

Defeating Jodan

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Introduction

BECAUSE of jodan's relative rarity many people do not have experience fighting against it.

Tips come from various sources on how to combat jodan...some of them are very good, and some are not so good. Few of these tips are written in stone and it has been my experience that most of these ideas are *situation dependent*. Specifically, they are *heavily dependent on assumptions made of the jodan user*¹. If these assumptions hold, the tip will quite possibly work. If the assumption fails, the tip is useless. All too often people seem to employ various tips because they are simply "what you are supposed to do" v.s. being applicable to the current opponent.

There is also a lot of misunderstanding regarding the purpose of various jodan defenses. This information is then passed on in its skewed form causing more problems.

The intent of this article is to look at jodan and to specifically look at the reasons behind various suggestions on how to combat jodan and to look at the "unspoken assumptions" made when using them. By examining these assumptions and understanding the ideas behind them, one ought to better understand their use.

¹ For example, assumptions made are often in regards to the opponents ability to judge maai, their ability to find an opening in one's kamae, the ease with which they can be distracted, etc.

Kamae

FIRST a brief discussion on both jodan and chudan kamae.

Chudan kamae is the standard kamae in kendo and, without diverging from the purpose of this article, it is a kamae of both offense and defense ². Chudan can be adapted to both aspects easily and naturally and should be considered as 50/50 each³. Chudan's strength comes from this adaptability, which in turn is due to the position of the kensen and its ability to control the kensen and the mid line of the opponent.

Jodan is a more aggressive kamae, both physically and spiritually, with the spiritual aspect being the more dominant ⁴ of the two. The jodan user sacrifices much of the adaptability of chudan, specifically it's defensive aspects, and diverts it toward attack. In essence whereas chudan is a 50/50 offense and defense kamae, jodan ought to be considered close to 100% offense⁵.

Especially important to note is that jodan does not have a forward positioned kensen like chudan does, *completely removing the physically offensive and defensive capabilities it offers the chudan user.*

General Targets

USING any given kamae dictates which targets are most available to the opponent to strike as well as which targets can be attacked by the user. While in a chudan-chudan match-up, all of the standard targets (men, sayu-men, yoko-men, tsuki, migi kote, migi do, and hidari do) are very viable attack options. However, when using an alternate kamae such as jodan, certain targets are not viable.⁶ To be clear, depending on kamae, some targets become unavailable, either through the rules of kendo or through actual physical viability, and others become more readily available.

This gives rise to a hierarchy of targets between the opponent and the user, which is not normally present⁷ in chudan-chudan match-ups.

² Jinichi Tokeshi. *Kendo: Elements, Rules, and Philosophy*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2003

³ That is to say that chudan easily allows the use of both shikake and oji waza.

⁴ Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei. *Fundamental Kendo*. Japan Publications, 1973. Out of Print; and Haruki Ogawa. "Advanced Kendo Seminar". <http://www.skijournal.co.jp>, 2001

⁵ Jodan primarily makes use of shikake waza with oji waza use limited almost exclusively to debana waza. Some nuki and kaeshi waza are possible.

⁶ It is important to note that most often certain targets become non-viable, *not* impossible.

⁷ There is a target availability rule in chudan-chudan which is widely known; the (un)availability of hidari kote.

Target Viability

TARGET viability is key to both using and defending against jodan effectively.

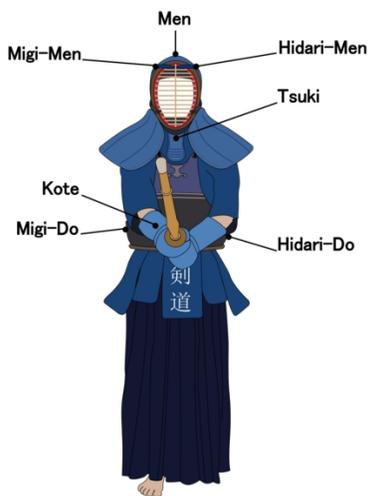
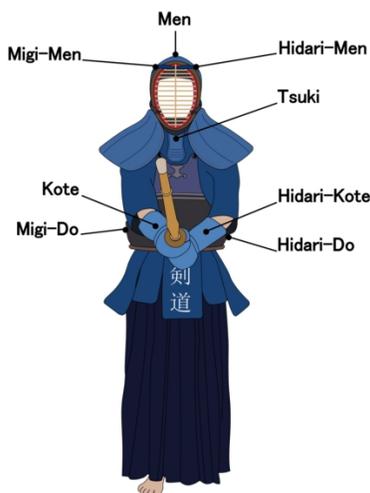


Figure 1 shows all of the available targets in kendo and figure 2 shows the usual chudan-chudan target viability. The only restriction present is the hidari kote which is not viable unless: (1) one uses a hidari chudan, i.e., left hand is the forward hand, or (2) one holds a non chudan kamae for an extended period of time⁸.

Figure 1: All of the available targets in Kendo are shown without regard to any viability rules.

All Possible Targets in Kendo		
Shomen	Migi Kote	Hidari Do
Sayu-Men	Hidari Kote	Tsuki
Yoko-Men	Migi Do	

Figure 2: Viable targets while fighting against chudan.

Chudan v.s. Chudan Viable Targets		
Shomen	Migi Kote	Tsuki
Sayu-Men	Migi Do	
Yoko-Men	Hidari Do	

⁸ International Kendo Federation. *The Regulations of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan*. International Kendo Federation, 2005. March 2003 revision, 2nd printing

Next we can look at the viable targets when fighting against jodan, shown in figure 3. There are three things to note. First, the hidari kote becomes permanently viable. Secondly, men (all types) is no longer a viable target as the kamae itself is a physical barrier against attacks⁹. Lastly, migi do isn't *consistently* viable as it is covered¹⁰ during the use of katate waza.



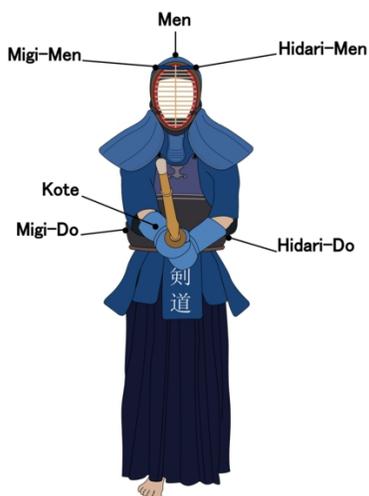
⁹ Unless the jodan kamae is altered or moved men isn't a viable target.

¹⁰ When the jodan player uses katate waza, the migi kote is pulled to the side covering the do as part of the technique. Striking migi do via oji waza is unlikely. Similarly, if the jodan player responds to your shikake waza with katate waza, striking migi do is unlikely.

Figure 3: Viable targets when against jodan.

Chudan v.s. Jodan Viable Targets		
Tsuki	Migi Kote	Hidari Do
Hidari Kote	Migi Do	

The first target restriction when a jodan player plays against chudan is tsuki as one would have to forgo jodan in order to thrust¹¹. Also hidari kote is not considered valid just as with chudan-chudan.



¹¹ This is not to say that this would never happen.

Figure 4: The viable targets while using jodan kamae against a chudan user.

Jodan v.s Chudan Viable Targets	
Katate Waza	Morote Waza
Shomen	Shomen
Sayu-Men	Sayu-Men
Yoko-Men	Migi Kote
Migi Kote	Migi Do
	Hidari Do

Kamae Features

NEXT we look at some of the general features¹² of jodan and expand on two crucial points: katate waza and seigan kamae.

Inherent Features of Hidari Jodan and Their Effects	
Katate Waza	Allows striking to occur from a larger distance.
	Chudan is usually adapted to seigan in order to keep its defensive capabilities against katate waza.
	Katate waza is often limited to men or kote.
Morote Waza	All jodan-viable targets are available using morote waza.
	Jodan morote waza can be used at long or short distances. Morote waza allows for more types of oji waza.
Maai	Without a forward positioned kensen jodan's maai is more difficult to assess.
	By using a hidari v.s. migi shizentai ¹³ for this kamae the maai of katate waza is increased. Jodan's increased maai can make it more difficult for opponents to initiate an attack.
Seme	With no forward positioned kensen jodan is heavily dependent on spiritual seme for its effectiveness in controlling the opponent and creating openings for attack.

Katate Waza

THE primary feature most people are familiar with when dealing with jodan is the katate waza. In fact, this is the desired primary attack method for jodan¹⁴. This can be understood by looking more closely at some of the kamae's features:

1. Katate waza allows attacks to be made from a farther distance.
2. Hidari shizentai adds to the maai of a katate strike.
3. Chudan is usually adapted to seigan.

It is the maai that makes katate waza jodans prominent technique. It allows one to be in an attack position before the opponent and the increased maai also eliminates some of the defensive¹⁵ capabilities of chudan as both kote and men can be hit easily.

¹² It's important to think of kamae features v.s. strengths or weaknesses as features are constant between users. Strengths and weaknesses may not be.

Table 1: Features of hidari jodan no kamae. Each kamae has features which are inherent to the kamae itself making them independent of the user's ability. While the exact expression of these features is relative from user to user, they will be common to all.

-Definitions-

Katate: one-handed.
Morote: two-handed.
Maai: distance.
Seme: pressure.

¹³ The term migi or hidari shizentai is used to refer to the natural standing position with the right or left foot forward, respectively, when one assumes a kamae.

¹⁴ Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei. *Fundamental Kendo*. Japan Publications, 1973. Out of Print; Junzo Sasamori Gordon Warner. *This is Kendo: The Art of Japanese Fencing*. Charles E Tuttle, 1964; Haruki Ogawa. "Advanced Kendo Seminar". <http://www.skijournal.co.jp>, 2001; and Iho Kiyotsugu. "New Progress Course Kendo". <http://www.skijournal.co.jp>, 1982

¹⁵ When in chudan-chudan combat simply holding the shinai in the center-line offers defense against strikes and advances where as against jodan this is no longer the case.

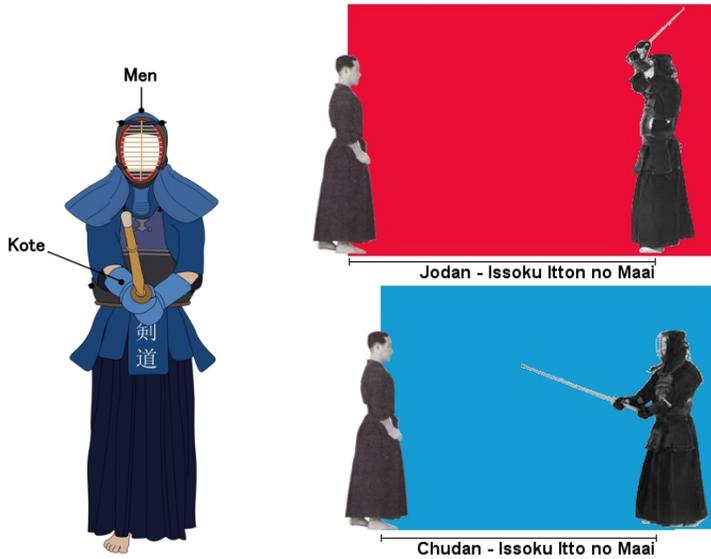


Figure 5: At left, the primary targets for katate waza: (sho)men and migi kote. This is made so because of the maai associated the use of katate waza. At right, issoku itto no maai for jodan (top) and issoku itto no maai for chudan (bottom). Jodan's issoku itto no maai is increased, relative to that of chudan, by approximately one step of it's user. This alters the effectiveness of chudan no kamae in offering protection against jodan based attacks. As shown here, maai is indicated by the horizontal rule (below each image) from the centre of the attacker's forward foot to the centre of the opponent's men

This ease with which both kote and men become available via jodan katate waza leads to the necessity to modify standard chudan into seigan kamae. This makes kote more difficult to hit and allows the seigan user to more easily perform some defensive¹⁶ waza.

Seigan no Kamae

THIS kamae literally means "correct eye". When assuming seigan, the left hand is held at approximately two fist widths away from the body and one fist width above the navel¹⁷. The kensen is at (the jodan player's) eye level and the monouchi (from the seigan users perspective) should cover the left kote of the jodan opponent.

¹⁶ Oji waza such as suriage, kaeshi, etc.

¹⁷ Standard chudan is described in [7, 8] as being held one fist away from the body with the bottom knuckle of the left thumb directly in front of the navel, the kensen held in the centerline, and aimed toward the throat of the opponent.



Figure 6: Seigan no Kamae: Side view, frontal view, and Seigan v.s. Jodan, as shown in [6].

Theory

Now that we have looked at some of the features of jodan, before looking at specific defenses we need to look at the theory behind jodan defense. This is best done by looking at the Nihon Kendo no Kata¹⁸ (hereafter Kata).

Specifically, the Kata which provide explicit information regarding jodan is Kata #5 and Kata #6. These two Kata demonstrate the underlying principles and basic techniques¹⁹ involved in defending against jodan, and these ideas are what we require to build upon.

Gohonme

GOHONME shows us two core ideas regarding jodan: (1) The use of seigan kamae and (2) using seme to entice an attack. The purpose behind the use of seigan has already been discussed, however to reiterate, the purpose is to reduce the availability of kote as a target and to increase the ability to perform some oji waza. The second idea, that of inducing an attack through seme is of critical importance.

As we have already seen in previous sections, playing against jodan changes the availability of certain targets which creates a kind of target hierarchy. With regards to jodan the targets at the top of this hierarchy are tsuki and hidari kote²⁰. As kata #5 shows, the seigan user's kensen is directed toward the hidari kote and hence *seme is directed toward one of the primary jodan targets*.

The kata progresses when the uchidachi reacts to the shidachi's seme and attacks men²¹. The shidachi performs suriage waza and counter attacks to the men. This is an application of sen sen no sen²²; it is through the shidachi's seme that the uchidachi reacts and provides the opening for attack. *The shidachi defeats the uchidachi by enticing a specific attack through seme, capitalizing on the induced opening.*

¹⁸ All Japan Kendo Federation. *Nippon Kendo Kata Manual*. All Japan Kendo Federation, 2002; Inoue Yoshihiko. *Kendo Kata: Essence and Application*. Kendo World Productions, 2003. Translated by Alex Bennett; Paul Budden. *Looking at a Far Mountain: A Study of Kendo Kata*. Tuttle Publishing, 2000; and Noboru Shigeoka. *Detailed Explanation of Japanese Kendo Kata*. Ski Journal Limited, 1977. 1st Edition

¹⁹ It is important to remember that even though the kata scenarios are often very different from shinai kendo scenarios, it is the application of the principles demonstrated in the kata that allow us to learn methods of attack and defense.

Chudan v.s. Jodan Target Hierarchy

Primary	Tsuki, Hidari Kote
Secondary	Migi Kote
Tertiary	Migi Do, Hidari Do

²⁰ Hidari kote is the closest target to the opponent and tsuki is reached via katate tsuki from an extended maai.

²¹ Seme here refers to shidachi both pressuring an attack and "offering" an opening (men) to the uchidachi.

²² Paul Budden. *Looking at a Far Mountain: A Study of Kendo Kata*. Tuttle Publishing, 2000

Gohonme: The Fifth Kata	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
(1) From chudan assume hidari jodan.	(1) From chudan assume seigan no kamae.
(2) Starting with your left foot, take three steps forward.	(2) Starting with your right foot, take three steps forward.
(3) With strong kiai, strike the shidachi's shomen with the intent of cutting him through to his chin.	(3) Take a small step back and with the left shinogi use suriage waza to parry the uchidachi's strike.
(4) Due to the shidachi's parry the uchidachi's sword becomes "dead" and is smoothly lowered to gedan level, the kensen outside of the shidachi's body. Shidachi counter attacks.	(4) Immediately after parrying the uchidachi's strike, step forward and with strong kiai strike the uchidachi's shomen.
(5) Shidachi exerts zanshin.	(5) Lower your kensen to the bridge of the nose of the uchidachi, while beginning to step back your right foot. Once at the bridge of the nose, finish your step back and assume hidari jodan.
(6) Verify shidachi's zanshin and begin raising your kensen up to chudan.	(6) Begin lowering your kensen and retract your left foot.
(7) Assume chudan no kamae.	(7) Assume ai-chudan with the uchidachi.
(8) Verify ai-chudan and take three steps backward starting on your left foot.	(8) Take three steps forward starting on your right foot.
(9) Hodoku, and take five steps back to the starting position.	(9) Hodoku, and take five steps back to the starting position.

Table 2: Gohonme, the fifth form of the Kendo no Kata. Steps (1), (3) and (4) as listed here are the crucial points in this kata with regards to fighting jodan; (1) the use of seigan, (3)-(4) the shidachi entices an attack from the uchidachi through seme and then uses the uchidachi's incoming attack as an opportunity to land a counter strike. This is an example of sen sen no sen and is crucial to defending against jodan.

Ropponme

ROPPONME shows us two more key ideas²³ toward building a jodan defense: (1) Invading the jodan maai and (2) pressuring the jodan player to retreat and/or alter their kamae.

As we have discussed in previous sections, jodan has an increased maai from which attacks can be initiated relative to chudan due to the use of katate waza. If one is able to enter into this maai, that is to physically move well into the jodan player's range, it affects the jodan player in two ways: (1) katate waza becomes less advantageous with the shortened distance (the primary purpose of using katate waza!) and (2) jodan has many viable targets to which the opponent is now very close, most likely within their striking range. *This eliminates the target hierarchy as all are equally viable at this close maai and increases the seme²⁴ of the opponent.*

The other key idea from ropponme is that of pressuring the jodan player to retreat or to alter their kamae. Recall that jodan is to be considered an aggressive kamae²⁵ heavily dependent on the user's spirit and their ability to apply seme. By forcing them to retreat, you are forcing them to forgo the mentality of the kamae itself.

Instead of backing up, the jodan player can react to seme by altering their kamae, in a defensive manner, in an attempt to remove the viability of the target they perceive the opponent to be directing their seme toward. While this type of reaction is problematic for *any* kamae, when a jodan player alters their kamae their men can become a viable target²⁶. This increases the opponent's viable target list to *all possible targets!*

Retreating and altering kamae produce similar results: *the jodan player is now (defensively) acting/reacting to the seme of the opponent and giving them an opportunity to strike.*

²³ It is understood that the ideas from kata #5 are also applied here; the adoption of seigan when faced with jodan, and applying seme toward the jodan user.

Equivable Jodan Targets via Invasion of Maai		
Tsuki	Migi Kote	Hidari Do
Hidari Kote	Migi Do	

²⁴ The strength of seme is dependent largely on what the opponent *perceives*. The close maai indicated here increases the perception of threat.

²⁵ Jodan is also known as *Hi no Kamae*, the kamae of fire and as *Ten no Kamae*, the kamae of "the heavens". Both make implications toward the level aggression and spirit of the user.

Induced Target Availability		
Shomen	Tsuki	Migi Do
Sayu-Men	Hidai Kote	Hidari Do
Yoko-Men	Migi Kote	

²⁶ Men will often become viable when the jodan player is pressured into defensive action against tsuki.

Ropponme: the Sixth Kata	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
(1) Assume chudan no kamae.	(1) From chudan assume gedan no kamae.
(2) Starting with your right foot, take three steps forward.	(2) Starting with your right foot, take three steps forward.
(3) Shidachi begins to raise his kensen up into chudan.	(3) Raise your kensen into chudan.
(4) In an attempt to control the shidachi, press your kensen down before the shidachi assumes chudan.	(4) The uchidachi attempts to assert control by pressing his kensen toward yours. Ignore his attempt and assume chudan.
(5) Upon verifying ai-chudan, step back on your right foot and assume hidari jodan attempting to control the shidachi.	(5) The uchidachi attempts to assert control by assuming hidari jodan. With your right foot immediately step forward aiming your kensen at his left kote. (Siegan)
(6) In response to the shidachi's pressure step back on your left foot, fore-going jodan, and assume chudan.	(6) Due to the threat of your kensen, the uchidachi must forgo jodan and retreat back into chudan. Assume ai-chudan.
(7) After verifying ai-chudan, step forward on your right foot and with strong kiai attack the shidachi with a small kote strike.	(7) Parry uchidachi's strike: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Step diagonally back-left. • As the uchidachi attacks, use the right shinogi and perform a suriage waza.
(8) After the shidachi parrys with suriage waza they counter attack with a small kote strike. Keep your bokuto at kote level.	(8) Immediately after performing the suriage waza, with strong kiai step forward and strike the uchidachi with a small kote.
(9) Drop your kensen to a level just above gedan, take a large step back on your left foot and attempt to escape the shidachi. The shidachi will exert zanshin to inhibit your movement. Turn your hands to the left such that the blade of the bokuto is angled toward the shidachi on your right.	(9) Inhibit the uchidachi from escaping with zanshin. Direct your kensen toward the uchidachi's eyes and step forward on your left foot. As you finish your step assume a strong hidari jodan.
(10) Verify shidachi's zanshin. Step forward on your right foot and assume chudan.	(10) In response to the uchidachi step back on your left foot into ai-chudan.
(11) Hodoku, and take five steps back to the starting position.	(11) Hodoku, and take five steps back to the starting position.

Table 3: Ropponme: The Sixth form in the Kendo no Kata. Steps (5) and (6) as listed here are the key steps in this kata with regards to fighting jodan; the uchidachi attempts to control the shidachi with the spiritually aggressive jodan kamae but as the uchidachi assumes jodan, the shidachi pressures him by advancing forward, into the uchidachi's maai, in seigan with his kensen toward the uchidachi's hidari kote. Due to the pressure and the shidachi entering his maai, the uchidachi cannot maintain jodan. He forgoes the kamae and retreats.

Basis for Application

Now that we have seen the theory of combating jodan via the Kata, we can begin making use of this information²⁷. Specifically we need use what we have learned in the Kata toward combating jodan in shinai kendo. This is somewhat difficult as shinai kendo rarely resembles the Kata explicitly, so focusing on application of the underlying ideas of the Kata is of crucial importance.

First a summary of what the Kata indicates as the basis for combating jodan.

Anti-Jodan Theory from the Kendo no Kata	
Gohonme	Ropponme
Use of seigan no kamae.	Entering the opponents maai.
Directing seme toward jodan’s primary target(s).	Using seme to force the opponent to retreat.
Seme to entice an attack and countering (sen sen no sen).	Using seme to force the opponent to alter their kamae.

Also a reminder of some jodan kamae features duplicated from table 1. These particular features can be considered as “weak points” of the kamae; points around which we can begin to build offense and defense against the kamae. These features also tie into the ideas from the Kata.

Anti-Jodan: Key Kamae Features	
Katate Waza	Often limited to (sho)men or (migi) kote.
Maai	With no forward positioned kensen jodan’s maai is more difficult to assess.
Seme	With no forward positioned kensen jodan is heavily dependent on spiritual seme for its effectiveness in controlling the opponent and creating openings for attack.

²⁷ For the remainder of the article the term “opponent”, unless explicitly noted otherwise, will refer to the chudan user who is facing a jodan player.

Table 4: A summary of the ideas presented in the Kendo no Kata with regards to defending against jodan.

Table 5: A summary of jodan features which may be used to create an effective offense/defense against a jodan player.

“Proper” Anti-Jodan

FIRST and foremost it must be said, less we fall into the pitfalls outlined in the introduction of this article, that there is no one, all powerful, single way to defend against jodan²⁸. Nothing is written in stone simply because your jodan opponent is not made of stone; they are alive and evolving according to you and your actions. *So must your application of the anti-jodan ideas given in the Kata be alive and evolve as dictated by the jodan opponent.*

The ideal jodan defense will incorporate the ideas from table 4 using the features in table 5 as starting points, both used as required in order to deal with the current opponent. Let’s examine the starting points in table 5 in order to expand on them somewhat.

Jodan is Heavily Dependent on Spiritual Seme...

JODAN’S success or failure is dependent on “spiritual aspects” more so than physical ones²⁹. In particular, jodan is reliant on seme to control the opponent as well as the jodan user’s own spirit/confidence needed to be fearless in their aggression. This is especially so as there is no forward positioned kensen to aid in control of the opponent’s centerline.

If the jodan user’s spirit, confidence, and focus are broken it is impossible for them to apply seme, to control the opponent, or have the confidence required to initiate an attack fearlessly.

All reasons for even using jodan stem from the ability of the user to initiate the attack, both physical and spiritual. If the jodan user is unable to do this then *there is no purpose to taking a jodan kamae*³⁰.

*This is the most crucial point of attack when facing jodan*³¹.

Jodan’s Maai is Difficult...

THE maai of the jodan player is particularly difficult to assess as it doesn’t have the usual “measuring stick” present in chudan-chudan. The potential exists to disrupt the jodan player’s sense of distance allowing the opponent to enter into the jodan maai undetected. This gives the opponent the opportunity to initiate an attack against the jodan player.

²⁸ This may seem like stating the obvious however it is seemingly a common assumption. Nobody assumes there is one, all-powerful way of defending against chudan. Why the error against jodan?

²⁹ Zen Nihon Kendo Renmei. *Fundamental Kendo*. Japan Publications, 1973. Out of Print

³⁰ This is demonstrated in Kata #6; the uchidachi must forgo the use of jodan when they are unable to control the shidachi.

³¹ Common advice given to jodan users which sums up the importance of the jodan user’s maintained aggression is that “if you retreat, you lose.”



Figure 7: Ai-Chudan offers a relatively easy to measure maai as both players can constantly measure their distances with their forward positioned shinai.

Katate Waza is Limited...

JODAN’S primary technique is katate waza and has advantages against chudan due to maai. The use of seigan eliminates certain physical aspects of this advantage as discussed in figure 8. Because of this the jodan user is now reliant on seme to produce opportunities aside from those “offered” by the opponent (see Gohonme p. 7).

This may seem like re-stating the obvious, however this is a crucial starting point; it is the same starting point in the Kata where both opponents begin by applying seme. If the opponent is able to draw out an (katate) attack from the jodan player then they have an advantage. The opponent can employ either sen sen no sen, go sen no sen, or the worst case scenario is that they must “guess” between the defense of either men or kote³².

Defeating Jodan

EACH entry in tables 6, 7, and 8 is broken into three components: purpose, application basis, and assumption on use. These indicate, respectively, the intent behind their use, the origins of the idea (Kata or kamae features), and the assumption one makes of the jodan player when deciding whether or not the strategy is applicable.

Move the Kensen Up and Down

OTHER than seigan kamae, this is probably the most commonly used idea in jodan defense. A variation on this is to “cycle” between pointing at the left kote, the right kote, and the tsuki. This will be looked at separately.

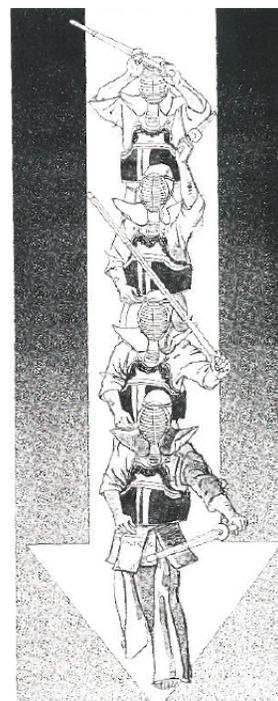


Figure 8: Jodan’s alternate katate kote waza. Due to jodan’s increased maai, the opponent’s kensen does not inhibit katate waza attacks; both kote and men can easily be reached with simple, *straight* katate strikes. The use of seigan forces the jodan user to use a more difficult kote waza in order to bypass the opponent’s kensen.

³² Compare this to the potential targets of a non-katate waza: men, kote, and migi or hidari do.

Moving the Kensen	
Purpose	Disrupt ability to “set-up”
Application Basis	“ <i>Katate waza is limited...</i> ”, p.13
Assumption on Use	Jodan player is unable to “set-up”
Purpose	Draw out an attack
Application Basis	“ <i>Theory: Gohonme</i> ”, p.7
Assumption on Use	Jodan player succumbs to your seme
Purpose	Disrupt perception of maai
Application Basis	“ <i>Jodan’s maai is...</i> ”, p.12
Assumption on Use	Jodan player unable to judge maai

Table 6: Moving the kensen while facing jodan.

There are three separate ideas given as to the purpose of moving the kensen up and down when facing jodan.

The first is to disrupt the ability of the jodan player to “set-up” a (katate) strike opportunity³³. Since katate waza is limited to men and kote, these are the openings a jodan player is looking for from a distant maai. By continually opening a target and then removing that target to open another, the intent is to distract the jodan player and make them unable to find an attack opportunity. The assumption behind this of course is that the jodan player is *actually* being distracted by this motion, and is unable to find an opening. The danger here is that if they are not distracted or that they can find a pattern in the movements, either will result in them being given an opportunity to strike rather than obscuring it. Another problem is whether or not the jodan player chooses to use morote waza from a distant maai forcing the opponent to defend three target types instead of two.

The second is to purposely open one target and then another with the intent to draw out an attack from the jodan player, e.g., move the kensen upward³⁴ to better protect men and uncover kote somewhat drawing out a strike to the kote. The assumption here is two-fold: one is that the jodan player succumbs to your pressure and *attacks the target you dictate* and secondly, that you are in fact *able* to counter the incoming attack. More precisely you are able to apply sen sen no sen or go sen no sen.

The third is that by moving the kensen frequently one can cause the jodan player to become distracted and unable to judge maai. This would allow the opponent to enter the jodan maai and initiate an attack of their own. This assumes that the jodan player *is distracted by or somehow reliant on* the opponent’s kensen for the gauging of maai.

Cycling Targets

“Cycling” the Kensen	
Purpose	Seme toward multiple jodan targets
Application Basis	“Theory: Gohonme, Ropponme”, p.7, 10
Assumption on Use	Jodan player succumbs to seme

THE reason for cycling the kensen between jodan’s primary and secondary targets serves a number of purposes, but each stems from one result and that is to have the jodan player perceive seme from their opponent; to feel threatened by an impending attack. Once this is established, any number of scenarios can occur³⁵: the jodan player alters their kamae, the jodan player retreats, the jodan player attacks, etc... and each one of these scenarios leads to an opening

³³ Recall that the most crucial point of attack against a jodan player is to disrupt their own focus, confidence, spirit, and their ability to always initiate the attack. Creating even the slightest hesitation in the jodan player can be disastrous.

Jodan v.s Seigan Viable Targets	
Katate Waza	Morote Waza
Shomen	Shomen
Sayu-Men	Sayu-Men
Yoko-Men	Migi Kote
Migi Kote	Migi Do
	Hidari Do

³⁴ In the most basic scenario, when the seigan user’s kensen is too low the jodan player will attempt to strike men. When the kensen is held too high the jodan player will attack kote.

Table 7: “Cycling” the kensen while facing jodan.

Chudan v.s. Jodan Target Hierarchy	
Primary	Tsuki, Hidari Kote
Secondary	Migi Kote
Tertiary	Migi Do, Hidari Do

³⁵ Often the opponent will seme toward one of jodan’s targets and then strike another as they are distracted or their kamae alters and an opening appears, e.g., seme left kote → strike tsuki, etc...

for the opponent to attack the jodan player with either shikake or oji waza. The assumption here of course is that the jodan player *actually* feels threatened, that they do in fact perceive seme. If this is not the case, then the jodan player will quite possibly be given an attack opportunity every time the opponent’s kamae³⁶ is changed/alterd.

³⁶ Often opponents will adopt a “katate seigan” of sorts into their target rotation by temporarily removing their right hand from the shinai. The purpose behind this is (1) create hesitation in the jodan player and/or (2) distract the jodan player then perform some sort of katate waza, usually migi kote or tsuki.

Keep Moving Around

Continuous Movement	
Purpose	Disrupt ability to “set-up”
Application Basis	“Jodan’s maai is...”, p.12
Assumption on Use	Jodan player is unable to assess maai or strike opportunities
Purpose	Enter jodan’s maai
Application Basis	“Jodan’s maai is...”, p.12
Assumption on Use	Jodan player unable to assess maai

Table 8: Continually moving while facing jodan.

THE final idea to look at is that the opponent ought to continuously move, i.e., forward, back, left, right, etc..., while facing a jodan 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 the opponent continuously moving.

The first is that one intends to disrupt the jodan player’s ability to “set-up” a strike opportunity. The idea is that by constantly moving the jodan player loses track of their maai, and similar to the idea discussed above on “moving the kensen”, the jodan player will become hesitant in their attack as the opponent’s targets continually come in and out of their distorted maai³⁷. The assumption made against the jodan player is that they are in fact unable to judge their own maai, which has been discussed already. Another assumption that comes in to play here is that the opponent assumes they themselves are able to remain stable and ready throughout this constant motion and are able to attack or counter the jodan player³⁸.

³⁷ 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 jodan 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 kendo.

The second idea is that by continually moving, the opponent is able to disguise their movement into the jodan player’s maai. If successful the opponent will be able to initiate an attack³⁹ against the jodan player undetected. This again assumes that the jodan player is distracted from their ability to judge their own maai and that the player is in fact stable enough to launch an effective attack.

³⁸ This “self assumption” is very easy to remain ignorant to and often not considered by the opponent when in fact it is of crucial importance.

³⁹ Initiate attack refers to attacking via shikake waza. It is not to be confused with the application of seme and the intent to attack (sen), both of which ought to be continuously present regardless of strategy.

Conclusion

While it is impossible to discuss all possible strategies and methods, by better understanding the underlying assumptions behind some of the more common “anti-jodan” strategies, as discussed above, the creation of an effective and *opponent appropriate* jodan defense should be readily attainable.

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