

## 6. San Satsu Ho, Mitsu no Sen, and the Four Sicknesses

The **San Satsu Ho**, or literally “the three laws”, are guidelines on how to defeat an opponent in Kendo. They’re not a specific “formula” for victory per se, but more of a method by which one can expose or create Suki, both mentally and physically, in the opponent.

- **Ken o Korosu**. “Kill the Sword”. Control the opponents Kamae such that it becomes ineffective. The sword is the source of the opponents ability to attack, i.e., through physically visible Seme, striking, etc., as well as their only method of defense, i.e., through Kamae or a defensive Waza. “Ken o Korosu”, and your opponent can’t attack nor can they defend against your initiatives.
- **Ki o Korosu**. “Kill the Spirit”. Mentally dominate your opponent, such that they begin to doubt themselves and hesitate in their actions. Doubt and hesitation exposes Suki in your opponent, and creates flaws in their offensive techniques. “Ki o Korosu” and your opponent is defeated before you even attack them.
- **Waza o Korosu**. “Kill the Techniques”. Disrupt your opponents techniques such that they become ineffective. The term “techniques” refers to both mental or spiritual, and physical techniques alike. If the opponent attacks you (physically), parry it; sweep it to one side and counter attack. Mental or spiritual techniques refer to ploys or lures that your opponent will attempt in order to break your Kamae, or confuse you with regards to their intent. It also refers to the opponent’s attempts to dominate your spirit. Remaining calm, holding a strong Kamae, and displaying a strong and unmovable spirit will always overcome these types of Waza.

The **Mitsu no Sen** or “the three sen” refers to the three types of “Sen” (initiative of attack) in Kendo. These three types Sen all refer to the opportunities where one can successfully attack an opponent. Each of the Mitsu no Sen has been parsed in order to help explain the “ownership” of each Sen.

- **Sen no sen**. This term translates to taking “initiative (yours) on the initiative (of the opponent)”. Sen no sen is when one makes an attack as the opponent is just starting to take the initiative of their own attack.
- **Go sen no sen**. This translates to “initiative (yours) after the initiative (of the opponent)”. This is when one responds to the opponent’s attack with a counter attack. The opponent’s attack is launched, recognized, and spontaneously responded to.

- **Sen sen no sen.** This term can be parsed, albeit a bit complex, into “initiative (yours) on the initiative (of the opponent) of the initiative (yours)”. This is somewhat similar to go sen no sen in that one responds to the opponent’s attack which has already been put into motion. However, instead of simply recognizing the attack (after it is launched) and spontaneously responding, one has a prior knowledge of the coming attack by initially drawing it out from the opponent, i.e., via Seme, and then counter attacking using that prior knowledge.

**The Four Sicknesses** in Kendo are inherently related to the San Satsu Ho. To completely illustrate the relationship between the two would be beyond the scope of this text. However, one need only consider the San Satsu Ho and their effect on an opponent in order to be convinced of their connectivity. The following is given in the context of facing an opponent.

- **Fear.** Fear of the opponent, fear of being scored on, or fear of the unknown. Fear leads to hesitation, doubt, loss of opportunity, and prevents one from reacting naturally and spontaneously.
- **Doubt.** Doubt in oneself or in one’s techniques leads to lowered self confidence and a lessening of the spirit. Doubt can lead to fear.
- **Surprise.** Surprise is due to a momentary loss of one’s connection between oneself and the opponent. Surprise clouds one’s ability to think freely, and can lead to fear, doubt, and confusion.
- **Confusion.** Confusion indicates the complete loss of a connection between oneself and the opponent, or even a connection between one’s mind (intent) and one’s body (physical action). All actions against a confused opponent will cause surprise.

Some sources may add “*ego*” and “*anger*” to the previous list and instead cite “*the six sicknesses*”.