if an ōji waza is used against jōdan their men is the most accessible target to strike.<sup>137, 138</sup>

<sup>135</sup> "Since these [attacks from jōdan] are always attacking techniques, the spiritual element exercises more control over their success or failure than technical skill", AJKF (1973). A key aspect then to fighting against jōdan is to attack their spirit, forcing them to hesitate or to change to a defensive mindset.

<sup>136</sup> Many kendōka are reluctant to use tsuki; this cannot be the case against jōdan. Spiritual aspects aside, if the jōdan player only has to be concerned with two primary targets exposed compared to three, they have an incredible advantage. Compare it to a chūdan vs. chūdan match where one player refuses to strike kote.

<sup>137</sup> *Defensive* refers to an opponent that retreats or blocks, exposing themselves both physically and spiritually. See p. 9.

<sup>138</sup> Dō or gyaku-dō are attacked infrequently as an *initial* strike, however it is much more common, and effective, as a follow-up to another, i.e., as part of a nidan waza.

## Movement

Movement against a jōdan player can be considered as *safe* or *risky* depending on the direction of motion.<sup>139</sup> This is because the position of the kensen relative to the jōdan player's targeting area determines whether a target is vulnerable, see p. 25. Whether the jōdan player moves or the opponent does is irrelevant; *either source of movement can change the relative position of the kensen giving the jōdan player a potential opportunity.*

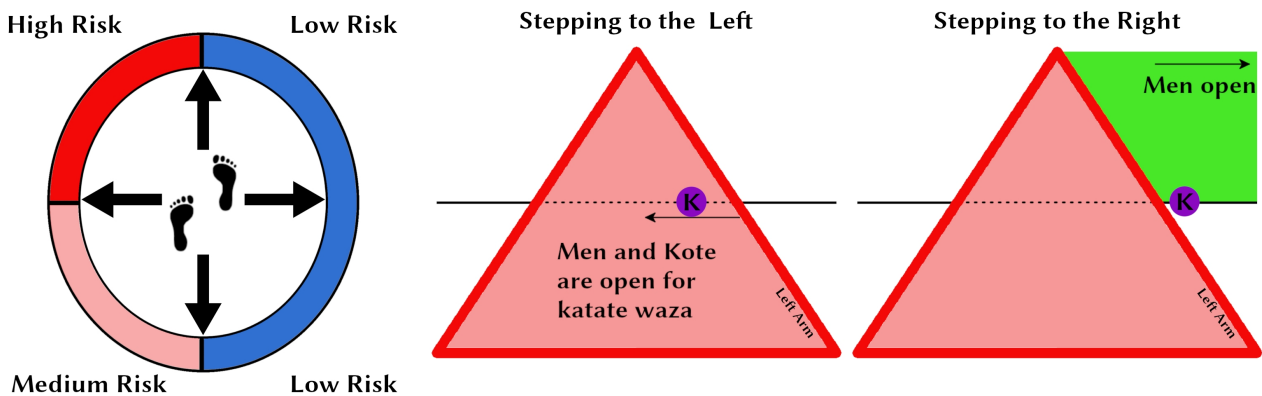
While in seigan vs. jōdan, kote is difficult to strike as the jōdan player either has to push the kensen into the targeting area, p. 26, or use the S-kote, p. 37, to move around the kensen. This leaves men as the main opening one must defend from katate waza.<sup>140</sup> If one moves, for example, toward the left — the jōdan player's right — *without properly adjusting the position of the kensen while moving* then the kensen's position relative to the jōdan targeting area will move inside of the targeting area boundary making both men and kote vulnerable to attack.

To prevent giving the jōdan player the advantageous 50/50 situation, movement should be primarily in the forward/backward direction(s), to the right, or to the diagonal forward-right and back-right.<sup>141</sup>

<sup>139</sup> No position or movement is guaranteed to be safe or vulnerable, or that moving in a safe direction can't be made unsafe and vice versa. It is perhaps more appropriate to note that moving in certain directions against a jōdan player *may* give them an advantage.

<sup>140</sup> This assumes the opponent is unaffected by the jōdan player's seme and maintains their kamae.

<sup>141</sup> 50/50 here refers to when a jōdan player has the opponent in a position, either through movement, seme, or both, where they have at best a 50/50 chance of knowing which target will be attacked, kote or men, as both are exposed. While highly desirable for the jōdan player, it is disastrous for the opponent.



### KEY POINTS: MOVEMENT

1. While moving to the left in seigan, the jōdan player's right, the jōdan opponent can regain the ability to strike both men and kote.
2. When moving against jōdan, or if the jōdan player moves, the kensen position must be adjusted to keep it directed toward the jōdan player's left kote. Otherwise the jōdan player can gain an opportunity to strike as the kensen will either move, or be pushed, into the targeting area or too far away from the boundaries.
3. Movement in a *low risk* direction while in seigan still leaves men vulnerable to an easy attack.

**Figure 82:** Relative risk of movement for chūdan vs. jōdan and positioning of the kensen. (Left) Movement of the chūdan player to the forward-right, rear-right, or directly right are considered low risk whereas movement to the left or forward-left are high risk. Diagonal rear-left is medium risk as the chūdan player moves away from the jōdan player. *From the chūdan player's perspective:* (Center) position of the kensen (K) relative to the stationary jōdan targeting area after stepping to the left, and (Right) after stepping to the right. Risk refers to giving a jōdan player the ability to strike *both men and kote* with katate waza due to the position of the chūdan player's kensen. With low risk movement men remains an exposed target.



## CHŪDAN VS. JŌDAN STRATEGIES

TO UNDERSTAND THE STRATEGY of fighting a jōdan opponent, it is important to understand what the jōdan player themselves intend and what they are focusing on.

### Review: A Jōdan Player's General Approach

*Probing the opponent.* Jōdan players initially face chūdan players with a distance advantage as their uchi-ma is *usually* longer. Because of this they can safely observe the opponent, apply pressure, and gain information about their opponent while being in their striking range. Until the chūdan player can close this gap they are in a position where they can be struck while the jōdan player cannot.<sup>142</sup> Jōdan players will attempt to maintain and/or reestablish this advantage to probe the opponent and gather information on their habits, reactions, etc.

*Observation of movement and maai.* Jōdan players continuously monitor the opponent's movement, position of the kensen, and maai.<sup>143</sup>

*Observation and manipulation of kensen position.* As discussed, jōdan players closely observe the position of the opponent's kensen relative to their targeting area. Through seme, their own movement, movement of the opponent, or a combination of each the jōdan player is looking for when the opponent's kensen enters the targeting area or moves too far above, below, or to the left & right of the targeting area boundaries.

*Application of seme.* With the information gathered by probing and observing the opponent a jōdan player will be able to form a strategy to create an opening to attack, either by manipulating the opponent or simply attacking a defensive or hesitant one. This is done through movement, threatening a specific target and attacking, or threatening one target and striking another. See pp. 26, 44, and 48.

### A Chūdan Player's General Approach Against Jōdan

Knowing in general what the jōdan player's intent is and how they will attempt to create opportunities to strike, the basic approach for the chūdan player then is to cloud the jōdan player's perceptions and disrupt their ability to effectively set up their striking opportunities.<sup>144</sup> This will, in the least, delay their ability to strike and potentially cover the chūdan players intent enough to cause hesitation. If the chūdan player is also able to apply seme and/or close the distance to the opponent, an opportunity to strike is inevitable. This can be accomplished in several ways.

#### GENERAL STRATEGY

There are two general strategies for facing any opponent and, in certain sword schools, these were encoded in the terms known as using a katsujin-ken or a *setsunin-tō*. Whether one faces jōdan by attempting to pressure and counter, or spiritually overwhelm and attack the key to dealing with a jōdan opponent is that one must challenge their ability to maintain their offensive intent. The chūdan player's goal is to push the jōdan player's intent from pure offense toward defense, making them feel exposed while in kamae, and/or vulnerable to ōji waza if using katate strikes. Defense or hesitation, even for a moment, is sufficient to create an opening to strike.

#### GATHERING INFORMATION

A common approach for jōdan players against chūdan is to not attack for the first few moments of a match until one forces the opponent to reveal a specific type of reaction or habit, e.g., overly protective of their kote or their men, aggressive, defensive, uses tsūki, etc. Once done, the jōdan player will use this to create an opportunity to strike.

<sup>142</sup> Save for katate tsūki. This is one reason why katate tsūki is such an important waza: an attack to a primary target with the same range as a jōdan player's katate strikes. Of course jōdan players know this waza can reach them so a blind attempt from a far distance will almost certainly be countered.

<sup>143</sup> The fundamental approach for jōdan vs. a chūdan opponent is to "try to strike him at the moment when he is about to step forward, to the rear, or is beginning a strike", AJKF (1973). So, debana waza against an attacking opponent aside, the act of moving into or out of attack range is a fundamental opportunity for the jōdan player to strike. Which target, e.g., men or kote, is dependent on the opponent's kensen position, maai determines footwork type and if a diagonal movement or an S-kote are viable.

<sup>144</sup> Of course the jōdan opponent may simply make a random attack. While this can serve an important purpose, more often than not an experienced player will not base their attack success on fluke.

*Distort or confuse their judgement of distance.* Jōdan has no forward positioned kensen, meaning the jōdan player doesn't have access to a permanent ruler, the shinai, to help gauge distances; it must be done visually.

Movement will generally consist of multiple steps in any of the safe directions: forward, backward, diagonal forward-right, and diagonal back-right. Movement to the diagonal rear-left can be used as well if the maai is large enough, or if the jōdan player has lost sight of the maai. See p. 92 for details on movement.

As one moves, especially toward the forward-right, the jōdan player will have to turn slightly to continue facing the opponent.<sup>145</sup> If another motion is initiated while the jōdan player is correcting their position, they will have to immediately correct themselves again. *Combined with seme and kensen motion from the chūdan player, this can effectively disrupt perception of distance causing the jōdan player to lose track of the maai.*

The key idea is *not to simply move just to move*, but to distort the opponent's judgement of the maai in order to get closer to the jōdan player before they can compensate or react. Once the chūdan player reaches is-soku ittō no maai strikes to several targets become possible and the jōdan player's safety due to range is eliminated.

#### KEY POINTS: DISTORTING PERCEPTION OF MAAI

1. To distort the jōdan player's perception of maai, one must move such that the jōdan player cannot focus on measuring it. This will have a different rhythm for each jōdan player depending on how quickly or easily they can correct their position to face the moving opponent. Moving just to move, in a repeated pattern, or moving randomly without taking into account the opponent's rhythm will result in the jōdan player having an opportunity to strike.
2. The goal of distorting perception of maai is to get closer to the opponent without the approach being detected. This allows the chudan player (1) to make attacks other than katate tsuki and (2) to stop the jōdan player from being able to safely observe their opponent without the threat of attack due to range.

*Distort their ability to determine vulnerable targets.* This goes hand in hand with clouding the jōdan player's perception of maai; the two are usually done simultaneously. Recall that a jōdan player tracks the opponent's kensen position relative to the targeting area to determine vulnerable targets. If the kensen remains stagnant, this becomes much easier to do and makes it much easier to come up with strategies to create and strike vulnerable targets.

<sup>145</sup> Caution must be taken with regards to one's kamae and focus even while moving to the diagonal forward-right as it is an easy opportunity for a jōdan player to strike against an unaware or unfocused opponent. In a standard seigan position *men* is still open for the jōdan player to attack and moving to the right – the jōdan player's left – still leaves this opening *even if the jōdan player doesn't correct their position to face the chūdan opponent face on immediately.* In particular a katate strike to the opponent's left *men* is *very easily* made from jōdan in this situation.

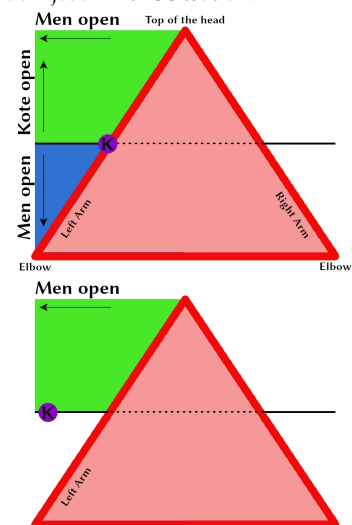


Figure 83: Hidari sayū-men becomes vulnerable. (Top) From standard seigan, when moving to the right against a jōdan player (Bottom) an unadjusted kensen (K) moves (jōdan's perspective) far to the left of the jōdan targeting area boundary making hidari sayū-men more vulnerable.

To counter this, chūdan players often move their kensen up, down, left, right, or in a small back-forward motion similar to a small strike. Their kamae is often cycled between seigan, chūdan, reverse seigan, and a temporary one-handed kamae. See figure 84, p. 96.<sup>146</sup>

The goal is not to somehow try and trick or fool the jōdan player as to your intent but to *make them hesitate by clouding which targets are vulnerable, which ones will be vulnerable, or which they can make vulnerable*.<sup>147</sup>

#### Example of Altering Kensen Position and Kamae<sup>148</sup>

1. The chūdan player takes a standard seigan then moves their kensen slightly upward. This protects men, but opens kote.
2. As the jōdan player's focus is drawn to kote, *but before they strike*, the chūdan player lowers their kensen covering kote and opening men.
3. The kote opening disappears and the jōdan player now focuses on men. As they mentally shift focus, there is a moment of hesitation.<sup>149</sup>
4. The chūdan player shifts again, e.g., to a reverse seigan. Both katate men and kote options are removed and a morote strike must be considered. As focus shifts there is moment of hesitation.
5. The chūdan player alters their kamae to a raised, one-handed kamae.

This removal of target options, when done at the correct rhythm, can have two effects:<sup>150</sup> (1) the jōdan player may hesitate as they adjust where to strike or apply seme, or (2) the jōdan player, especially if the chūdan player is moving closer, simply attacks. Both situations give the chūdan player opportunities to attack, move closer, apply seme, etc.

#### KEY POINTS: CLOUDING PERCEPTION OF OPEN TARGETS

1. *The goal isn't to move the kensen randomly*, but at the correct rhythm to distort the opponent's ability to see and make openings to strike.<sup>151</sup>
2. This is used along with distorting perception of distance, and seme to allow the chūdan player to enter striking range.<sup>152</sup>

#### KEY POINTS: RAISED, ONE-HANDED KAMAE

1. When assuming the one-handed kamae, shōmen and kote are no longer open. Sayū-men, tsuki, and gyaku-dō are.
2. If the chūdan player is unable to strike from here, *at best* it's an attempt to distract the jōdan player. Without seme being applied this leads to an opportunity for the jōdan player to strike kote: at the moment the chūdan player lowers their left hand and replaces their right on the tsuka kote is often vulnerable to a diagonal or S-kote. This is the risk in altering kamae randomly, moving without an intent to strike, or ignoring the opponent's rhythm(s), i.e., moving just to move. A focused jōdan player is able to watch for an eventual opening in relative safety while applying seme of their own.

<sup>146</sup> This one-handed position is often done to cover the men with the shinai, and the right kote is moved to the waist, essentially removing the two primary targets for katate waza.

<sup>147</sup> Although fooling the opponent, i.e., masking one's intent, can definitely happen. Essentially if the jōdan player is focused solely on following the kensen vs. observing the opponent's rhythm and intent they can lose sight of where and how the opponent can attack.

<sup>148</sup> This is a *contrived example* as these movements are done in addition to distorting maai perception, application of seme, and in accordance to the rhythm(s) of the opponent. However the example does convey the intent behind the movements.

<sup>149</sup> This mental hesitation is not due to fear or doubt but that they must, at least momentarily, alter their intended target. Experience and focus will determine how long this moment lasts, if one exists at all.

<sup>150</sup> Similar to distorting a jōdan player's perception of distance, altering kamae and the position of the kensen isn't just random motion. These movements should be done to counter the specific rhythm(s) of the opponent to be effective.

<sup>151</sup> Initially a chūdan opponent will most certainly move *somewhat* randomly as they probe the opponent in order to perceive their rhythm(s). The key is that these motions are done *while applying seme*, i.e., actively pressuring the opponent in order to interpret habits, reactions, etc., vs. truly random, empty movement. Once done, kensen movement becomes more coordinated and deliberate against the opponent.

<sup>152</sup> See 前原正作(鹿児島) - 寺地種寿(東京) 1990 全日本剣道選手権大会 (2014) for examples of combining each of these ideas while applying seme.





*Figure 84: Altering kensen position. (Top, Left to Right): Kensen raised and kensen lowered in seigan no kamae. (Bottom, Left to Right): Raised kensen in reverse seigan, and a one-handed kamae from *jodan Yamamoto sensei* (2009) and *jodan Yamamoto sensei 2* (2009). The purpose of altering kensen position is to prevent the jōdan opponent from seeing or creating openings to attack. This is used, along with distorting maei and application of seme, by chūdan players to create opportunities to strike.*



*Establish tsuki as a threat.* As discussed, p. 90, tsuki is a primary target against a jōdan player. Many kendōka either do not practice tsuki regularly, are discouraged from using it, or are simply afraid to use it. However against a jōdan player, this stigma must be overcome otherwise it gives the jōdan player an enormous advantage.<sup>153, 154</sup> The equivalent situation for chūdan vs. a chūdan opponent would be, e.g., to purposely never attack kote; an advantage nobody would ever willingly give.

#### Advantages Given by an Opponent That Doesn't Use Tsuki

1. With the threat of katate tsuki gone, the only attack a chūdan player has with similar range to katate waza from jōdan, the jōdan player's distance advantage is unquestionable.
2. Without having to be concerned about tsuki, the jōdan player essentially only has to consider attacks to their kote. This makes coping with the opponent's attacks, no matter how aggressive, much simpler.
3. The chūdan player's ability to apply seme and manipulate the jōdan player's reactions becomes limited. See p. 98.
4. Knowing the opponent won't tsuki gives the jōdan player a spiritual boost as they simply don't have to deal with the attack.<sup>155</sup>

This does not mean that all players should just repeatedly tsuki, but that the jōdan player needs to know that it is present in the chūdan opponent's anti-jōdan arsenal.<sup>156</sup>

All this requires is for the opponent to attempt tsuki once *with full spirit*. This places the threat of tsuki in the jōdan player's mind, front and center, removing any potential advantage from being able to ignore it.

#### KEY POINTS: ESTABLISHING TSUKI AS A THREAT

1. Force jōdan players to deal with tsuki; don't give an advantage.
2. One attempt is enough to establish tsuki as a threat *if it's done with full vigor and intent*. An ambivalent or hesitant attempt will entice the jōdan player to call you on your bluff.<sup>157</sup>
3. Once tsuki is established as a threat, a defensive or reactive jōdan player may begin to expose their men by breaking kamae and covering their tsuki-dare instead of attacking.<sup>158</sup> Seme toward tsuki, inducing a kamae break, and attack any target that opens.

*Logically and purposefully apply seme.* This ties in directly with movement and altering the kensen position. As one approaches the jōdan player, seme is applied to threaten an attack. While the jōdan player has to cope with distortion of their distance perception and movement of the kensen, the application of seme draws their attention away from those aspects, allowing those strategies to function more effectively.

<sup>153</sup> There are several etiquette issues surrounding tsuki use in the dōjō, and many will have their own rules. While tsuki is kihon and jōdan players should invite opponents to use it, violating dōjō etiquette to use this particular attack would be a mistake.

#### GENERALIZED ETIQUETTE FOR TSUKI

1. Some dōjō have a minimum rank requirement for tsuki use; obey it.
2. Do not consider tsuki in *keiko* until you have adequate control.
3. Do not use tsuki against those of higher rank unless discussed.
4. Do not use tsuki against a senior sensei unless they invite it.

<sup>154</sup> *Shiai* is a different beast than dōjō practice, and the etiquette for tsuki use is somewhat relaxed. However, it still should not be used against opponents until a certain level of control and accuracy is achieved.

<sup>155</sup> "[Jōdan players] *must learn to deal with it [tsuki]*", *Chiba Sensei's 'Kendo Perfect Master' – Jodan* (2017).

<sup>156</sup> Although this can be very effective as a means to push a hesitant player further into a defensive mindset. A jōdan player that uses san-pō-mamori, horizontal blocking, preemptive blocking, or is hesitant to attack, see pp. 7–10, may become even more defensive against repeated tsuki. Once their spirit crumbles they will feel exposed and lower their hands to cover tsuki, or make desperate attacks to try and stop the pressure. In both situations they are completely vulnerable to attack. Spiritually they have lost the encounter and, theoretically, landing a strike on them is inevitable.

<sup>157</sup> *Call you on your bluff* here refers to attempting to face the jōdan opponent directly on their centerline with an equal or stronger offense based spirit. An insufficient or faltering spirit would be disastrous against any opponent, jōdan or not, that intends to test its authenticity, especially after a tsuki attempt.

<sup>158</sup> This is a common habit with jōdan players who are not regularly struck by tsuki, i.e., they have not been forced to learn to deal with it spiritually or physically.

However it is important to apply seme to all primary targets, i.e., left or right kote, and tsuki. Threatening all primary targets forces the jōdan player to (1) recognize their exposure to three different attacks, (2) lose the ability to *easily* observe the opponent as their attention is drawn, by threat of attack, from one target toward another.<sup>159</sup>

Much like distance distortion and kensen movement, seme should not be done randomly but according to the rhythm or behaviour(s) specific to the opponent, and rational for the given situation.

**Avoid patterned or empty motions.** So far much of what has been stated for fighting against jōdan has been on altering the position of the kensen, moving one's position relative to the jōdan player, and applying seme to the primary targets by threatening an attack. However all of this can lead to patterned movement, especially if there is no connection with the jōdan opponent.<sup>160</sup> If a pattern does develop a focused jōdan player *will almost certainly detect it* and use this to know where and when to attack.

Movement of the kensen or one's position should have the express purpose of applying seme.<sup>161</sup> Whether moving to invade their maai, distorting which targets are viable, etc., all motions should threaten an attack.<sup>162</sup> Don't make empty motions *just to make them*.

A simple example is when players move their kensen up and down. Even if random, with no threat of attack it's just empty movement and the jōdan player will recognize a pattern: when the kensen is down, as soon as the chūdan player begins to move it, the jōdan player *knows* the kensen will move up; kote can be made vulnerable.<sup>163</sup>

#### KEY POINTS: PATTERNED & EMPTY MOVEMENT

1. Jōdan players focus on observing the kensen and opponent motion. They *will* detect obvious patterns and use them to create openings.
2. Make movements or alterations to kamae according to the rhythm of the opponent and always threaten attack. *Don't move just to move.*

**Threaten one, strike the other.** Just as with jōdan, in addition to applying seme and striking, chūdan players should threaten one target and strike another, see p. 48, as focus is drawn to the original.

#### KEY POINT: EXAMPLES OF THREATENING & STRIKING A JŌDAN OPPONENT

Threatening Left Kote	Threatening Right Kote	Threatening Tsuki
Threaten left kote → strike right kote	Threaten right kote → strike left kote	Threaten tsuki → strike left kote
Threaten left kote → strike tsuki	Threaten right kote → strike right kote	Threaten tsuki → strike right kote
Threaten left kote → strike left kote	Threaten right kote → strike tsuki	Threaten tsuki → strike tsuki

<sup>159</sup> The term *easily* refers to the *relatively* safe position of being able to observe the opponent while only having to be concerned with limited attacks, e.g., only kote strikes if tsuki is not used.

<sup>160</sup> That is they are done randomly or with some predefined pattern and not according to the specific rhythm of the opponent. It is a common assumption that the act of moving of the kensen, changing distance, or altering kamae *automatically* distracts the jōdan player. *This is not true.*

<sup>161</sup> A common adage for fighting jōdan is that first and foremost one must overpower their spirit. From Craig (1999), after facing a senior sensei with jōdan, and being harshly knocked over with tsuki, the sensei was asked if they did something wrong. The response was “If you attack me from the heavens [Ten no Kamae], I have no choice but to send you back”. See 37th All Japan Kendo Championships (1989)–Higashi vs. Suigura (2013) for an example of an opponent undermining a jōdan player's spirit.

<sup>162</sup> This type of kensen movement, and accompanying spirit, is demonstrated in 第23回 明治村剣道大会 千葉仁 x 有馬光男 (2013).

<sup>163</sup> In this example the chūdan player will move their kensen up according to their current pattern on their own, or due to seme toward men from the jōdan player applied at the correct moment.



*Figure 85: Examples of threatening left kote and striking against jōdan. The chūdan player begins at issoku-ittō no maai. (1) A basic strike: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening left kote and (Blue) strikes left kote. (2) Threaten left kote, strike tsūki: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening left kote. Altering kensen direction they (Blue) strike katate tsūki. (3) Threaten left kote, strike right kote: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening left kote. Altering kensen direction they (Blue) strike right kote.*





*Figure 86: Examples of threatening right kote and striking against jōdan. The chūdan player begins at issoku-ittō no maai. (1) A basic strike: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening right kote and (Blue) strikes right kote. (2) Threaten left kote, strike tsūki: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening right kote. Altering kensen direction they (Blue) strike morote tsūki. (3) Threaten right kote, strike left kote: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening right kote. Altering kensen direction they (Blue) strike left kote.*





*Figure 87: Examples of threatening tsuki and striking against jōdan. The chūdan player begins at issoku-ittō no maei. (1) A basic strike: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening tsuki and (Blue) strikes katate tsuki. (2) Threaten tsuki, strike left kote: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening tsuki. Altering kensen direction they (Blue) strike left kote. (3) Threaten tsuki, strike right kote: the chūdan player begins their step forward (Green) threatening tsuki. Altering kensen direction they (Blue) strike right kote.*

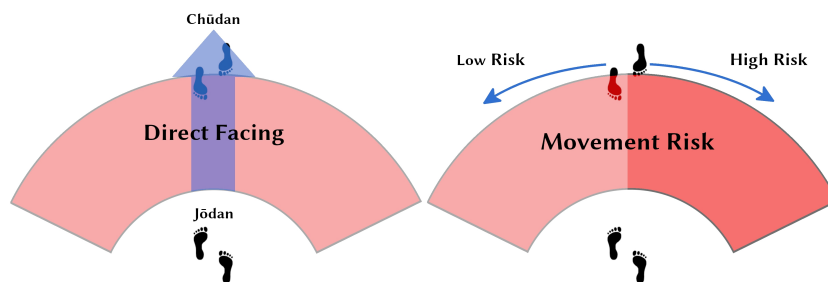
*Be observant for jōdan specific opportunities to act.* There are several opportunities specific to jōdan where one can act: (1) during the recovery of a katate strike, (2) as they correct their facing, and (3) during the retraction of their pressed tsūka-gashira.<sup>164</sup>

With a missed katate strike the jōdan player must recover their shinai before they can attack again.<sup>165</sup> Unless they move quickly closer to or away from the opponent during their recovery the jōdan player will be able to, at best, block attacks with a one-handed block, see p. 9. Against players that are slow or more stationary after an attack this is an opportunity to apply seme, draw out a committed block from the jōdan player, and strike a target that opens.

#### KEY POINTS: ATTACKING DURING STRIKE RECOVERY

1. Opponents that are quickly forward mobile during zanshin will often move in while attempting to block men. A gyaku-dō or migi sayū-men strike is often effective here.
2. Slower or more stationary players can make consecutive blocks to men, kote, and tsūki with a one-handed block. Drawing out a more physically large motion, e.g., blocking gyaku-dō one-handed, and making use of angled strikes can create opportunities.<sup>166</sup>

The second opportunity is when a jōdan player corrects their facing. A direct facing is preferred as this allows them to pressure both men and kote with katate waza; a jōdan player *will* re-assume this facing should the opponent move left or right. While pivoting, there is a *momentary* shift in focus toward moving and/or correcting their kamae which can distract from their offensive readiness.



#### KEY POINTS: ACTING WHILE JŌDAN PLAYERS PIVOT

1. If the jōdan player has to pivot to maintain a direct facing to the opponent, there is a momentary shift in focus their opponent can use to attack, pressure, alter maa, etc.
2. If the opponent is within striking range then they must take into account the associated risk their movements bring.

<sup>164</sup> While these opportunities are not *unique* to jōdan, save for the tsūka-gashira press, they are consistently present among all jōdan users and should be taken advantage of.

<sup>165</sup> Jōdan, known for being a *one chance* kamae, forces users to learn very early to have zanshin in order to protect themselves after making a strike attempt. See pp. 30–32.

<sup>166</sup> The intent is to force them to block in a way they cannot quickly recover from. For example, when they use a horizontal block, threaten or attack men. As they block, threaten gyaku-dō. If they move their arm to cover their dō with their tsūka strike their exposed migi sayū-men. Defending dō doesn't allow them to recover quickly enough to block a target as distant as migi sayū-men.

*Figure 88:* Jōdan players prefer a direct facing toward their opponent. (Left) A (Blue) direct facing while the opponent is in a jōdan player's (Light Red) uchi-ma allows them to effectively pressure both men and kote. If they have to correct their facing by pivoting, this creates a momentary shift in their focus which the opponent can take advantage of. (Right) The relative risk for movement of a chūdan player vs. a jōdan player. If the chūdan opponent is in the jōdan player's uchi-ma, then they must also take into account the risk hierarchy of moving to the left or right if they are intending to elicit a pivot. (Blue) Moving to the jōdan player's (Red) right, chūdan player's left, is a high risk movement as it can open their kote. Movement to their (Light Red) left, the chūdan player's right, is a low risk movement as this only leaves men open. See p. 92 for more details.



The third opportunity is as they press the tsuka-gashira to apply seme. <sup>167</sup> As they retract, focus *briefly* shifts to resuming kamae.

#### KEY POINTS: ATTACKING TSUKA-GASHIRA RETRACTION

1. The *correct moment* for a strike is similar to debana waza; it must be made at the moment the retraction begins.
2. If seme is applied on retraction instead, jōdan players can be forced into making defensive actions. See pp. 9–10.

#### KEY POINT: TSUKA-GASHIRA RETRACTION OPPORTUNITIES

Retraction → debana left/right kote or tsuki <sup>168</sup>

Retraction → seme → *false nuki* → right kote, dō, gyaku-dō, tsuki

Retraction → seme → *horizontal block* → gyaku-dō, tsuki, sayū-men

Retraction → seme → *retreat* → chase and continue seme <sup>169</sup>

<sup>167</sup> This is the more difficult opening to make use of as it requires the jōdan player to be caught off-guard or be spiritually overwhelmed. This requires a strong connection to the opponent, expression of sen, and excellent timing. But it's also dependent on the jōdan opponent, e.g., the state of their spirit and offensive/defensive intent, focus, as well as experience, timing, etc.

<sup>168</sup> *Debana* here refers to the timing of hitting the opponent's *tsuka* retraction as it begins, *not their attack*.

<sup>169</sup> This is a variation of tachi kata: rōpponme. See p. 83.

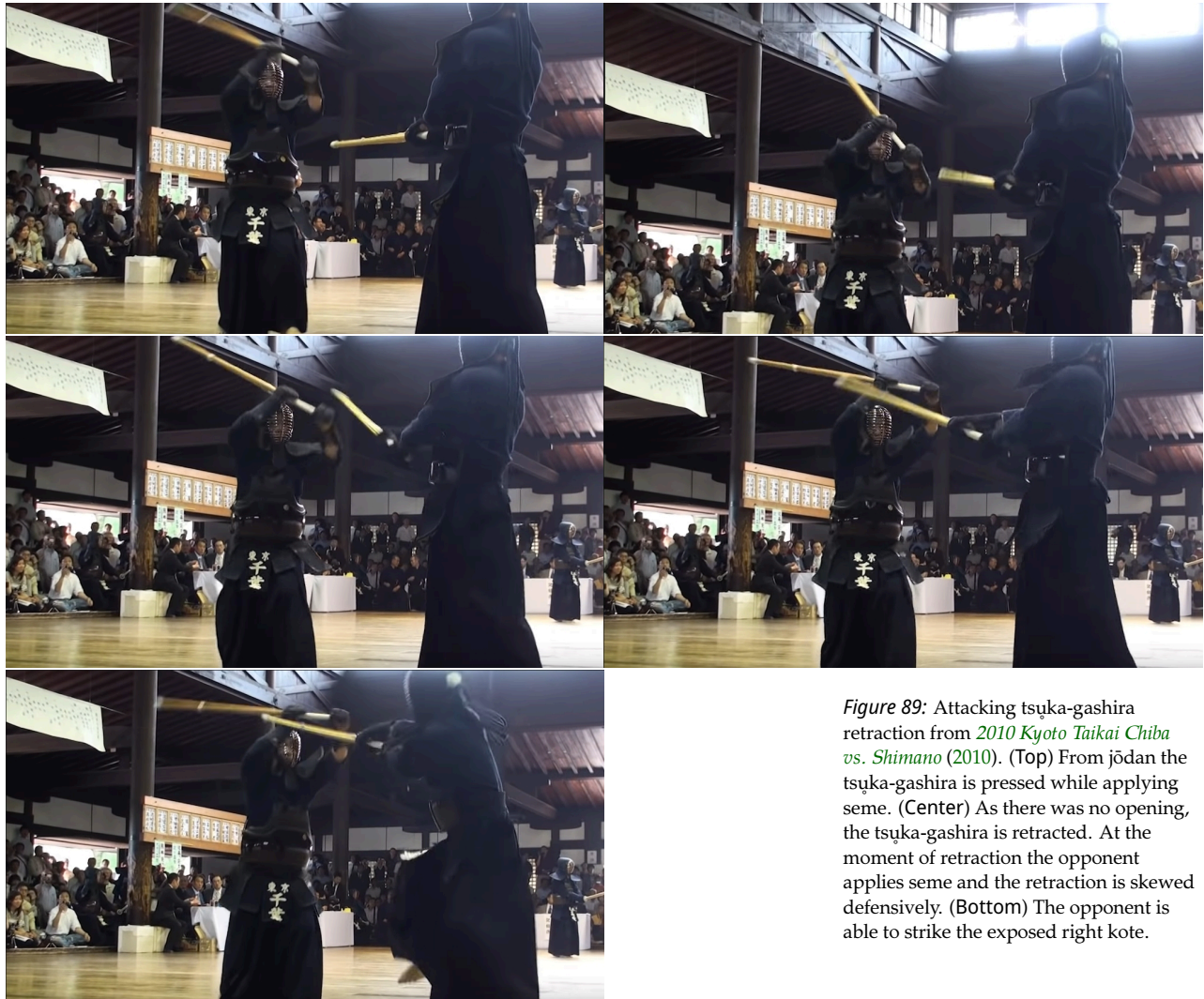


Figure 89: Attacking tsuka-gashira retraction from 2010 Kyoto Taikai Chiba vs. Shimano (2010). (Top) From jōdan the tsuka-gashira is pressed while applying seme. (Center) As there was no opening, the tsuka-gashira is retracted. At the moment of retraction the opponent applies seme and the retraction is skewed defensively. (Bottom) The opponent is able to strike the exposed right kote.

## CHŪDAN VS. JŌDAN: STRATEGIES & THEIR ASSUMPTIONS

THERE ARE SEVERAL COMMON ideas for anti-jōdan, many of which have already been pointed out. These ideas are not written in stone and are situation dependent. Specifically, they are *dependent on assumptions made and the actions of the jōdan opponent*. Often kendōka employ anti-jōdan ideas because they are “what you are supposed to do” vs. being applicable to the current opponent.

The intent here is to look at (chūdan based) anti-jōdan, the reasons behind common actions, and assumptions made using them.

Entries in tables 2, 3, and 4 are broken into three parts: purpose, origin, and assumption on use. These indicate the intent, the origin of the action (kata or kamae features), and the assumption one makes of the current jōdan opponent when using them.<sup>170</sup>

### Consistently Moving the Kensen

There are three common reasons behind consistently moving the kensen.

Consistently Moving the Kensen	
Purpose:	Disrupt jōdan player's ability find opportunities
Origin:	Kamae: limited targets with katate waza
Assumption:	The jōdan player is unable to determine if the kensen is in a vulnerable position, p. 25
Purpose:	Draw out an attack from the jōdan opponent
Origin:	Tachi Kata: Gohonme, p. 83
Assumption:	The jōdan player is affected by applied seme enough that they will accept a lure
Purpose:	Disrupt the jōdan player's perception of maai, p. 94
Origin:	Kamae: no forward kensen to measure maai
Assumption:	The jōdan player is unable to assess maai visually

The first is to disrupt the ability of the jōdan player to set-up a katate strike opportunity. Since katate waza is limited to men and kote, these are the openings a jōdan player is looking for from a distant maai. By continually opening and then removing a target, the intent is to create hesitation in the jōdan player.<sup>171</sup> The assumption behind this of course is that the jōdan player is *actually* being distracted by this motion, and is unable to find an opening. The danger is that if they are not distracted, or they find a pattern in the movements, this will result in giving an opportunity to strike. Another problem is whether or not the jōdan player chooses to use morote waza from a distant maai forcing the opponent to defend multiple targets instead of two.<sup>172</sup>

**Note:** It is important to note that when actually facing a jōdan opponent many of the strategies discussed here are often used together simultaneously vs. individually. However understanding each separately will aid in understanding their combined use.

<sup>170</sup> Assumption here implies one accepts certain actions are *immediately appropriate* for use against the current opponent. This does not mean one shouldn't probe the opponent to determine what is appropriate by testing these ideas against them. But this determination often takes time and assuming all actions are appropriate without understanding the opponent's actions or rhythm can lead to giving them an opportunity to strike.

Table 2: Consistently moving the kensen as a part of anti-jōdan.

#### KEY POINT: MOVING THE KENSEN

If moving the kensen is to be an effective part of an anti-jōdan defense one must ensure it has an actual effect on the opponent. Determining this can be difficult. To do so one must observe the actions and re-actions the opponent makes when the kensen is moved, e.g., body movement, advancing or retreating, shinai position, when and how they apply seme or press the tsuka-gashira, etc. From their actions one can determine if they have lost focus on their targeting area, are under pressure to attack or defend, and if they are still attentive to the maai.

<sup>171</sup> *Hesitation* is created not by diminishing their confidence but in that they are unable to determine a vulnerable target. See p. 94.

<sup>172</sup> If the jōdan player chooses to use morote waza men, kote, and dō all become possibilities. In limited situations even tsuki can be used. See p. 27.



The second is to purposely open one target and then another with the intent to draw out an attack from the jōdan player, e.g., move the kensen upward to better protect men and uncover kote somewhat drawing out a strike to the kote.<sup>173</sup> The assumption here is two-fold: (1) the jōdan player accepts your lure and *attacks when you dictate*, and (2) that you are in fact *able to counter the incoming attack*.

The third is that by moving the kensen frequently one can cause the jōdan player to become distracted. Combined with movement from the chūdan player, the jōdan player may lose track of the maai. This would allow one to enter the jōdan opponent's maai and initiate an attack. This assumes that the jōdan player *actually is distracted by the opponent's kensen or somehow reliant on it for the gauging of maai*.

### Alternating Position of the Kensen

#### Cycling Kensen Position Between Primary & Secondary Targets

Purpose:	Seme toward all of jōdan's primary targets
Origin:	Tachi Kata: Gohonme, Ropponme, p. 83
Assumption:	The jōdan player is affected by applied seme
Purpose:	Threaten one, strike the other, p. 98
Origin:	Kamae: multiple targets consistently exposed
Assumption:	Applied seme draws the jōdan player's focus

The reason for cycling the kensen between jōdan's primary and secondary targets serves a number of purposes, but each stems from one result and that is to have the jōdan player perceive seme from their opponent; to feel threatened by an impending attack. Once this is established, any number of scenarios can occur: the jōdan player alters their kamae, retreats, attacks, etc., and each one of these scenarios leads to an opportunity to attack the jōdan player with either shikake or ōji waza. The assumption here of course is that the jōdan player *actually feels threatened*, i.e., that they do in fact perceive seme.<sup>174</sup> If this is not the case, then the jōdan player will quite possibly be given an attack opportunity every time the opponent's kamae is changed/alterd.

<sup>173</sup> In the most basic scenario, when the seigan user's kensen is too low the jōdan player will attempt to strike men. When the kensen is held too high the jōdan player will attack kote. See p. 26.

Table 3: Cycling the kensen between targets while facing a jōdan opponent as a part of anti-jōdan.

#### KEY POINT: CYCLING THE KENSEN

For kensen cycling to be effective two things must occur:

1. The cycling motions should apply seme and not simply be empty movement *just to move*.
2. The jōdan opponent must be threatened by these motions, i.e., they perceive that one is able to make an attack from these alternate positions.

Each of the motions must be made as if one is about to attack. If one cannot make an attack or continue to threaten the opponent from a specific position, e.g., from a one-handed kamae, *then this position should not be taken as part of one's anti-jōdan strategies*.

<sup>174</sup> One of the difficult issues beginners have regarding seme is that it is *opponent dependent*. An action that creates seme against one opponent may not against another. *Unless the opponent perceives a threat, there is no seme*.

## Continuous Movement About the Jōdan Opponent

The final idea to look at is that one ought to continuously move, i.e., forward, back, left, right, etc., while facing a jōdan opponent. This is often combined with moving and/or cycling the kensen, however only the movement will be examined here. There are two separate ideas involved in continuously moving.

Continuous Movement About the Jōdan Opponent	
Purpose:	Disrupt jōdan player's ability to find opportunities
Origin:	Kamae: no forward kensen to measure maai
Assumption:	The jōdan player is unable to assess maai visually or determine if the kensen is in a vulnerable position
Purpose:	Enter opponent's uchi-ma & into issoku ittō no maai
Origin:	Kamae: no forward kensen to measure maai
Assumption:	The jōdan player is unable to assess maai visually

The first is that one intends to disrupt the jōdan player's ability to set-up a strike opportunity. The idea is that by constantly moving the jōdan player loses track of the maai, and similar to the idea discussed above on moving the kensen, the jōdan player will become hesitant in their attack as the opponent's targets continually come in and out of their distorted maai.<sup>175</sup> The assumption made here is the jōdan player is unable to judge their own maai, which has been discussed already. Another assumption that comes into play is that one assumes they themselves are able to remain stable and ready throughout this constant motion and are able to attack or counter the jōdan player.<sup>176</sup>

The second idea is that by continually moving, the opponent is able to disguise their movement into the jōdan player's uchi-ma. If successful the opponent will be able to initiate an attack against the jōdan player undetected. This again assumes that the jōdan player is distracted from their ability to judge their own maai and that one is stable enough to launch an effective attack while making these motions.

## Creating an Anti-Jōdan Defense

While it is impossible to discuss all possible strategies and methods, by better understanding the underlying assumptions behind some of the more common anti-jōdan strategies, as discussed above, the creation of an effective and *opponent appropriate* strategy is possible.

**Table 4:** Continually moving about the opponent as a part of anti-jōdan.

### KEY POINT: CONTINUOUS MOVEMENT

For this to be an effective addition to anti-jōdan the movement(s) must be made such that:

1. They do not cause the kensen to *unintentionally* enter a vulnerable position, p. 26.
2. They avoid *unintentional* high risk movements, p. 92.
3. They allow one to remain stable and balanced such that readiness to attack or counter-attack is maintained.

**Note:** *Unintentional(ly)* implies occurring without knowing. This does not mean they cannot *intentionally* be done as part of a lure during seme-ai.

<sup>175</sup> An important reminder is that one of the most basic answers to "when should a person attack their opponent?" is in fact when the opponent begins to move (in any direction). The assumption on the jōdan player then is much more than they are unable to judge maai or set up a strike opportunity, but that their focus has been disrupted enough so they completely abandon one of the most basic instructions in kendō.

<sup>176</sup> This assumption about one's own ability is very easy to remain ignorant to and not always considered when applying these types of motions against an opponent.

## AI-JŌDAN OVERVIEW

AN AI-JŌDAN MATCH, *in simple terms*, is a match to see who can make a successful strike to the opponent's left or right kote.<sup>177</sup> While there are other details to the match-up, this is the basic theme.



<sup>177</sup> There are men attempts as well. If the opponent attempts to strike right or left kote a properly timed katate men will act as a kote → nuki men. See figures 91 and 92, p. 108.

*Figure 90:* Two kendōka in ai-jōdan. An ai-jōdan match tends to be a match where the central strategy is to create an opportunity to strike either a katate left or right kote, or counter-attack with a katate or morote men. The other targets require the opponent to become defensive in some manner, allowing one to initiate with a morote strike.

### Available Targets & Target Priority

While all targets are *technically* available, most are considered low priority as both players are looking to use katate waza almost exclusively.<sup>178</sup>

#### Primary Targets

**Left and right kote.** These are the primary targets during an ai-jōdan match. They are both consistently exposed and open to katate strikes.<sup>179</sup>

#### Secondary Targets

**Men.** Men is protected by the opponent's shinai and can't be hit unless the opponent attacks, blocks, or breaks kamae.

#### Tertiary Targets

**Tsuki, dō, and gyaku-dō.** These are low priority as each requires the opponent to either (1) become hesitant, (2) preemptively block, or (3) alter kamae.<sup>180</sup> Each of these are morote waza.<sup>181</sup>

### KEY POINTS: ATTACKING & TARGET PRIORITIES

1. Attacks are almost exclusively katate waza with ai-jōdan.
2. Morote waza, which have shorter range and are slower to initiate, may give the opponent an advantage. They're usually used against an opponent that preemptively blocks, or as an ōji waza.
3. Left and right kote are *by far* the most important targets.

<sup>178</sup> The obvious exception would be a hiki-waza from tsuba-zeriai. Morote waza *can* be used outside of tsuba-zeriai as well but this usually requires one to shift the opponent into a defensive mindset in order to strike a target opened by preemptive blocking, etc.

<sup>179</sup> It is important to note that all kote strikes against a jōdan opponent while using jōdan are similar to katate sayū-men strikes which are considered intermediate to advanced level waza depending on the type used. See p. 119.

<sup>180</sup> Dō and gyaku-dō *can* be hit as an ōji waza. However these are uncommon with ai-jōdan.

<sup>181</sup> In ai-jōdan the shorter striking range for morote waza compared to the opponent's potential katate waza creates a significant disadvantage in using them outside of the situations listed.



### KEY POINT: LEFT & RIGHT KOTE

In ai-jōdan left and right kote are always exposed making them *by far* the most frequently attacked targets in this type of encounter.

*Figure 91: Striking right and left katate kote in ai-jōdan from 千葉 仁 Chiba sensei (kyōshi 7dan) and 東 一良 Higashi sensei (kyōshi 6dan) [1980s] (2011). (Left) Striking the left kote and (Right) striking the right kote are the primary targets in ai-jōdan.*



### KEY POINT: “KŌBŌ-ITCHI” WAZA IN AI-JŌDAN

In ai-jōdan, while there are other important ōji waza, attacking is often the best form of defense due to jōdan’s “kōbō-itchi” waza; the inherent nuki waza provides defense against attacks to both primary targets. See p. 72.

*Figure 92: Kote→ nuki men in ai-jōdan from 千葉 仁 Chiba sensei (kyōshi 7dan) and 東 一良 Higashi sensei (kyōshi 6dan) [1980s] (2011). (Top) The player on the left applies seme; the player on the right responds by pressing the tsuka-gashira. (Bottom) The left player attacks left kote but the player on the right attacks men, resulting in a kote→ nuki men.*



## Mentality

The basic scenario of using jōdan against chūdan is (1) the jōdan player, while in kamae, is almost fully exposed to the opponent with limited defensive, i.e., ōji waza, options and (2) the advantages of jōdan and its source of defense is through offense. This is the same for ai-jōdan.

With ai-jōdan, assuming neither player has succumbed to seme and have become defensive or are lured into attacking when the opponent dictates, *both players will actively look for opportunities to strike with katate waza to either the left or right kote or to strike debana or nuki men.*

The key to the ai-jōdan match then is maintaining sen, and applying pressure to the opponent.<sup>182</sup> When an attack is made, it must be made with *sutemi* and be followed with strong physical and/or spiritual zanshin, regardless of whether the attack was successful or not.<sup>183</sup>

With the primary targets being exposed almost continuously and ōji waza, outside of debana waza, essentially limited to kote→ nuki men and kote→ uchi-otoshi men, makes for a situation where a jōdan player that becomes defensive or even slightly hesitant will likely be hit. Only through offense, both spiritual and physical, can players in ai-jōdan both protect themselves and establish seme to create opportunities to strike.

Uchi-otoshi used as redirection is effective as a defensive option, but must be used with the intent to set up opportunities, or place the opponent at a disadvantage to push them towards a defensive mindset. Using redirection only as an *escape* vs. as a way to set up attacks or challenge the opponent's spirit is a *delay tactic*.<sup>184</sup> This is similar to becoming defensive and blocking; the defensive player can lose their offensive mindset, see pp. 7–9, and eventually give an opportunity to be hit.

### KEY POINTS: AI-JŌDAN MENTALITY

1. Maintaining one's offensive intent during an ai-jōdan match is of the utmost importance. Being defensive or hesitant as a jōdan player will give the opponent a opening they can take easy advantage of.
2. If a defensive action is used, e.g., uchi-otoshi as a pure redirection, immediately following up with movement or repositioning to apply pressure will help prevent one from losing their offense based mindset by maintaining focus on creating opportunities to attack.

### APPLICATION OF SEME

While difficult in practice, the general idea of using seme against an opponent is simple: if one can force the opponent to become defensive shikake waza allows one to take advantage of any openings, while on the other hand if one can lure, force, or invite the opponent to attack ōji waza can be used to strike. This allows one to strike both aggressive and defensive opponents by effectively controlling the opponent, the tempo of the encounter, etc. This applies to chūdan vs. chūdan, jōdan vs. chūdan and ai-jōdan encounters. However due to the consistently exposed nature of an ai-jōdan match the effective use, or more importantly the ineffective use, of seme dominates the encounter.

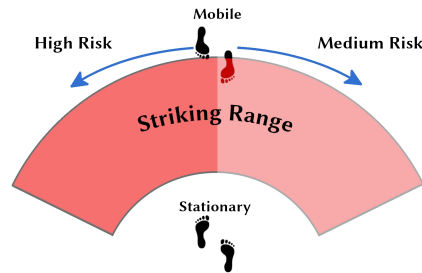
<sup>182</sup> *Maintaining sen* here refers to consistently being mentally and physically ready to initiate or act; maintaining one's offense based mindset and *proactively* attempting to initiate an exchange where the opponent is forced to respond to you.

<sup>183</sup> See note 16, p. 10, and pp. 30–32 for details on zanshin.

<sup>184</sup> Uchi-otoshi as a *delay tactic* is referring to using it with the mentality of blocking, i.e., the primary intent is to stop oneself from being hit. If one performs uchi-otoshi purely as a redirection, as opposed to redirection followed by an immediate strike, the important point is to immediately follow-up with movement or repositioning that puts the opponent at a disadvantage allowing one to maintain their offensive pressure. See p. 60.

## Movement in Ai-jōdan

Ai-jōdan movement has a risk hierarchy as with chūdan vs. jōdan, p. 92, but as the primary targets are always exposed all motion has risk.<sup>185</sup>



In general movement is used to apply pressure or to cause the opponent to have to pivot, in order to maintain a direct facing, diverting their attention momentarily.

Jōdan players monitor the opponent's movement closely as this is a part of the kihon striking method.<sup>186</sup> Because of this, and the effects of movement mentioned above, movement itself is a large part of the strategy to create opportunities to strike.

## APPROACH TO AI-JŌDAN

ALBEIT DIFFERENT, THE GENERAL approach in ai-jōdan is similar to ai-chūdan; a balance of aggression and patience is needed.<sup>187</sup>

*Maximum issoku-ittō no maai.* The ai-jōdan match is usually played at a *maximum* issoku-ittō no maai. Players can attack by taking their *maximum length* step or back up one *small* step to avoid an attack.

*Threatening the opponent.* Attacking pressure is applied by moving into range and pressing the tsuka-gashira, p. 44. This is less complex than with a chūdan opponent as *pressing forward threatens all primary targets*.<sup>188</sup>

Pressing the tsuka-gashira begins the motion for uchi-otoshi waza. As katate strikes are susceptible to ōji waza, this can apply alternate pressure: the threat of deflection.<sup>189</sup> This can cause hesitation.<sup>190</sup>

The goal is to disrupt the opponent's calm focus and force them to react creating a chance to strike. Succumbing to pressure for a *fraction of a second* is often enough due to the nature of ai-jōdan.

### KEY POINT: PRESSING THE TSUKA-GASHIRA

Pressing the tsuka-gashira begins the motion(s) for shikake and ōji waza. Be ready to use both as this creates alternate types of pressure.

<sup>185</sup> When within the uchi-ma of the opponent and vice versa.

*Figure 93:* Relative movement risk in ai-jōdan. From the mobile jōdan player's perspective moving to the right, stationary player's left, this is a (Dark Red) relatively high risk motion as the stationary opponent can strike with a katate waza easily toward their left *without* first requiring a pivot. Movement toward the left, stationary player's right, is a (Light Red) medium risk motion as the stationary opponent must first pivot to the right slightly before they can attack with katate waza. However, a morote strike can be made by cross-stepping onto the right *without* needing to pivot first. Although this attack is somewhat slower than katate waza, as all of the primary targets are consistently exposed in ai-jōdan *any* movement while in the opponent's uchi-ma is risky.

<sup>186</sup> See note 143, p. 93.

<sup>187</sup> Because both players' primary targets are *always* exposed it may seem taking an immediately aggressive approach, e.g., attack as soon and as often as possible, would be advisable. However this may be an error as it opens the attacker to potential ōji waza. At the same time no defense is perfect and a player intent on ōji waza can be overwhelmed or manipulated. *The balance will be dependent on the rhythm of the opponent.*

<sup>188</sup> Left & right kote are easily attacked from the center position. Compare this to threatening men or kote against an opponent in seigan, pp. 44–47.

<sup>189</sup> *Susceptible* here doesn't mean easy to counter, only that they are easily redirected putting the attacker at a disadvantage.

<sup>190</sup> In ai-jōdan this can obviously backfire; as one presses to threaten attack or ōji waza, the opponent can strike an easy kote. See 千葉 仁 *Chiba sensei (kyōshi 7dan)* and 東 一良 *Higashi sensei (kyōshi 6dan)* [1980's] (2011) for examples.

## Shikake & Ōji Waza: Responding to Pressing of the Tsuka-Gashira

Before a jōdan opponent attacks they often apply pressure by pressing the tsuka-gashira.<sup>191</sup> *This is a motion that one must pay attention to as it signifies two potential opportunities to strike in an ai-jōdan match-up: (1) initiating with a shikake waza or (2) preparing to counter with ōji waza.*<sup>192</sup>

### KEY POINT: TSUKA-GASHIRA RETRACTION

In much the same way as in chūdan vs. jōdan the retraction of pressing the tsuka-gashira, p. 102, is a unique opportunity to strike a jōdan player in the ai-jōdan match-up as well. See figure 94, p. 112.

**Shikake waza.** When the tsuka-gashira is pressed by a jōdan player, they are looking for an opening or reaction from the opponent. If one is not perceived, the press will be retracted. During this retraction, *their focus is on returning to kamae*, creating an opportunity to strike.<sup>193</sup>

**Ōji waza.** If the opponent perceives an opportunity they will most likely strike (katate) left or right kote; this attack can be *lured out* by pressing the tsuka-gashira, making an opportunity to use ōji waza.<sup>194</sup>

### KEY POINT: STRIKING OPPORTUNITIES IN AI-JŌDAN

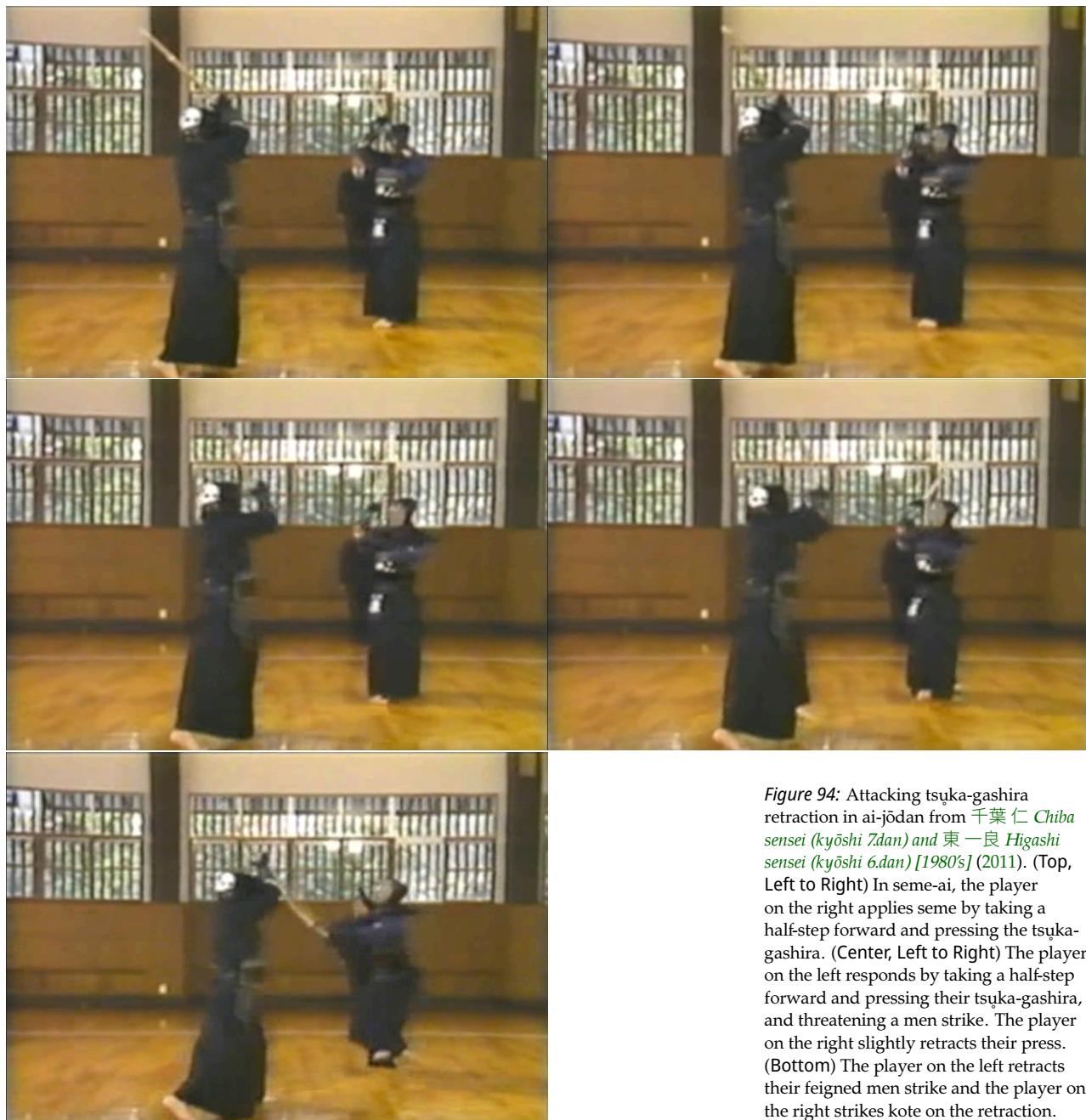
It only requires the opponent to have their focus drawn for a *fraction of a second* to create an opportunity to strike. Focus drawn by hesitation or defensive intent are common examples, *but for ai-jōdan focus drawn toward correcting kamae, movement, and positioning are also enough due to the speed and range of katate waza.*

<sup>191</sup> Often but not *always*. The motion is used to apply seme, however if the jōdan player intends an immediate attack, e.g., against a hesitant opponent, then they are likely to not press the tsuka-gashira.

<sup>192</sup> Ōji waza here includes the option of just redirecting via uchi-otoshi vs. redirecting and counter-attacking. See p. 60 for details.

<sup>193</sup> Jōdan opponents caught off-guard here can easily slip into a defensive mindset allowing for several different opportunities, see pp. 9, 10, 67. One can also use morote waza to strike a tertiary target, p. 107, depending on opponent reactions.

<sup>194</sup> This is essentially the scenario shidachi creates in tachi kata: ipponme. See p. 76.



*Figure 94: Attacking tsuka-gashira retraction in ai-jōdan from 千葉 仁 Chiba sensei (kyōshi 7.dan) and 東 一良 Higashi sensei (kyōshi 6.dan) [1980's] (2011). (Top, Left to Right) In seme-ai, the player on the right applies seme by taking a half-step forward and pressing the tsuka-gashira. (Center, Left to Right) The player on the left responds by taking a half-step forward and pressing their tsuka-gashira, and threatening a men strike. The player on the right slightly retracts their press. (Bottom) The player on the left retracts their feigned men strike and the player on the right strikes kote on the retraction.*



## Using Footwork to Create Opportunities

Jōdan players monitor movement to find opportunities, maintain maai, and ensure they face the opponent directly.<sup>195</sup> As these ideas are central to jōdan, there are strategies to use it against them.<sup>196</sup> Using footwork, some can be used to make openings or disguise intent, e.g., *threaten one, strike the other* similar to jōdan vs. chūdan, p. 98.

**Nusumi-ashi.** *Nusumi-ashi* can help one to shorten the distance to the opponent without them noticing, e.g., in ai-jōdan at maximum issoku ittō no maai closing the distance to the opponent undetected removes their ability to back up in order to avoid a (shikake waza) strike.

**Tsugi-ashi.** *Tsugi-ashi*, and altered tsugi-ashi, can be used in the ai-jōdan match to create opportunities to strike by closing the distance, but it's also a central part to using *threaten one, strike the other*, p. 114.

**Okuri-ashi.** By moving toward the opponent one can apply pressure to a target or induce the opponent to strike; both situations creates an opportunity to attack. An altered okuri-ashi can be used for *threaten one, strike the other*, p. 116.

## Using Footwork for Threaten One, Strike the Other

*Threaten one, strike the other* is an important aspect of using jōdan and is used in the ai-jōdan match as well. However due to the limited style(s) of pressing the tsūka-gashira in ai-jōdan, the mechanics of *threaten one, strike the other* also relies very heavily on specific use of footwork.<sup>197</sup>

**Note:** All of the following ai-jōdan footwork set-ups, pp. 113, 114, and 116, can readily be used and/or adapted to the chūdan vs. jōdan match-up.

<sup>195</sup> *Face their opponent directly* here is literal: one physically faces the opponent such that they are directly in front of them vs. allowing the opponent to move to the side or make an angled approach. See p. 102.

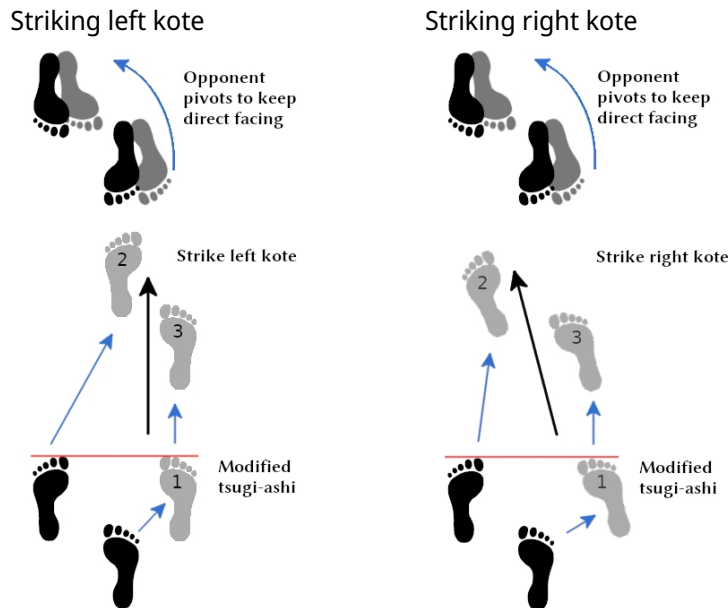
<sup>196</sup> This can be likened to making use of the mitsu no sen, i.e., devising strategies based on *using the opponent's desire to initiate an attack to create opportunities to strike them instead*. As monitoring movement and maintaining their facing toward the opponent are central to jōdan there are several strategies that can be used to turn this against them and create opportunities to strike/act.

<sup>197</sup> *Limited style(s)* doesn't mean multiple methods to press the tsūka-gashira aren't *available*, only that due to the nature of ai-jōdan they aren't necessarily needed; all primary targets can be threatened in ai-jōdan by pressing the tsūka-gashira toward the center.

*Altered tsugi-ashi.* A jōdan player can use an altered tsugi-ashi to set up an opportunity to strike the left or right kote. Instead of bringing the rear foot directly forward as with normal tsugi-ashi, p. 29, a half-step to the right is taken threatening the opponent's left kote; the opponent will often pivot to maintain a direct facing.<sup>198</sup> As the opponent focuses on pivoting, an opening is made.

The second part of the step is made to strike. By altering the angle of the feet the left or right kote can be attacked.

<sup>198</sup> As stepping to the right is a high risk movement in ai-jōdan, p. 110, the opponent is also likely to attack. One must either be prepared to use ōji waza, or understand the opponent's rhythm enough to perceive their intent to pivot vs. attack.



*Figure 95: Using altered tsugi-ashi to create opportunities to strike left and right kote. (Left) Stepping to the right with an altered tsugi-ashi causes the opponent to pivot in order to maintain a direct facing. As they pivot the second part of the tsugi-ashi is made to strike the left kote; the step is in a (Black) straight forward direction. (Right) Again stepping to the right, but this time with a slight rotation of the foot toward the left, the opponent pivots to maintain a direct facing. As they pivot the second part of the tsugi-ashi is made to strike the right kote; the step is at a (Black) slight angle toward the left.*

#### KEY POINTS: ALTERED TSUGI-ASHI

1. If the opponent pivots during the first step, they can be hit. If they increase distance, or press the tsuka-gashira, they are likely aware of the attempt and can attack or counter. Be prepared with ōji waza.
2. The timing to strike either kote during their pivot is that of a debana waza. See **KEY POINTS #1**, p. 103 for a similar discussion.
3. If seme is applied *as they pivot* instead of attacking, e.g., pressing the tsuka-gashira, common openings are right kote if they use a false nuki motion, p. 10, and migi sayū-men or gyaku-dō if they block, p. 9. This requires the opponent to react defensively.
4. Stepping to the right in ai-jōdan is a high risk movement. See p. 110.



*Figure 96: Altered tsugi-ashi to set up left and right kote strikes. (1) From ai-jōdan the player on the left (Blue) makes a modified tsugi-ashi style step to their left. This causes the opponent to (Red) pivot to their right to maintain a direct facing. As the pivot begins the player on the left (Blue) strikes left kote. (2) From ai-jōdan the player on the left (Blue) makes a modified tsugi-ashi style step to their left. This causes the opponent to (Red) pivot to their right to maintain a direct facing. As the pivot begins the player on the left (Blue) strikes right kote.*

*Okuri-ashi to the left & an altered okuri-ashi to the left.* A jōdan player can step to the forward-left with standard okuri-ashi, pressuring the opponent's right kote.<sup>199</sup> The opponent will likely pivot to the right in order to maintain a direct facing. As their focus is momentarily set on altering their direction, a *suki* is created. This creates an opportunity to strike either kote.

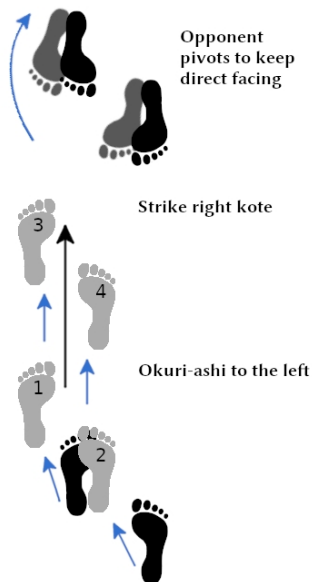
With a standard okuri-ashi step, as the rear foot is brought forward to finish the step and the opponent is focused on pivoting their direction, the right kote can be attacked.

For the altered step, as the rear foot is brought forward to finish the step instead of bringing it to the usual position it is brought *slightly* behind the forward foot such that the forward foot is crossed in front of the rear; this allows one to smoothly pivot to the right or to move straight forward.<sup>200</sup> As the opponent focuses on pivoting, the feet are in a position to attack the left or right kote.

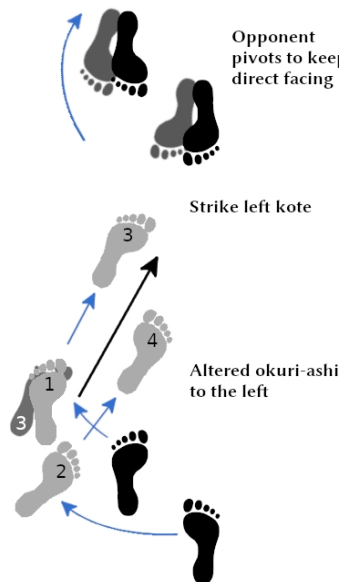
<sup>199</sup> This method moves to the left, the opponent's right, which is a medium risk movement as it requires the opponent to pivot to use katate waza. See p. 110.

<sup>200</sup> This altered step could be described as a mix of okuri-ashi and hiraki-ashi; an okuri-ashi type step with the forward foot and hiraki-ashi type step with the rear. The key difference is that the rear foot is not brought to the usual position and instead ends up crossed *slightly* behind the forward foot.

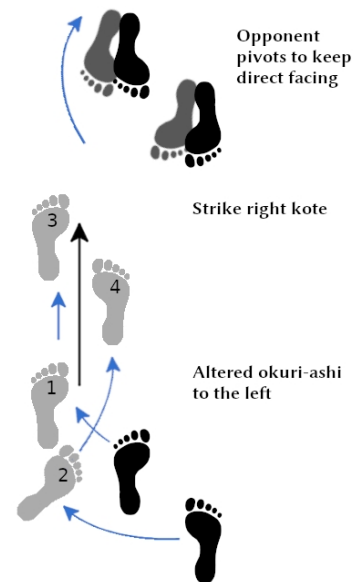
### Striking right kote



### Striking left kote



### Striking right kote



### KEY POINTS: OKURI-ASHI & ALTERED OKURI-ASHI

1. This set-up requires two steps vs. the half-step used with altered tsugi-ashi, p. 114, making this *theoretically* slower.
2. The timing to directly strike either kote is similar to debana waza. See **KEY POINTS #1**, p. 103 for a similar discussion.
3. Applying seme as they pivot may open right kote, migi sayū-men, and gyaku-dō if they use false nuki or block. See pp. 9–10.
4. With *katate waza* an altered step is used to strike either kote; a standard step for just the right. With *morote waza* the standard step easily transitions to a cross-step to strike left kote. See figure 93, p. 110.

*Figure 97: Using okuri-ashi and an altered okuri-ashi to create opportunities to strike right and left kote. (Left) Stepping to the left with okuri-ashi causes the opponent to pivot to maintain direct facing. As they pivot, a second step is taken to attack their right kote; the step is in a (Black) straight forward direction. (Center) Stepping to the left with an altered okuri-ashi, which allows one to easily pivot to the right, causes the opponent to pivot to maintain direct facing. As they pivot, a second step to the diagonal right is taken to attack their left kote; the step is at a (Black) slight angle to the right. (Right) Striking the right kote by stepping (Black) straight forward, during the opponent's pivot, after the altered okuri-ashi.*





*Figure 98: Standard and altered okuri-ashi to create opportunities to strike right kote. (1) From ai-jōdan the player on the left (Blue) takes an okuri-ashi step to their forward left. The opponent responds by (Red) pivoting to their right to maintain a direct facing. During the pivot, the player on the left (Green) strikes right kote by (Blue) stepping straight forward. (2) From ai-jōdan the player on the left takes an altered okuri-ashi step to their forward left; as the right foot is brought into place it crosses behind the left leg. The opponent responds by pivoting to their right to maintain a direct facing. During the pivot, the player on the left (Green) strikes right kote by (Blue) stepping straight forward.*



*Figure 99: Altered okuri-ashi to create opportunities to strike left kote. From ai-jōdan the player on the left (Blue) takes an altered okuri-ashi step to their forward left; as the right foot is brought into place it crosses behind the left leg. The opponent responds by pivoting to their right to maintain a direct facing. During the pivot, the player on the left, pivoting slightly to their right, (Green) strikes left kote. The attack is made by (Blue) stepping diagonally to their forward right.*

# APPENDIX I: GENERAL PROGRESSION

## TRANSITIONING FROM CHŪDAN TO JŌDAN

WHEN FIRST LEARNING JŌDAN there is a general progression. Like all basics, learning is cyclic and each area is frequently revisited.<sup>201</sup>

**Kamae.** Learning the proper position, and being able to hold it correctly for the duration of the practice.

**Posture.** Correct posture and use of core to ensure stability as jōdan can easily become top-heavy and unbalanced if incorrect.<sup>202</sup>

**Footwork.** Correct use of okuri-ashi and fumi-komi, weight distribution, and balance with the left foot forward.

**Striking.** Learning to strike, in particular one-handed strikes, with accuracy, control, and te-no-uchi with correct striking technique.<sup>203</sup>

## STRIKE PROGRESSION: BASIC, INTERMEDIATE, & ADVANCED

THERE ARE SEVERAL DIFFERENT strike available to jōdan. Some are basic and stem directly from chūdan, others advanced or unique to jōdan requiring complex motions and shinai control. This creates a natural progression order for their use against an opponent similar to chūdan.<sup>204</sup>

### Basic Strikes

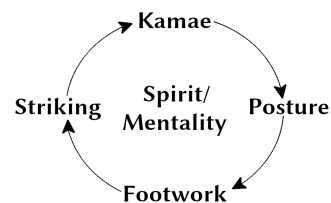
1. Innate: morote men & kote, nidan waza.<sup>205</sup>
2. Katate men: straight footwork.
3. Katate kote: straight strike & footwork.

### Intermediate Strikes

4. Katate sayū-men: straight footwork.
5. Katate kote: straight strike but with diagonal footwork.

### Advanced Strikes

6. All previous strikes but with diagonal footwork or altered direction mid-motion. Tsuki can be added to the list of attacks as needed.
7. Ai-jōdan's tsugi-ashi, okuri-ashi, and altered okuri-ashi set-ups.
8. S-kote: straight footwork.
9. S-kote: diagonal footwork.



*Figure 100:* Basic progression of physical aspects of jōdan while transitioning from chūdan. The general progression route is (1) proper kamae, (2) proper posture, (3) footwork, and (4) striking technique. This progression is cyclic and as one aspect is learned or improved each of the steps in the cycle will in turn be revisited. The spiritual aspects of jōdan are assumed to be consistently trained throughout.

<sup>201</sup> This refers to learning the *mechanical* basics of kamae itself. Details will be excluded or emphasized by teachers depending on the practitioner's experience level and learning progress. These will also be frequently reviewed as kendōka begin the process of applying these basic mechanics toward how to *fence* with an opponent using a new kamae, i.e., transitioning from kihon to application.

<sup>202</sup> *Top-heavy* refers to attacking or moving from the upper torso vs. the hips. As the shinai is consistently overhead in jōdan this exacerbates poor posture or striking habits due to improper posture and insufficient use of core.

<sup>203</sup> *Correct striking technique* refers to using proper strike mechanics vs. using excessive muscle or power to swing the shinai. This is regardless of the particular striking method(s) use, see p. 16.

<sup>204</sup> For chūdan, a conservative outline for progression order could be (1) big men, kote, and dō, (2) big nidan waza, (3) big sayū-men strikes & small men and kote strikes, (4) small nidan waza, and finally (5) tsuki and gyaku-dō.

<sup>205</sup> *Innate* (strikes) refers to those that are directly transferable from chūdan.



## APPENDIX II: COUNTING & PRONUNCIATION

### CARDINALS, ORDINALS, & BASIC PRONUNCIATION

BASIC JAPANESE COUNTING, ORDINAL NUMBERS, & PRONUNCIATION							
Cardinals		Kata & Bokuto Waza Ordinals			Basic Pronunciation		
<i>English</i>	<i>Japanese</i>	<i>English</i>	<i>Kendō Kata</i>	<i>Bokutō Waza</i>	<i>Vowels</i>	<i>Voiced As</i>	<i>International</i>
One	Ichi	First	Ipponme	Ichi	A	ah	ɑ
Two	Ni	Second	Nihonme	Ni	E	eh	e
Three	San	Third	Sanbonme	San	I	ee	i
Four	Shi	Fourth	Yonhonme	Yon	I	ee (voiceless)	i̥
Five	Go	Fifth	Gohonme	Go	I	ee (long)	i:
Six	Roku	Sixth	Ropponme	Roku	O	oh	o
Seven	Shichi	Seventh	Nanahonme	Nana	O	oh (long)	o:
Eight	Hachi	Eighth	—	Hachi	U	oo	u
Nine	Kyū	Ninth	—	Kyū	U	oo (voiceless)	u̥
Ten	Jū	Tenth	—	—	<i>Combinations</i>	<i>Voiced As</i>	<i>International</i>
					AE	eye	ai
					AI	eye	ai
					EI	ay	ei

**Consonants.** Consonants are pronounced as in English. Some are altered when occurring after a vowel. A common example is changing a *k* sound to a *g* as in kakari *geiko* vs. kakari *keiko*.

Doubled consonants indicate a slight pause prior to pronunciation. Hansoku ikkai has a double *kk* in *ikkai*, giving it a pronunciation of *i-kai*.

**Long, standard, and voiceless vowels.** Vowels can have a long, standard, and voiceless sound similar to English.

A voiceless vowel is *almost* silent, e.g. a voiceless *u* occurs in *tsuki*, and is voiced as “*tski*” [tsu̥<sup>β</sup>kj̥i̥]. This is similar in English to the *e* in peculiar [p<sup>h</sup>ə<sup>ˈ</sup>kjuːliə] which is often voiced as “*pculiar*”.<sup>206</sup>

Vowels, most commonly *i* and *u*, often become voiceless when (1) the vowel is between voiceless consonants, and (2) the vowel occurs after a voiceless consonant with nothing following it.<sup>207</sup>

Omote uses a standard *o*, *oh* as in *story*, whereas jōdan uses a long *o* as in *toast*. The long *o* is usually written as *ou*; this guide uses the Latin convention *ō*. Other long vowels in Japanese are written with duplicate letters, e.g., *chiisai* vs. *chisai* for a long *i* sound.

**Table 5:** Basic Japanese counting, ordinal numbers, & pronunciation. Cardinal numbers indicate amount, ordinal numbers indicate numeric order. *Voiced as* gives an English term approximating the Japanese term, and *International* gives the International Phonetic Alphabet pronunciation.

#### ON-YOMI & KUN-YOMI

There are two ways to pronounce kanji; the Chinese (on-yomi) and the Japanese (kun-yomi) pronunciations. Which is used depends on context and/or tradition, e.g., *shi* & *yon* for the number four.

<sup>206</sup> Wikipedia (2012)

<sup>207</sup> From Living Language (2012), with a voiced letter the throat vibrates while speaking; with voiceless it doesn't. For example, touching the throat while speaking *g*, as in *great*, one feels a vibration. Speaking *k*, as in *kite*, there is no vibration.



## HIRAGANA &amp; ROMANJI: JAPANESE PHONETIC SYLLABLES

The following syllabary, called hiragana, lists all of the syllables used to pronounce (exclusively) Japanese words.<sup>208</sup>

Hiragana is used to represent Japanese words not represented by kanji and for grammatical inflexion, e.g., a root word has a different hiragana ending for the verb form vs. the noun, etc...

Romanji is the term used to refer to Japanese syllables written in English letters, e.g., the syllable か is written as *Ka*.

<sup>208</sup> Hiragana is not the only syllabary, however it is used exclusively for Japanese words. The *katakana* alphabet is used to represent foreign or borrowed words, is also used as an equivalent to *italics* in English, and is used in several other situations.

STANDARD HIRAGANA SYLLABARY WITH ROMANJI										
	—	K	S	T	N	H	M	Y	R	W
A	あ	Ka か	Sa さ	Ta た	Na な	Ha は	Ma ま	Ya や	Ra ら	Wa わ
I	い	Ki き	Shi し	Chi ち	Ni に	Hi ひ	Mi み	—	Ri り	Wi ゐ <sup>209</sup>
U	う	Ku く	Su す	Tsu つ	Nu ぬ	Fu ふ	Mu む	Yu ゆ	Ru る	—
E	え	Ke け	Se せ	Te て	Ne ね	He へ	Me め	—	Re れ	We ゑ <sup>210</sup>
O	お	Ko こ	So そ	To と	No の	Ho ほ	Mo も	Yo よ	Ro ろ	(W)o を <sup>211</sup>
—					N ん					

EXTENDED HIRAGANA SYLLABARY WITH ROMANJI						
	G	Z	D	B	P	
A	Ga が	Za ざ	Da だ	Ba ば	Pa ぱ	
I	Gi ぎ	Ji じ	Ji ぢ	Bi び	Pi ぴ	
U	Gu ぐ	Zu ず	Zu づ	Bu ぶ	Pu ぷ	
E	Ge げ	Ze ぜ	De で	Be べ	Pe ぺ	
O	Go ご	Zo ぞ	Do ど	Bo ぼ	Po ぽ	
	K	S	C	N	H	M
Ya	Kya きゃ	Sha しゃ	Cha ちゃ	Nya にゃ	Bya ひゃ	Mya みゃ
Yu	Kyu きゅ	Shu しゅ	Chu ちゅ	Nyu にゅ	Byu ひゅ	Myu みゅ
Yo	Kyo きょ	Sho しょ	Cho ちょ	Nyo にょ	Byo ひょ	Myo みょ
	R	G	J	B	P	
Ya	Rya りゃ	Gya ぎゃ	Ja じゃ	Hya ひゃ	Pya ぴゃ	
Yu	Ryu りゅ	Gyu ぎゅ	Ju じゅ	Hyu ひゅ	Pyu ぴゅ	
Yo	Ryo りょ	Gyo ぎょ	Jo じょ	Hyo ひょ	Pyo ぴょ	

Table 6: Hiragana syllabary: the phonetic alphabet used for Japanese words.

<sup>209, 210</sup> Obsolete in modern Japanese.

<sup>211</sup> “(W)o” is pronounced “oh”.

# GLOSSARY

## GENERAL TERMS

### A

#### Ai

(1) (prefix) (相) “Mutual, balanced, joint.” (2) (suffix) (合い) “Union, integration, match (together).”

#### Ai-uchi

(相打ち) “Mutual strike” or “simultaneous strike(s).”

#### Ayumi-ashi

(歩み足) “Walking foot.” A normal walking motion where the feet cross one another. However in [kendō](#) ayumi-ashi is still done as [suri-ashi](#).

### B

#### Bokutō

(木刀) “Wooden sword.” The bokutō, [tachi](#) and [kodachi](#), are primarily used to practice [nihon kendō no kata](#). The tachi is also used in the [bokutō waza](#) and is often used to practice [shinai kendō](#) basics such as [suburi](#).

#### Bokutō ni yoru kendō kihon waza keiko hō

(木刀による剣道基本技稽古法) “Practice of fundamental [kendō](#) techniques with a bokutō.” See [bokutō waza](#).

#### Bokutō waza

(木刀技) “Wooden sword techniques.” Abbreviation for [bokutō ni yoru kendō kihon waza keiko hō](#). A series of forms created to practice fundamental [shinai kendō](#) techniques with [bokutō](#).

#### Bōgu

(防具) “Kendō armor.” Consisting of the [men](#), [kote](#), [dō](#), and [tare](#). Also called [kendō-gu](#).

#### Budō

(武道) “Martial art” or “martial way.” Budō are martial arts where the focus is placed on bettering oneself instead of pure combative victory.

### C

#### Chiisai waza

(小さい技) “Small techniques.” A term used to refer to small strikes.

#### Chika-ma

(近間) “Short interval.” A distance that is shorter than [issoku ittō no maai](#).

#### Chūdan no kamae

(中段の構え) “Mid level stance.” Chūdan is known as the “*kamae of water*” due to its adaptability for offensive and defensive [waza](#). Chūdan is the fundamental [kamae](#) in [kendō](#).

#### Complimentary stepping

Complimentary stepping is the *generalized* method of footwork in [kendō](#). Beginning with the feet in their starting positions, when taking a *single step* both the forward and rear feet are moved consecutively, in quick succession, to re-assume the starting positions upon completion, e.g., [okuri-ashi](#) is commonly a *right-left* motion. Exceptions are found in the [kata](#) or during specialized [waza](#).

#### Connection

[En](#) in Japanese, meaning a “link, relationship, or connection.” In [kendō](#) this implies a mental and physical connection to the opponent. Mentally this implies one perceives how the opponent will act, their intents, level of focus, [ki-ken-tai-itchi](#), and [zanshin](#). Physically this allows one to respond to movement, maintain distance, adjust [kamae](#), etc... A connection is essential to understanding the [rhythm](#).

### D

#### Daitō

(大刀) The name used to refer to the “long sword” when using [nitō](#).

#### Dan

(段) “Step” or “level.”

#### Dan-i

(段位) “Rank.” This refers to the set of [dan](#) ranks in [kendō](#), commonly equated with the rank of “black belt”. In modern [kendō](#) dan ranks range from first to eighth.

#### Datotsu-bu

(打突部) “Striking section.” The portion of the [shinai](#) strikes are made with; the [mono-uchi](#).

#### Datotsu-bui

(打突部位) “Striking position.” Portion of the [bōgu](#) where one may strike.

#### Dead

See [dead sword](#) and [dead hands](#).

#### Dead hands

Similar to a [dead sword](#), however in this case it is caused specifically by the hands or forearms being in

an improper position to control one's weapon or strike/cut effectively.

#### Dead sword

A term describing one's weapon when the ability for offensive and defensive techniques is gone as a result of being effectively parried or redirected; *shinitachi*.

#### Debana waza

(出ばな技) Techniques used to strike as the opponent's attack is being initiated.

#### Dō

(1) (道) "The way", i.e. a way of enlightenment, or of bettering oneself, e.g., *kendō*. (2) (胴) The abdominal protector worn in *kendō*. See *kendō-gu*. (3) The name of the target when striking the abdomen.

#### Dōjō

(道場) "Practice hall." A place or location where one practices *budō*.

#### Dō-mune

(胴胸) The chest portion of the *dō*.

#### E

#### En

(縁) A "link, relationship, connection." See *connection*.

#### F

#### Fumi-komi

(踏み込み) The shortened term for *fumi-komi-ashi* meaning "stepping" or "rushing into" footwork. Fumi-komi is a *lunging okuri-ashi* style step that momentarily forgoes *suri-ashi* as the leading foot leaves the ground during the step. This footwork is known for the stomping sound as the foot claps the floor on landing.

#### G

#### Gedan no kamae

(下段の構え) The "low level" *kamae*, also known as the "kamae of earth." *Gedan* can be considered a *kamae* of waiting, inviting the opponent, but it also applies *seme* from below by threatening a thrust.

#### Gi

(着) The traditional practice jacket worn in *kendō*. Also known as a *kendō-gi*, *dō-gi*, or *keiko-gi*.

#### Go no sen

Also called *go sen no sen*. See *mitsu no sen*.

#### Gyaku-dō

(逆胴) "Reverse *dō*." This refers to the left *datotsu-bui* of the *dō*. Formerly a non-standard target, with the popularization of *san-pō-mamori* awarding *ippon* for *gyaku-dō* is now common.

#### H

#### Half-step

A half-step is when a *kendōka* only moves one of their feet instead of the usual *complimentary stepping*. Half-steps are relatively uncommon but can be found in the *kata*, *bokutō waza*, or specialized *waza*.

#### Hanmi kamae

(半身構え) "Half body stance." When assuming a *hanmi kamae* the torso is turned so it is only half exposed to the opponent.

#### Harai waza

(払い技) "Sweeping aside" *waza*. A *waza* where one pushes the opponents weapon aside, breaking their *kamae*, to create a *suki*.

#### Harai-ageru

(払い上げる) "Sweep and knock upward." A specific version of *harai waza* where the opponent's *kamae* is swept to diagonal up-left or up-right.

#### Harai-otoshi

(払い落とし) "Sweep and knock downward." A specific version of *harai waza* where the opponent's *kamae* is pushed to the down-left or down-right.

#### Hassō no kamae

(八相の構え) The "eight position stance." Also known as the "kamae of wood" and sometimes *in no kamae*, it is a variant of *jōdan no kamae*.

#### Heijōshin

(平常心) "Common" or "everyday mind." A basic definition of this is keeping one's mind in a normal state, unaffected by things around you; your mindset during regular or common situations.

#### Hi no kamae

(火の構え) The *kamae* of "fire." See *jōdan no kamae*.

#### Hidari

(左) "Left". Relative direction, e.g., right & left.

#### Hiki-tsuke

(引き付け) "Pull into place; to draw near."

#### Hiraki-ashi

(開き足) "Opening foot." This is a semi-circular step to the left or right.

#### Hira-seigan no takai

(平正眼の高い) A "high, tall" variant of "flat, common, ordinary" *seigan no kamae*. The variant of *seigan* written as (正眼) is equivalent to *chūdan no kamae*. This term then refers to altering one's *chūdan* to be higher. Specifically this *kamae* is used against an opponent that assumes *hidari jōdan no kamae*.

#### I

## In no kamae

(陰の構え) “Waiting/still” **kamae**. The antithesis of **yō no kamae**. See **hassō no kamae**.

## Invading the maai

The act of physically moving into the striking range of the opponent with the purpose of (1) pressuring them, (2) crowding them making attacks awkward, or (3) making them feel exposed. The end result is to cause their spirit of attack to collapse. This is used in the **nihon kendō no kata** in **tachi** kata #3 & #6 and is the intent behind **iri-mi** in the **kodachi** kata. See **kurai-zume**.

## Ippon

(一本) “One point” or “one strike.”

## Iri-mi

(入り身) “Entering body”, often translated as “entering directly.” This is the intent while using the **kodachi**. The action of spiritually threatening and physically moving into your opponents **maai** to attack.

## Iri-mi no kamae

(入り身の構え) “Entering body stance.” The **kamae** taken when **invading the maai** through **iri-mi**; the **kodachi** is in **chūdan no kamae**, blade downward, **kensen** directed toward the opponent’s throat.

## Ire-zuki

(入れ突き) “Entering thrust.” See **nayashi ire-zuki**.

## Issoku ittō no maai

(一足一刀の間合) The “one step, one sword distance.” The distance where one can launch, or evade, an attack by taking one step; the fundamental **maai** of **kendō**. While there are approximations, often described as the distance where opponents’ sword tips cross, each individual has their own *unique* issoku ittō no maai due to the fact that each person’s physique defines a different length for “one-step”.

## Issun no seme

(一寸の攻め) “One sun” **seme**. Sun is an old Japanese unit of measurement, approximately three centimeters long. Issun no seme refers to applying seme by consistently moving forward toward the opponent one sun at a time, i.e., slowly but surely creeping forward while threatening a strike.

## Ittō-Ryū

(一刀流) “One cut school/style.” Ittō-Ryū was a sword school founded by Ito Ittōsai Kagehisa which branched into several sub-schools. This school has heavily influenced modern **kendō**.

## J

## Jin-bu

(刃部) “Blade part.” The side of a **shinai** designated as the blade.

## Jōdan no kamae

(上段の構え) The “high level/positioned” **kamae**. As jōdan is spiritually aggressive, the terms **ten no kamae** and **hi no kamae** are used to describe the spirit and intent required to be effective.

## K

## Kaeshi waza

(返し技) “Return” **waza**. Techniques where one momentarily receives the opponent’s strike and then, changing the direction of the weapon, *immediately* counter-attacks.

## Kakegoe

(掛け声) “Yell.” Although having very different meanings this is often interchanged with **kiai**.

## Kamae

(構え) “Stance” or “position.” In **kendō**, this term has an obvious physical meaning, but it also has mental or spiritual implications.

## Kamae (w)o toku

(構えを解く) **Kamae** “untie, unfasten, undo.” This term is used to refer to the breaking of kamae at the end of each of the **nihon kendō no kata** or **bokutō waza**.

## Kata

(形) See **nihon kendō no kata**.

## Katana

(刀) “Sword.” Also pronounced as **tō**.

## Katate

(片手) “One hand(ed).”

## Katsugi waza

(担ぎ技) “Shouldering the sword” technique. The sword is brought over the shoulder before striking. The overt motion is to create a **suki** in your opponent while still being in a position to attack.

## Katsujin-ken

(活人剣) “The life-giving sword.” In sword arts “life-giving” does not refer to not killing the opponent, but to not kill their attacking spirit, i.e., allowing the opponent to act (attack). By manipulating the opponent and allowing them to feel free to attack, opportunities for **ōji waza** can be created. Using a katsujin-ken then refers to a particular type of strategy for defeating the opponent. “Katsujin-ken... involves a sophisticated manipulation of the opponent and his actions by means of utter selflessness; properly conducted it is virtually undefeatable”, Friday (1997). This is a central strategy in **Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū** and other descendants of **Shinkage-Ryū**. The antithesis of katsujin-ken is **setsunin-tō**.

## Keiko

(稽古) “Practice”, “training”, or “study.” Often used by **kendōka** to imply sparring practice in **bōgu**.



**Ken**

(1) (剣) “Sword”, (2) (懸) “Be trapped, begin, attack.”

**Kendō**

(剣道) “The way of the sword.”

**Kendō-gu**

(剣道具) “Kendō protective equipment”, see [bōgu](#).

**Kendōka**

(剣道家) A [kendō](#) practitioner.

**Kenjutsu**

(剣術) “Sword art/technique.”

**Kensen**

(剣先) “Tip/point of a sword.” The tip of the [shinai](#) or [bokutō](#); also called the [kissaki](#).

**Ken-tai-itchi**

(懸待一致) “Attack and waiting in unison.” This covers many ideas that relate to the application of [seme](#) toward the opponent to set up an opportunity to strike. Simply put, one pressures the opponent through [seme](#) (attack) and then holds to see their reaction (waiting), calmly preparing to attack or counter depending on the result, i.e., [seme-tame](#). [Ken](#) in this instance translates to “attack; oppose”, but it also can mean “to begin” or to “be trapped”. This implies forcing the opponent, via threat of attack, into a situation they must respond to. See [sente](#).

**Ki**

(気) “Mind”, “spirit”, or “energy.”

**Ki (w)o mite**

(機を見る) “To see the opportunity [to strike], seizing the [correct] moment [to strike].” In the [nihon kendō no kata](#), [tachi](#) kata #1–7, [uchidachi](#) strikes [shidachi](#) at the correct moment, defined as “...the chance coming from the shifts in the opponent’s spirit, body, and technique”, AJKF (2002) and “the instant separating mental and physical transformation on the verge of an attack. In other words, the opening that is created as a result of the shifts in body, spirit, and technique”, Y. Inoue (2003).

**Kiai**

(気合い) “Energy integration.” The vocal expression of a unified mental & physical intent. Although one’s “fighting spirit” can be expressed through [kakegoe](#), [kiai](#) and [kakegoe](#) are not the same.

**Ki-atari**

(気当たり) “Spirit/energy hit/prediction.” Displaying an offensive stance or intent to strike, then observing or anticipating the opponent’s reactions.

**Kigurai**

(気位) “Presence, bearing, pride, dignity.” AJKF (2011) defines [kigurai](#) as “the strength or commanding presence derived from confidence acquired through repeated training.”

**Kihon**

(基本) “Fundamental.”

**Ki-ken-tai-itchi**

(気剣体一致) “Spirit, sword, body, in unison.” [Ki-ken-tai-itchi](#) is a modern umbrella term for several ideas, e.g. [shin-ki-ryoku-itchi](#) and [shin-gi-tai-itchi](#), each of which are specific instances of the more general meaning. As such, [ki-ken-tai-itchi](#) takes on more meaning as one gains experience in [kendō](#). The most basic meaning, unified action of a [kendōka](#)’s intent/spirit, sword, and body is a fundamental tenet of [kendō](#) regardless of rank or experience.

**Kiri-tsuke**

(切り付け) “Cut or slash” (at something).

**Kissaki**

(切先) See [kensen](#).

**Kōbō**

(攻防) “Offense & defense.” This term is used to describe the general combative aspects of [chūdan no kamae](#), specifically referring to the ease with which both offensive and defensive [waza](#) can be used.

**Kōbō-itchi**

(攻防一致) “Unified offense & defense.” This is often translated the same as [ken-tai-itchi](#): [ken](#) means to “attack” while [tai](#) has the meaning of “wait” which AJKF ([ibid.](#)) indicates means to “wait while observing the opponent’s movement calmly”, i.e., being ready to defend while attacking and vice versa. [Kōbō](#) is made up of the characters [kō](#) (攻), “aggression, attack”, and [bō](#) (防), “ward off, defend, protect”. [Kōbō](#) implicitly has a more physical or [waza](#) oriented meaning for offense and defense, e.g., actively striking and parrying. The inferred meaning here is that [kōbō-itchi](#) refers to a [waza](#) or action that is used to simultaneously attack and defend.

**Kodachi**

(小太刀) The “short sword” used in the [nihon kendō no kata](#).

**Kodachi kata**

(小太刀形) A subset of the [nihon kendō no kata](#) using the [kodachi](#).

**Kote**

(小手) “Forearm.” (1) The protective gloves worn in [kendō](#), see [kendō-gu](#). (2) The name of the forearm target.

**Kurai-zume**

(位詰め) “Level (of) rebuke.” Pressure the opponent into disadvantage through physical and/or spiritual intimidation. Pressuring and [invading the maai](#) of the opponent through the strength of one’s spirit, posture, [kamae](#), etc... Used by [shidachi](#) in [tachi kata](#) #3.

**M**

**Ma**

(間) “Space.” Used in terms referring to distance or spacing.

**Maai**

(間合) “Spacial integration.” Often interpreted simply as “distance”, maai includes many variables from both oneself and the opponent: speed, reaction time, power, distance, **kamae**, etc...

**Men**

(面) (1) “Mask; face guard”; the helmet worn in **kendō**, see **kendō-gu**. (2) The name of the head target.

**Migi**

(右) “Right.” Relative direction, e.g., right & left.

**Migi shizentai**

See **shizentai**.

**Mitsu no sen**

(三つの先) “The three sens.” This refers to the three initiatives giving your attack an advantage. The first, **sen sen no sen** (先々の先), refers to having prior knowledge of your opponents intentions and, using this knowledge, draw out their attack capitalizing on it. The second, **sen no sen** (先の先), refers to attacking at the very moment your opponent is about to attack. Third is **go no sen** (後の先). This refers to counter-striking your opponent after they have made their attack. The opponent is countered as in **sen sen no sen**, but knowledge of the opponents intentions are not known beforehand.

**Mono-uchi**

(物打) “Hitting part.” The upper ¼ length of a **shinai** measured from the **kensen** down, see **datotsu-bu**. For a **bokutō (tachi)** it is “the part of the blade of a sword which cuts best, said to be about 10cm from the tip”, AJKF (2002).

**Morote**

(諸手) “Two handed.”

**Mushin**

(無心) “No mind.” In very basic terms, **mushin** is acting with a natural, calm state of mind, i.e., not distracted by over thinking. **Mushin** is directly related to the concept **heijōshin**.

**N****Nayashi**

(萎し) “Wither; droop; to be lame.”

**Nayashi ire-zuki**

(萎し入れ突き) **Shidachi**’s parry and counter in the third **tachi kata**. **Shidachi** deflects **uchidachi**’s thrust (**nayashi**) and counters with a thrust (**ire-zuki**).

**Nidan**

(二段) “Two step” or “two level.”

**Nidan waza**

(二段技) “Two step” **waza**.

**Nihon kendō no kata**

(日本剣道の形) “The Japanese **kendō** forms.” In a formal context, the *Nippon Kendō no Kata*, informally *kata*. These are the official standardized set of partnered, predetermined encounters designed to teach techniques and, in particular, the principles of swordsmanship derived from several traditional Japanese sword schools. These principles form the basis of modern **shinai kendō**.

**Nitō**

(二刀) “Two sword(s).” A common term referring to **nitō kamae**.

**Nitō kamae**

(二刀構え) “Two sword stance” where one uses a long and a short sword, (**daitō**) and (**shōtō**) respectively.

**Nuki waza**

(抜き技) **Waza** where you simultaneously dodge a strike and execute a counter-attack.

**Nusumi-ashi**

(盗み足) “Stealing/stealthy footwork.” Positioning the feet for an unexpected style of footwork, e.g., positioning for **tsugi-ashi**, without alerting the opponent. See H. Inoue (2003).

**O****Ōji waza**

(応じ技) Counter-attacking **waza**, i.e., techniques used in response to your opponent’s attack.

**Okuri-ashi**

(送り足) “Sending out (the) feet.” The standard footwork used in **kendō** where one makes complimentary steps, most commonly a “right-left” motion, using **suri-ashi**, without crossing the feet.

**Omote**

(表) “Front”, “outside”, or “visible side.” This refers to the left side of the **shinai** or **bokutō**.

**R****Renzoku**

(連続) “Continuous, repeating.”

**Rhythm**

A term frequently used to describe the unique flow and/or timing(s) associated with multiple aspects of an encounter: “There are a variety of rhythms in strategy. First of all, understanding the matching rhythm and distinguishing from the rhythm which does not match, and from among rhythms large and small, slow and fast, understanding the rhythm of hitting the mark, understanding the rhythm of intervals, and understanding the rhythm that goes against rhythm – these are the most essential things in strategy. If you do not get how to discern the rhythm of

opposition, your strategy will never be certain”, Musashi (2012).

#### Riai

(理合) “Principles behind.” The condition under which an action or actions are rational, purposeful.

#### Ritsu-rei

(立礼) A “standing bow” which is done at 15° or 30°, depending on context.

#### Ryoku

(力) “Strength, power, proficiency, ability.”

#### S

##### Sae

(牙え) “Clearness, clarity.” With correct *te-no-uchi* a *shinai* strike with sae has a characteristic “pop” on landing while appearing effortless.

##### San-pō-mamori

(三方守り) “Three point defense.” A position, made popular in *shiai*, used to block attacks to *men*, *kote*, and *migi dō* simultaneously. San-pō-mamori leaves *gyaku-dō* and *tsuki* open to attack.

##### San-sappō

(三殺法) “Three killing laws.” Three methods for overwhelming an opponent using a sword; (1) *ken (w)o korosu*: kill their sword, (2) *ki (w)o korosu*: kill their spirit, and (3) *waza (w)o korosu*: kill their techniques. The basic idea is that killing the opponent’s spirit implies overwhelming them with your own, causing hesitation and doubt. See *four sicknesses*. Killing the opponent’s sword implies controlling their ability to manipulate their weapon for offensive or defensive purposes. Finally, killing the opponent’s techniques implies countering or anticipating the opponent’s intentions, removing their ability to effectively attack.

##### Sashi

(刺し) “Pierce, stab, thrust.” Sashi style strikes in *kendō* refer to attacks that use minimal wrist and shoulder motion, i.e., “thrusting” the *shinai* onto the target. Popularized in *shiai*, this style is discouraged as it doesn’t incorporate a cutting motion. This term is sometimes incorrectly used to refer to *chiisai waza*.

##### Sayū-men

(左右面) “Left and right” *men*. An angled strike to the upper left or right *men*.

##### Seigan no kamae

Most commonly written as (正眼の構え) “Correct eye stance” or (晴眼の構え) “clear eye stance.” Often translated as “aiming at the eyes.” There are several variations of *seigan*, each a slightly different *kamae* with respect to the position of the *kensen*, and each written with different characters, Shigeoka (1977) and Imafuji (2019). Previously in the *nihon kendō no kata* the term

*seigan* was common and the variant used was to be understood from the context. In modern *kendō* the term has been eliminated from the official kata descriptions. One specific variant is still used in response to *jōdan no kamae* and is often called *seigan* or *hira-seigan no takai*, H. Inoue (2003), but in the kata descriptions it is referred to as “a *chūdan* position”, AJKF (2002), with notes on how to assume it correctly.

##### Seme

(攻め) An “attack” or “offense.” From the verb *semeru* meaning “to attack” or “to assault”, *seme* is most often interpreted as “pressure”, e.g., a spiritual pressure put on the opponent, the intent of which is to make them focus on your (perceived) imminent attack resulting in a momentary loss of composure creating various opportunities to strike.

##### Seme-ai

(攻め合い) “Union of pressure.” *Seme-ai* is the point where two opponents actively pressure one another in an attempt to create an opening. *Seme-ai*, realistically, only occurs when in combative range.

##### Seme-komu

(攻め込む) “To invade; to attack.” The forward step taken by *shidachi* to invade *uchidachi*’s *maai* during the second *kodachi kata*.

##### Seme-kuzushi

(攻め崩し) An “unbalancing” or a “disruptive pressure.” *Seme-kuzushi* can be likened to the *final nudge* inducing the opponent to react.

##### Sen

(先) (1) “First move”, is synonymous with *sente* and *sen (w)o toru*. (2) “Previous; former.”

##### Sen (w)o toru

(先を取る) “Take the lead” (initiative) and attack by anticipating the opponent.

##### Sen no sen

See *mitsu no sen*.

##### Sen sen no sen

See *mitsu no sen*.

##### Sensei

(先生) “Born previous”, usually interpreted as “teacher”, i.e., somebody older than you and hence has more experience. In *kendō* experience and rank are also taken into account regarding this term.

##### Sente

(先手) “Forestalling; (seizing the) initiative.” In *kendō* *sente* refers to an attack or action used to seize the initiative against the opponent. This then forces the opponent to have to react, in particular they must act at a pace they do not set. See also *sen* and *sen (w)o toru*.

##### Setsunin-tō

(殺人刀) “The killing sword.” In sword arts this does not

refer to killing the opponent, but to killing their attacking spirit. By overwhelming the opponent's spirit they are unable to attack or cope with attacks. Setsunin-tō is then a specific strategy for facing an opponent. *"Setsunin-to is an egoistic and risky approach to combat—the slightest miscalculation will result in the swordsman walking straight into the opponent's counter-attack"*, Friday (1997). Setsunin-tō is the antithesis of *katsujin-ken*.

### Shiai

(試合) *"Match, game, bout, contest."* A match where points are scored to determine a winner.

### Shidachi

(仕太刀) *"The doing/serving sword."* The role of the "student" in the *nihon kendō no kata*.

### Shikake waza

(仕掛け技) Techniques to initiate a strike.

### Shin-ki-ryoku-itchi

(心気力一致) *"Mind, spirit, and action as one."* The *shin*, a heart or mind able to predict an opponent's action through a state of *mushin*, guides one's *ki*, the dynamic mental state of one's spirit, which in turn dictates one's *ryoku*, physical actions in the form of technique.

### Shin

(1) (心) *"Mind", "heart", or "spirit."* (2) (真) *"Truth."* See *shin-gyo-so*.

### Shinai

(竹刀) *"Bamboo sword."*

### Shin-gi-tai-itchi

(心技体一致) *"The mind and one's ability as one."* The ability to put one's intent into effective action.

### Shin-gyo-so

(真行草) 'Shin', "truth", 'Gyo', "stream", and 'So', "grass." The three feelings which *shidachi* embodies in the *kodachi kata*. From the *ittō-Ryū* school, these correspond to three different methods of attack. These also correspond to the ideas of three phases or transitions, for example *formal, semi-formal, informal*. Another example refers to shapes or forms where *shin* is the true shape, so is the essence of the shape, and *gyo* is the transition between the two. These feelings also correspond to *shu-ha-ri*.

### Shinogi

(鎧) The raised ridge on either side of a *katana* and *bokutō* used for deflecting or manipulating the opponent's weapon.

### Shinpan

(審判) *"Referee, judge."* A *shiai* referee.

### Shizentai

(自然体) The *"natural body."* A natural (proper) posture, i.e., standing straight and extending the spine,

shoulders back, arms hanging naturally, feet shoulder width, and the core engaged. *Migi* and *hidari shizentai* is when the right or left foot is forward, respectively, and the opposite shoulder is pulled slightly backward. This is not to be confused with a *hanmi kamae*.

### Shōgō

(称号) *"Rank, degree, title."* Shōgō are a set of titles awarded to *kendōka* of sufficient rank, 6th, 7th, and 8th *dan*; age, and experience. The titles, listed in ascending order, are *renshi* ((錬士)), *kyōshi* ((教士)), and *hanshi* ((範士)). *Shi* translates to (respected) "gentleman/scholar", *ren* translates to "refined", *kyō* is "teach", and *han* is "model". Currently 8th *dan*, *hanshi* is the highest rank attainable in *kendō*.

### Shōmen

(正面) *"Front."* (1) The frontal target area of the *men*. (2) The symbolic head/front of the *dōjō*.

### Shōtō

(小刀) The "short sword" used in *nitō*.

### Sonkyo

(蹲踞) *"Crouching."* The formal crouching position in *kendō*.

### Suburi

(素振り) *"Elementary swing."* Various swing practices or exercises which make up a fundamental part of basic *kendō*. *Kendōka* will easily perform many thousands of practice strikes in their training, learning proper technique through repetition.

### Suki

(隙) *"Interval", "gap", "opportunity."* This refers to an opening in your or your opponent's defenses, or a gap between thoughts or actions.

### Suri-age

(すり上げ) *"Sliding" while "rising."*

### Suri-age waza

(すり上げ技) A "rising slide" *waza*. Used to deflect an attack by sliding your weapon along the opponent's making a small, half-circle motion as you lift your weapon into the path of the attack. This rising-slide motion is not to be confused with hitting or knocking the opponent's weapon out of the way.

### Suri-ashi

(摺り足) *"Sliding foot/leg."* Footwork where *kendōka* slide their feet on the floor as they move.

### Sutemi

(捨て身) *"Sacrifice/abandon body/self"*, often translated as "body abandoning", i.e., ready to throw one's life away. *Sutemi* refers to the mentality needed while striking, i.e., that one will either kill or be killed during the attempt and only by fully placing one's life on the line, without hesitation or reservations, can a strike



become truly effective.

## T

### Tachi

(太刀) “Long sword.” Used in the [nihon kendō no kata](#).

### Tachi kata

(太刀形) A subset of the [kata](#) using [tachi](#).

### Tachi-ai no maai

(立会いの間合 or 立合いの間合) “Attendance, presence; be pitted against.” The distance between [kendōka](#) for the [ritsu-rei](#) in the [nihon kendō no kata](#) and [bokutō waza](#); roughly nine steps apart.

### Tai

(1) (体) “Body.” (2) (待) “Wait.” (3) (帯) “Belt/sash.”

### Tai-atari

(体当り) “Body blow”, “ramming attack.” Used to create a [suki](#) in the opponent by momentarily upsetting their balance via a specific type of push.

### Tame

(溜め) To “store, amass, accumulate.” AJKF (2011) defines tame as “the condition of being composed both mentally and physically and maintaining a spiritually replete state despite the tense situation.” In a basic sense tame is the continuation of [seme](#); one observes the opponent’s reaction(s) to seme while maintaining an attacking spirit. It has a broader meaning over the duration of a match: [kendōka](#) amass their spirit but have the patience to act at their own pace.

### Tare

(垂) “Hang, suspend.” The “skirt of a coat.” The waist protector worn in [kendō](#). See [bōgu](#).

### Ten no kamae

(天の構え) “Kamae of heaven.” See [jōdan no kamae](#).

### Te-no-uchi

(手の内) “Palm, skill.” In [kendō](#) the specific method of handling the [shinai](#) or [bokutō](#) upon striking. Te-no-uchi transfers power to the [kensen](#) while maintaining control at the moment of impact.

### Tō

(刀) “Sword.” A Japanese sword; [katana](#).

### Tō-ma

(遠間) A distance longer than [issoku ittō no maai](#). Also called [tōi-maai](#).

### Tsuba

(鐔) The “sword guard” on a [shinai](#) or [bokutō](#).

### Tsuba-zeriai

(鐔ぎり合い) “Urging/forcing (while) tsubas are joined together.” The position when two [kendōka](#) are in close proximity, [tsuba](#) against [tsuba](#), attempting to create an opening to strike.

## Tsugi-ashi

(継ぎ足) “Adding/extending/elongating” footwork. This style of footwork is a variation of [okuri-ashi](#), where the [kendōka](#) brings both feet side by side before taking the [okuri-ashi](#) step. This motion helps to build momentum and is often used to cover very large distances.

## Tsuka

(柄) “Handgrip.” The handle of the [shinai](#) or [bokutō](#).

## Tsuka-gashira

(柄頭) “Top/head of the tsuka.” This refers to end of [tsuka](#).

## Tsuki

(突き) (1) “Thrust.” (2) The name of the target when thrusting to the throat.

## Tsuki-dare

(突き垂) The throat protector on the [men](#), see [kendō-gu](#), for receiving [tsuki](#) attacks.

## U

### Uchi-ma

(打ち間) “Striking distance.” The spatial distance at which one can strike the opponent. While [ma](#) has a distinct meaning from [maai](#), uchi-ma is implicitly related to the three general maai: [issoku ittō no maai](#), [chika-ma](#), and [tō-ma](#).

### Uchidachi

(打太刀) “The striking sword” or “the presenting sword.” The role of “teacher” in the [nihon kendō no kata](#).

### Uchi-otoshi waza

(打ち落とし技). Techniques for striking the opponents weapon downward, midway through their attack, redirecting it.

### Uke

(受け) “Receive, catch, defend.” The temporary block/deflection in several [ōji waza](#). The opponent’s strike is momentarily received/deflected and, in a single continuous motion, a counter-attack is made. This is different than blocking as the intent is to attack vs. just preventing oneself from being hit.

### Ura

(裏) “Inside.” The right side of the [shinai](#) or [bokutō](#).

## W

### Waki-gamae

(脇構え) “Side stance.” Known as the “kamae of metal”, or [yō no kamae](#), it’s a variant of [gedan no kamae](#).

### Waza

(技) “Technique(s).” Fencing techniques used against an opponent.

## Y

## Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū

(柳生新陰流) Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū is one of the oldest [kenjutsu](#) schools in Japan. Descendant from Shinkage-Ryū, founded by Kamiizumi Nobutsuna, the Yagyū Shinkage-Ryū was founded by Yagyū Munetoshi and is still practiced today.

## Yokote-kōsa

(横手交差) “Intersection of the *yokote*.” The position [kendōka](#) meet at when they will perform formality based motions, e.g., [kamae \(w\)o toku](#) or [sonkyo](#), in the [nihon kendō no kata](#) and [bokutō waza](#).

## Yō no kamae

(陽の構え) “Attacking *kamae*.” The antithesis of [in no kamae](#). See [waki-gamae](#).

## Yūkō-datotsu

(有効打突) “Effective strike.” In [kendō](#), [yūkō-datotsu](#) is an accurate, i.e., made in the same direction as the [jin-bu](#), strike or thrust (1) onto the [datotsu-bui](#) of the opponent’s [kendō-gu](#) with the [shinai](#) at the [datotsu-bu](#), (2) in high spirits and correct posture, and (3) followed by [zanshin](#).

## Z

## Zanshin

(残心) “Remaining mind.” In the context of [kendō](#) this is, simply put, interpreted as sustaining both mental and physical readiness with every action in order to be able to respond or cope with the opponent; a sustained alertness.

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