



Chapter 1

Jodan no Kamae

“Jodan ha Ten no Kurai, Hi no Ikioi ni aru.” The Characteristics of Jodan are the high position like the heaven and the strong power like fire.

In **Go** and **Shogi**, which are both traditional Japanese board games, there is the concept of “Kurai wo takaku toru” or “Taking the high position” which is believed to be ideal for offense. Similarly in Kendo, “Ten no Kurai”, the position of the heavens has been used for a long time. The primary feature of Jodan is that the position of the shinai is held up high, and the very strong striking power and potential that comes from this position. These aspects must be focused on.

1.0.1 Jodan wo Toru: Positioning in Jodan

Key Points:

1. Assume “Hi no Kamae”.
2. Hidari Katate Men Uchi is crucial for Jodan.
3. Use the power of your right and left hands when hitting.

About five or six years ago, Jodan became extremely popular. Although there may have been some other reasons for this phenomenon, the primary reason seems to be that two famous Kendoka were using Jodan no Kamae: Hitoshi Chiba, who won the Japanese National Kendo Competition, and Tetsuo Kawazoe, who was also a strong player.

There are not as many players who use Jodan themselves as before, but it still seems that this kamae is still attractive to many Kendoka. Therefore, you may often have the opportunity to practice with kendoka who use Jodan, as well as face them in competitions.

There seem to be a number of players who assume Jodan, but do not have a firm understanding of it. Also, I have seen, in competitions some players lose their matches quite badly against a Jodan player simply because they were unfamiliar in fighting against Jodan. This tends to happen to Kendoka who, because of no interest in using Jodan no Kamae, do not learn anything about it or practice it.

One of the most important strategies for defeating your opponent is to “know your opponent(s).” Thus, it is important for all players - not only the ones who wish to use Jodan no Kamae - to learn about it. Even if you do not assume Jodan, learning about Jodan will teach you some important points and will also improve your Kendo.

1.1 Hi no Kamae is Crucial for Jodan no Kamae

It has been said that assuming “Hi no Kamae” (Power of Fire) for Jodan and Mizu no Kurai (Power of Water) for Chudan. “Kurai” refers to an emotional condition. When positioning in Jodan, you should make yourself excited, dominant, and confident. Fire is a metaphor of these feelings.

Therefore, if you do not prepare these feelings, your Jodan will be insufficient. It is not until you learn what the spirituality necessary for Jodan is, you will not succeed. Prepare your spirit before learning Jodan Waza.

If you assume Jodan, you must be confident. You should not always defend yourself when playing with Chudan players. Don’t run away from them. Don’t show that you are frightened, scared, or nervous.

Imagine that although he was surrounded by fire, Fudo-myo-ou still stood without being afraid. You must stand and position yourself like him.

1.2 Hidari Katate Men Uchi from Jodan

There are a variety of Jodan no Kamae; however it could be said that Jodan refers to Hidari Jodan in which your left foot is placed forward. Hidari Katate

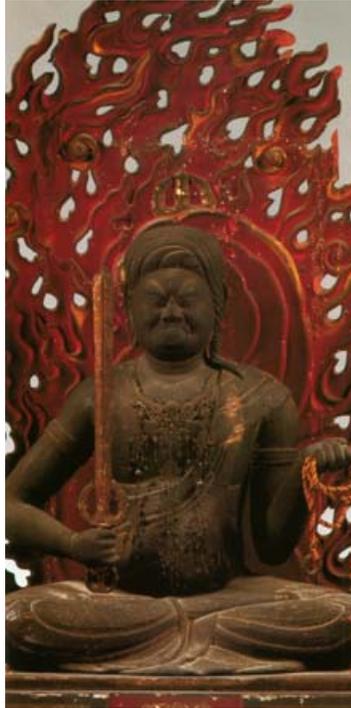


Figure 1.1: **Fudo** is a Buddhist deity who serves practitioners by defeating obstacles and devils which hinder buddhist practice. It is said that he enters a flame-emitting meditation (Kasho Zammai) in which he exudes flame and destroys all karmic hindrances. Because he never yields to obstacles, he is called “Fudo” or “Immovable”. The deity symbolizes the mind that does not move, or the body that is not unsettled even when surrounded by danger. The deity was popular with the Japanese warriors (bushi or samurai) who saw themselves as guardians of order in a nation besieged with disorder.

Men Uchi is the primary attack in Hidari Jodan. Despite the fact that there are other powerful and attractive types of attack, Hidari katate Men Uchi is considered the most powerful. Nothing else can make Jodan as it should be.

Therefore, if you want to achieve success with Jodan, you must learn Hidari katate Men Uchi. If you cannot master katate Men even if you practice it diligently, you may need to give up Jodan and stay with Chudan.

However, don't make the conclusion that you should give up Jodan now because you have not yet achieved katate Men Uchi. It seems that many



Figure 1.2: Jodan players must have both a strong spirit and confidence when playing Kendo.

Jodan players do not really know much about it. This may be because there are few trainers who can properly teach it, which in turn leads many players to developing their own style, and not the original style of Jodan. If you can learn from somebody who knows about Jodan, you will be able to succeed at katate Men Uchi.

Extend your left arm and push with your right.



Figure 1.3: 1.Hidari Jodan 2.Push with your right hand 3.Hit Men

Because it is said, “Use only your left arm and hand when doing Men-Uchi in Jodan,” many players believe they should use only the power of their left arm and hand and that they do not need their right. This is a common misunderstanding regarding Hidari katate Men Uchi. If they do not use their

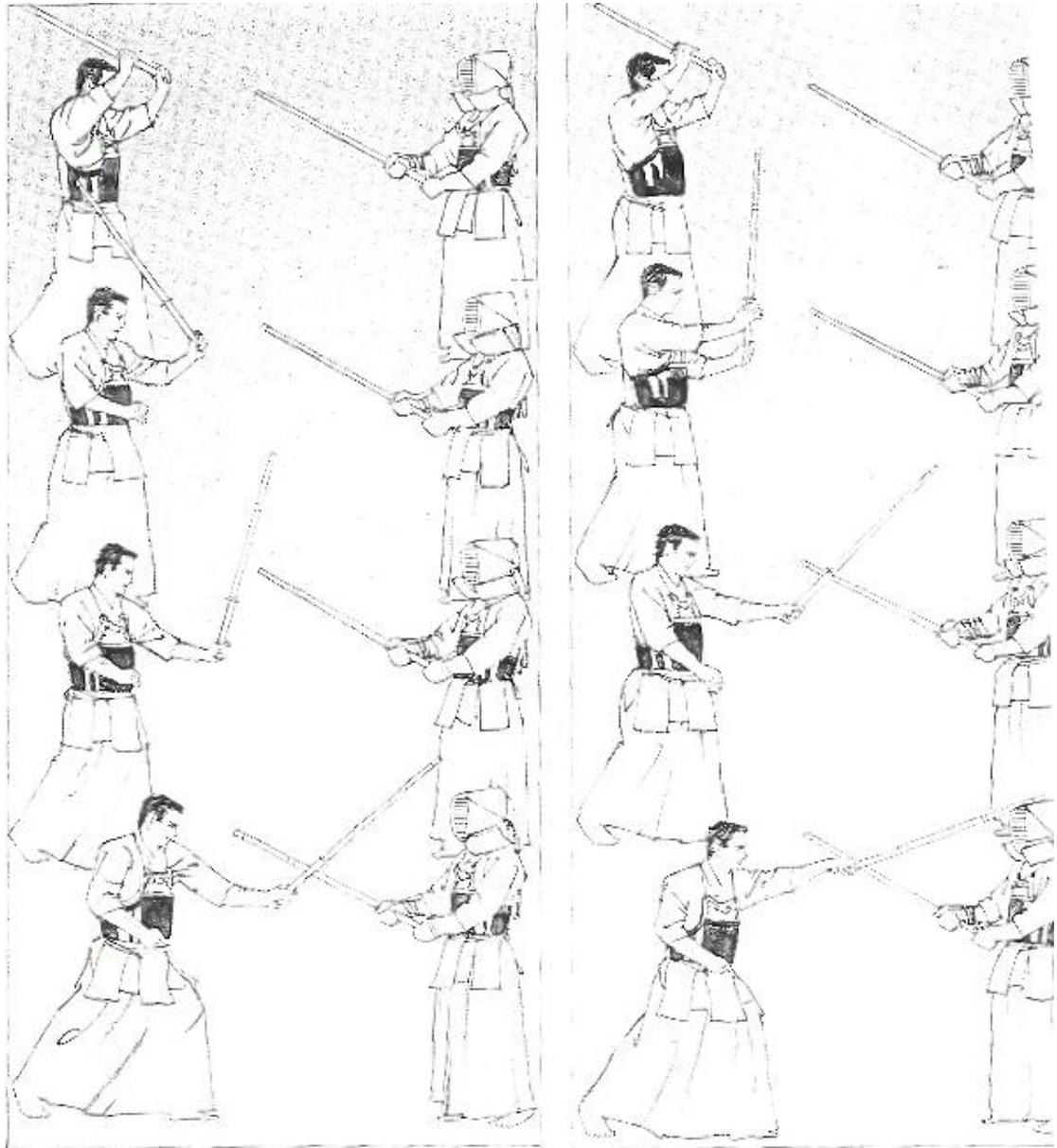


Figure 1.4: Left: Poor Katate Men Uchi Right: Proper Katate Men Uchi

right arm and hand, they may have trouble hitting Men correctly. Or, their aite may be able to easily defend themselves from the strike.

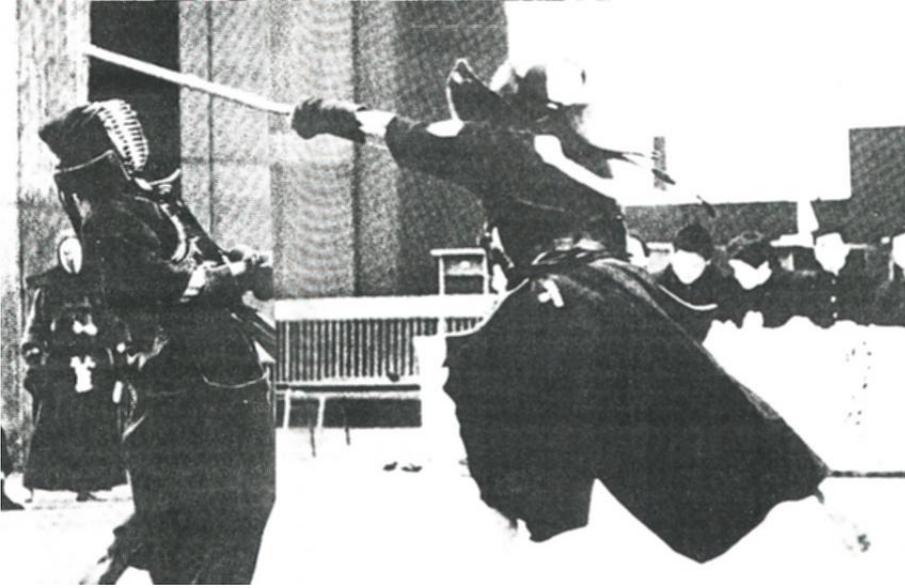


Figure 1.5: An ideal model of Hidari katate Men Uchi: look at the players left shoulder, wrist, and shinai. It makes a straight line.

The essential factors that lead you to success in Men Uchi are timing, speed, and power derived from using both your right and left arms and hands. With regard to how you use each arm and hand, your left arm is to be extended along the elbow and wrist in order to reach as far as possible with the shinai. Your right arm is used to push the shinai forward.

To extend your left arm fully, you must “snap” your left wrist forward toward the ulna so that your left shoulder, elbow, wrist and shinai form a straight line. See figure 1.2. If your wrist is not substantially “snapped” to the ulna, your shinai will not reach your opponent or will end up hitting their Men-gane (grill). See figure 1.2. Furthermore, you sacrifice power and speed by not “snapping” your left wrist.

In addition to extending your left elbow and wrist during Men-Uchi, you must push the Tsuka of your shinai forward with your right hand. This adds a lot of power and speed to your strike.

1.3 A Powerful Men-Uchi Helps You Succeed at Kote Uchi

1. Accomplish an appropriate Jodan no Kamae first.
2. Don't miss an opportunity to strike Men.
3. A strong Men-Uchi helps you achieve Kote-Uchi.
4. Men-Uchi and Kote-Uchi are performed differently.

The more powerful your Men-Uchi is, the more intimidated your opponent will become forcing them to focus on defending against you. Once this has been accomplished you can attack them in almost any way that you would like using almost any number of different Waza.

Therefore it is absolutely crucial for you to acquire a strong Hidari-katate-Men-Uchi. By pushing the Tsuka of the shinai forward with your right hand, the shinai will move fast and powerfully as mentioned above; however, this is not enough. You must learn how to use your left arm in order to pursue effective Men-Uchi.

Before talking about effective use of your left arm and hand, let me mention how to position yourself in Jodan first, since an appropriate position is the base for an appropriate Hidari-katate-Men-Uchi. There are several points that you should check when taking Jodan no Kamae.

1. Both of your feet should point straight to the front. (Your right foot should not be twisted towards the right front)
2. Straighten your back. You should stand as if your head is positioned over your opponent. (Don't keep your balance primarily on your right foot, which is towards the rear.)
3. When you assume Jodan, your shinai should be placed 8-10cm above your Men. Your left hand should be above and ahead of your left shoulder, your right hand above and ahead of your right shoulder. The middle of the Tsuka should be placed right above the Men-gane. Your shinai should be at a 45° angle from the center line.
4. Your left hand should grasp the shinai, and your right hand should support it; do not grasp it with your right.

1.3. A POWERFUL MEN-UCHI HELPS YOU SUCCEED AT KOTE UCHI11

5. Your balance should be such that 70% of your weight is on your front foot, 30% on your rear foot.

You can now hit Men from this position. There are three important points in doing this:

1. When your shinai is about to hit the opponents Men, grip your shinai tightly with your left thumb.
2. When you hit Men, fully extend your wrist and elbow. By doing this, your shinai will be sure to reach your opponents Men even if they attempt to avoid the strike by stepping backwards.
3. When hitting, powerfully step forward with your left foot as you would with your right foot in Chudan.

If you achieve these three points, you will become a good Jodan player.

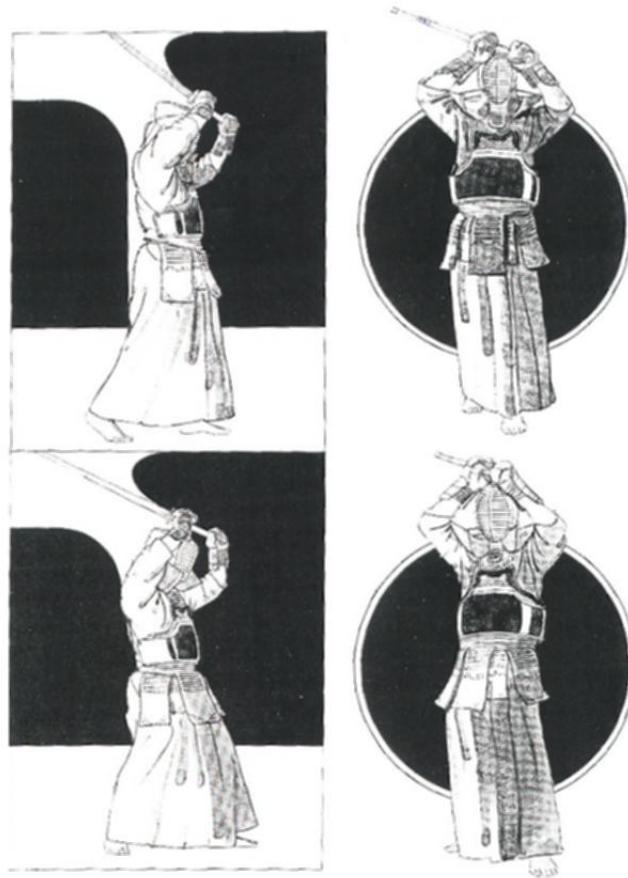


Figure 1.6: **Top: Proper Jodan no Kamae.** Both feet face forward, and the back is straight. His balance of weight is 7 : 3 on his front and rear feet respectively. His shinai is approximately one fists width above his Men. **Bottom: Poor Jodan no Kamae.** His right foot is twisted, and his weight is more to his rear. His back is not straight, and his hips are lowered. Lastly, the shinai points backwards making him rigid.

*1.3. A POWERFUL MEN-UCHI HELPS YOU SUCCEED AT KOTE UCHI*¹³

1.3.1 Ensure that it is the right chance to hit Men.

Unless you think it is the right chance to hit Men, you should not try and hit. You must be serious and think that this hit may lead you to lose or to win. The players who do not understand Jodan are likely to attempt as many Men-Uchi as they can, which looks thoughtless.

Keep in mind that the reason for hitting Men is because you think that it must be the proper opportunity to do so. At this moment you should, therefore, consider that the next strike you attempt will either cause you to win or to lose. When using Jodan no Kamae, you must wait for the proper time to strike.

There are two main opportunities to hit Men; one is when your opponent starts moving to attack you, and the other is when he or she moves away in retreat. The former opportunity would be the more effective of the two since all you have to do is swing your shinai to the spot where your opponents Men will move to. This is where you can take advantage of Jodan no Kamae's ability to attack from above.

When your opponent does not come towards you and attack, actively go towards them instead. It is a perfect opportunity to hit Men when your opponent defends themself by moving backwards due to you cornering them.

1.3.2 When your Men-Uchi becomes powerful, you can achieve Kote-Uchi as well.

When playing a Jodan player, chudan players are likely to keep the end of their shinai up in order to prevent their Men from being hit. The higher they hold their shinai, the easier it becomes to hit their Kote. It is safe to say that if you are good at hitting Men, chudan players will be more likely to hold the end of their shinai up, giving you more opportunities to strike their Kote.

Whether or not you can achieve the following skills depends on your ability to powerfully hit Men

1. Pretending to hit Men, then hitting Kote.
2. Pretending to hit Kote, then hitting Men.

A Jodan players ability to hit Men impacts their ability for Kote-Uchi the same as a pitchers ability to throw straight balls influences their ability

to throw curve and shoot balls in baseball. Only when straight balls are sufficiently powerful and fast do curve and shoot balls work to defeat batters.

1.3.3 The ways you use your left wrist and elbow in Kote-Uchi differ from that of Men-Uchi

As mentioned above, there is a similarity between Kendo and baseball in terms of the effect of one skill to another. Interestingly, there are more similarities between these two sports. The way of hitting Men is similar to that of throwing straight balls, and how you hit Kote is similar to that of throwing curve balls. To be exact, the way you use your left arm halfway through hitting Kote is exactly the same as that of throwing shoot balls.

As you cannot throw curve and shoot balls using the same method for that of a straight ball, you cannot hit Kote if you use your left arm as when you hit Men. You need to learn the proper way in which to hit Kote; you only use your left arm. The way of Kote-Uchi in Jodan is *completely* different than that of Chudan.

Let's practice Men-Uchi first. Fully extend your left elbow and wrist, so that the line from your shoulder to your shinai will be straight towards the opponents Men. In this position, you could quickly hit their Men. This is how pitchers throw straight balls.

When you hit Kote, the way that you use your left elbow and wrist differs from that of Men-Uchi. Imagine how left-handed pitchers throw shoot balls. While performing Men-Uchi, you move your left elbow to the center of your body and extend your elbow toward your opponent. In Kote-Uchi, you put your elbow up to the left front of your body first and then extend your elbow towards your opponents right Kote.

How you "snap" your wrist is also different in Kote-Uchi as compared to Men-Uchi. When hitting Men, your left wrist is "snapped" in the forward direction; i.e., your thumb moves forward in the direction of your fingers. In Kote-Uchi however, you "snap" your left wrist sideways from left to right from the back towards the palm side of your left hand.

If you hit Kote by using your left elbow and wrist as explained above, your opponent will see your shinai come far from the center line of your body. It would therefore be difficult for them to prevent you from hitting their Kote. If you step to the left/front with your left foot while attempting Kote-Uchi, it makes it even harder for them to avoid being hit.

1.3. A POWERFUL MEN-UCHI HELPS YOU SUCCEED AT KOTE UCHI¹⁵

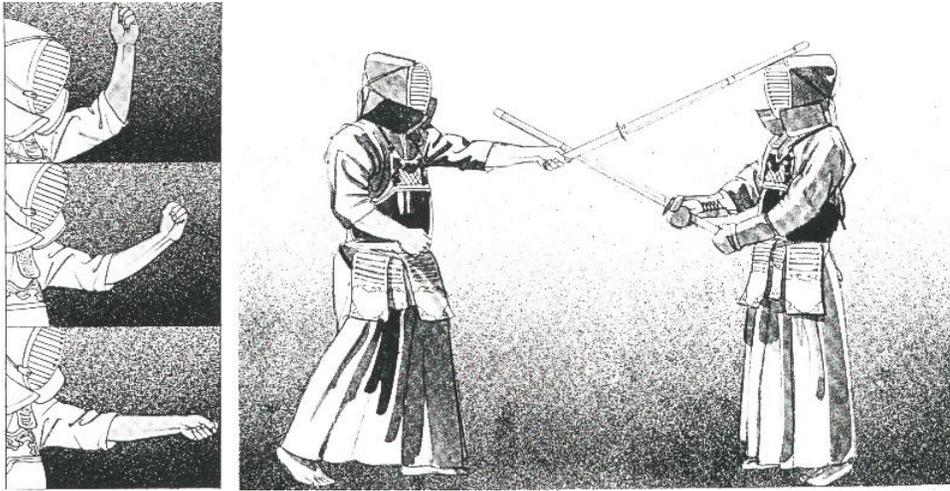


Figure 1.7: **In Men-Uchi:** Grasp your shinai tightly with your left thumb, quickly move your left elbow to the center line of your body, and “snap” your wrist toward you little finger.



Figure 1.8: **In Kote-Uchi:** Put your left elbow up to the left front of your body, flex your left wrist toward the back of your left hand, and then “snap” your left wrist toward the palm side when hitting Kote.

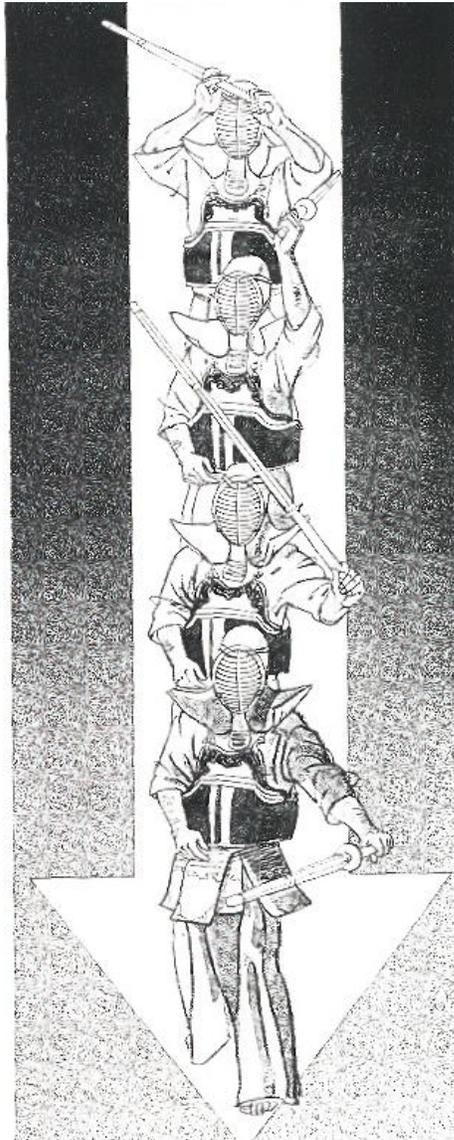


Figure 1.9: Front view of Kote-Uchi.

1.4 Morote Uchi in Jodan

1. It would be best if you win by katate-Uchi, but Morote-Kote-Uchi would be helpful to win when you play against an opponent in Seigan no Kamae.
2. Prevent your Tsuki from being hit by hitting your opponents shinai with the Tsukagashira of your shinai, and then hitting Morote-Men-Uchi.

If you are to use Jodan, you must be good at Katate-Men-Uchi and Katate-Kote-Uchi. Otherwise, you cannot say that you have “achieved” Jodan. However, if your opponent is familiar with Jodan and how to defend against it, you may not be able to defeat them with only Hidari-Katate-Men-Uchi and Hidari Katate-Kote-Uchi. Or, you may not know what to do when they launch a powerful offense against you. We shall discuss these two cases, and the appropriate strategy for each.

Before beginning, we must note that in this section “hitting” refers to Jodan kara Morote-Uchi: two-handed strikes from Jodan.

Jodan players used to use Morote-Uchi exclusively; in the past it was quite common and Katate-Uchi was very rare. It was thought that striking with a heavy katana would be difficult, if not impossible, with the use of only one arm.

Later, players began to use a shinai instead for practice, which is much lighter than a katana. This enabled the use of Katate-Uchi to become more prevalent. In addition, because Katate-Uchi enabled the player to reach much farther than Morote-Uchi, Katate-Uchi became very popular and its use began to eclipse that of Morote-Uchi.

On the other hand, it can also be said that there used to be many waza using Morote-Uchi from Jodan, and that Morote-Uchi - not Katate-Uchi - is the original Jodan.

1.4.1 When your opponent in Seigan no Kamae moves towards you, twist your upper body and use Morote-Kote-Uchi

Players use Seigan no Kamae in order to protect themselves from attack by Jodan players. When you position in this kamae, you take an oblique stance

against your opponent (a Jodan player) and point your Kensen at their left Kobushi. This position is appropriate to avoid being hit on your Men and Kote. If your Men is attacked, you can easily react with “Suriage-Men”, “Suriage-do”, “Oji-Kaeshi-do”, etc...

Jodan players are likely to be uncomfortable if you position yourself in Seigan no Kamae while slowly but sure come towards them. They cannot hit your Kote as it is protected by your shinai. Even if they do attempt a strike, you can easily perform a “Suriage” waza. If they have no skill in hitting your Kote, they will inevitably begin to move backwards. If a Jodan player is pressured backwards, they will lose.

So, how does a Jodan player deal with an opponent in Seigan no Kamae? By making use of Morote-Uchi. If you believe that Katate-Uchi is the only method of attack in Jodan, you must change your way of thinking.

When you assume Jodan, pretend to hit Men by showing the opponent a small portion of the beginning motion for Men-Uchi. Then step forward, tilt you upper body to the left side, rotate your shinai above your head (think of drawing a small arc of a circle) and then hit your opponents Kote with Morote. By tilting your upper body to the left, you will be able to see your opponents otherwise hidden (by their shinai) Kote. They may raise their arms when you “fake” Men, which in turn will make it even easier to strike their Kote.

1.4.2 When your opponent uses Tsuki, use Uchi-Otoshi-Men. Use Nuki-Men against against their Kote-Uchi, and Nuki-Do against their Tobi-Komi-Men.

Chudan players primary method of attack against a Jodan player is Katate-Tsuki. The secondary target is Hidari-Kote-Uchi. Sometimes a Chudan player will use Tobi-Komi-Men-Uchi, but this is usually done in desperation. The following waza will demonstrate how a Jodan player can prepare for dealing with these attacks.

Uchi-Otoshi is an effective waza against Tsuki. You must use the Tsuka of your shinai when performing Uchi-Otoshi. While in Jodan no Kamae, your Tsuka is above your throat; therefore, it is very easy to hit your opponent’s shinai downward away from your Tsuki. Then, immediately hit your opponents Men with Morote. Depending on distance, speed, timing, etc... you may either remain where you are, or step backward in order to properly

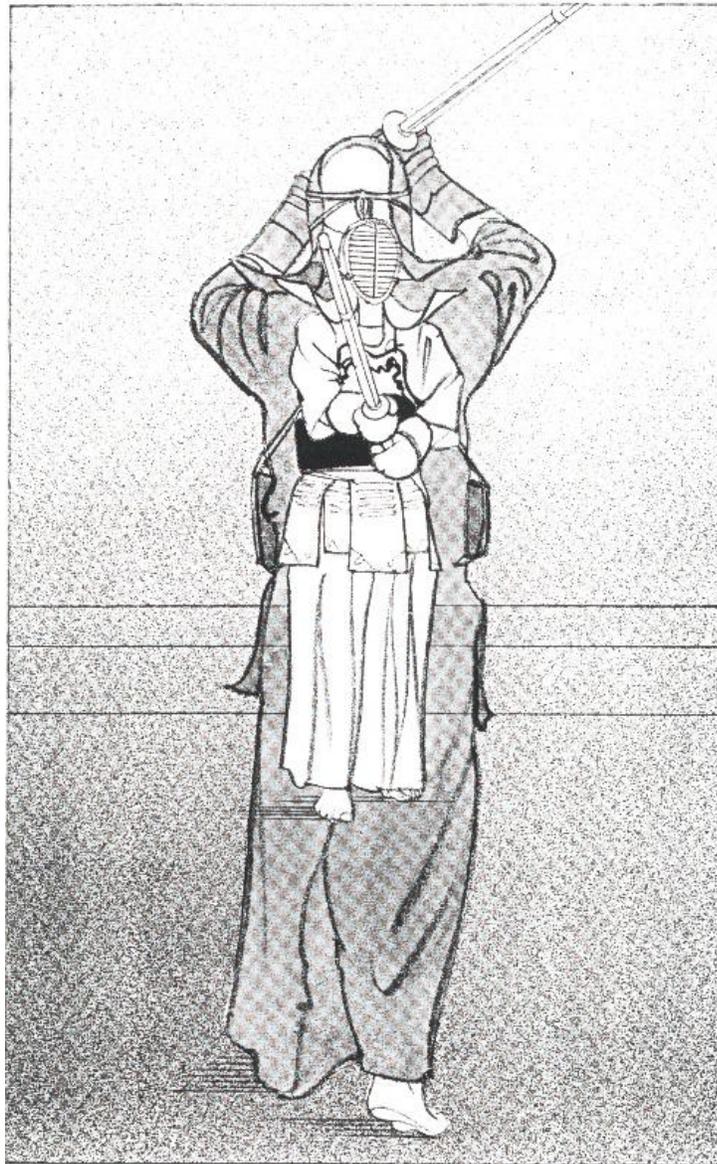


Figure 1.10: Opponent in Seigan no Kamae

hit Men.

When your opponent is attacking your Hidari Kote, raise your shinai up with both hands thus avoiding their strike (Nuki Waza). Then, immediately



Figure 1.11: Show your Opponent the beginning of your movement to hit their Men, then tilt your body to the left, rotate your shinai in a small arc above your Men, then strike their Kote from your left side.

strike their Men (Morote) by swinging your shinai down. Again, depending

on the distance, speed, and timing you may need to take a step forward, back, or remain standing where you are in order to hit Men properly.

If your opponent uses Tobikomi-Men, do not break your kamae from Jodan in an attempt to defend yourself. Otherwise, your opponent will have a chance to successfully hit your Men. Don't panic! As long as you hold proper Jodan no Kamae, your shinai which is directly above your Men will naturally protect you. Keep in mind that the use of Tobikomi Men is out of desperation on their part. Keep calm, let your shinai prevent the Men strike naturally, then counter attack with an Oji-Kaeshi-Do. Or, move your torso to avoid the Men and perform a Nuki-Do.

To summarize, you should know that there are a variety of attacks by using Morote Waza from Jodan. Learning them and practicing them is essential.

1.5 Don't be Afraid of Jodan Players

1. If you learn about Jodan, you will not be afraid of it.
2. Be determined and energetic when playing against Jodan players; don't think that you will lose.
3. Move backward, forward, and to both sides to make it harder for Jodan players to hit you.
4. Keep attacking. Don't always defend yourself.
5. Use Katate-Tsuki.

Sun Tzu said that "if you know your opponent and yourself, then even if you have 100 battles you will not lose." This is applicable to when you play against Jodan players. You should learn about Jodan. Try using Jodan no Kamae yourself. By understanding how Jodan players attack Chudan players, you will have a better understanding of how to deal with Jodan instead of fearing it.

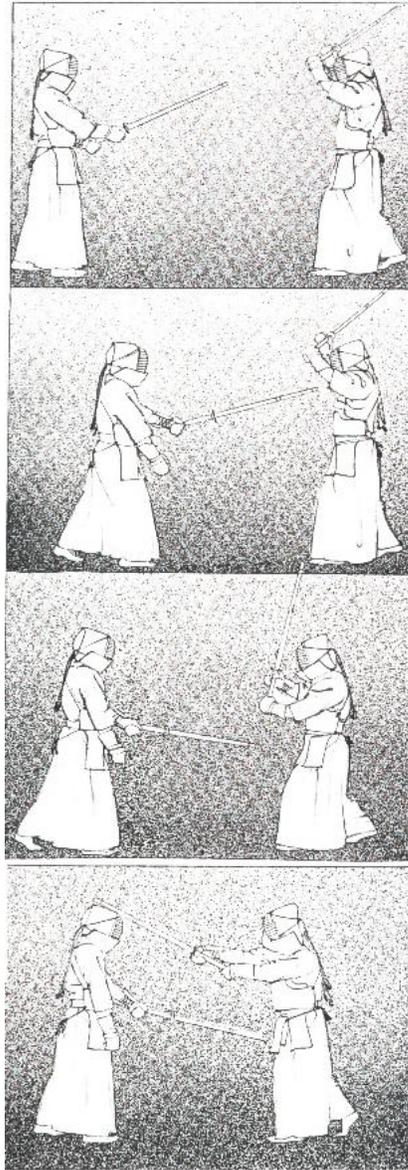


Figure 1.12: When your opponent's shinai reaches your Tsuki, hit their shinai with the Tsuka of yours. Then immediately hit Men.

1.5.1 Don't let Jodan players take "Hi-no-Kurai". Be determined to win.

Jodan players tend to be very energetic and determined to win, which itself may spiritually defeat you. Therefore, it is important for you to become

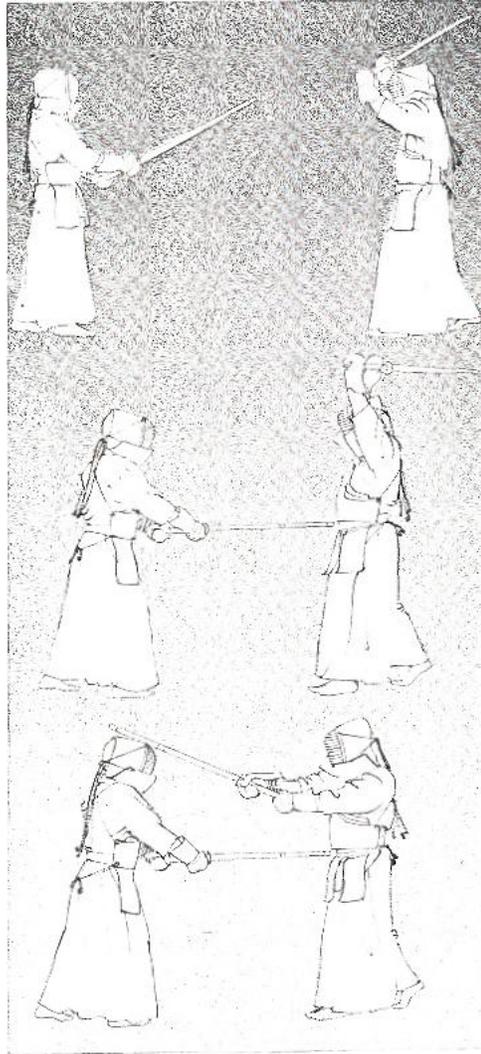


Figure 1.13: When your opponent's shinai is coming toward your left Kote, lift your shinai up with both hands to avoid the Kote-Uchi. Then, quickly hit Men.

energetic and full of spirit. Don't think that you may lose, and don't focus on defending yourself all the time. If you try to defend, you will lose. If you attack your opponent and they begin to defend themselves rather than attacking, you will win. Don't be afraid of Jodan players. Be confident.

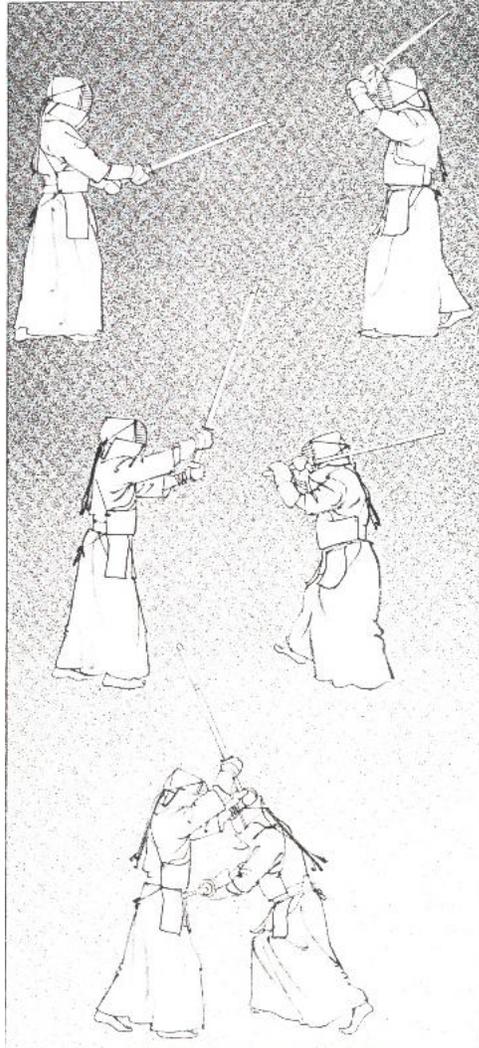


Figure 1.14: When your opponent attacks your Men, bend yourself to the right to avoid the hit, and then counter attack with a do strike.

1.5.2 Don't stop moving. Keep moving forward, backward, and to either side.

Don't stand in the same place. If you let your feet “stick” to the floor or become “flat-footed”, you will not be able to move your body as well as you

may need to. Some players stop moving when they are cornered by a Jodan player, making it easy for them to attack. You must keep moving to prevent giving them the advantage.

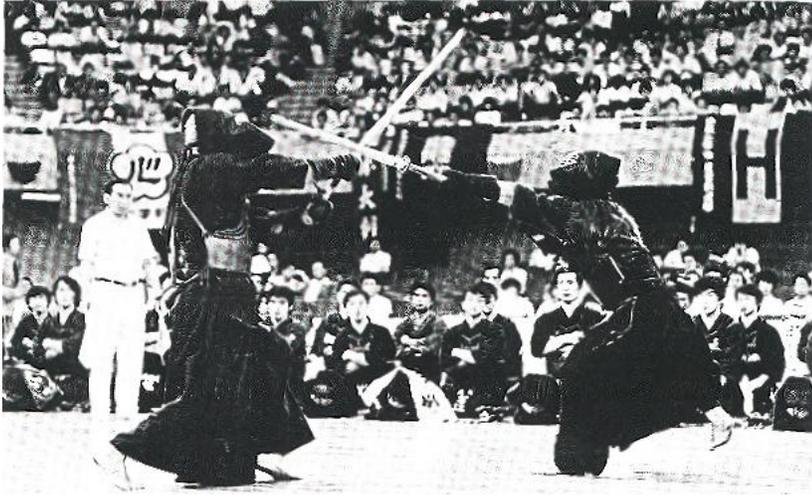


Figure 1.15: Be determined to win against Jodan players.

1.5.3 Actively attack Jodan players and don't let them have a rest.

Don't focus on defending yourself from a Jodan players attacks. You will actually be attacked more (and more successfully) if you just try to defend them all. Instead, attack them aggressively to disrupt their spirit.

1.5.4 Dare to use Katate-Tsuki as a primary target and Hidari-Kote-Uchi as the secondary when playing against a Jodan player.

Katate-Tsuki is the most effective method in attempting to break a Jodan players Kamae and spirit. It has been said, "Use tsuki to defeat Jodan players." Tsuki attacks will cause them to become "emotionally pressured". In addition, if you use Katate-Tsuki, you may be able to reach as far as a Jodan player would with Hidari-Katate-Uchi. This helps to eliminate the

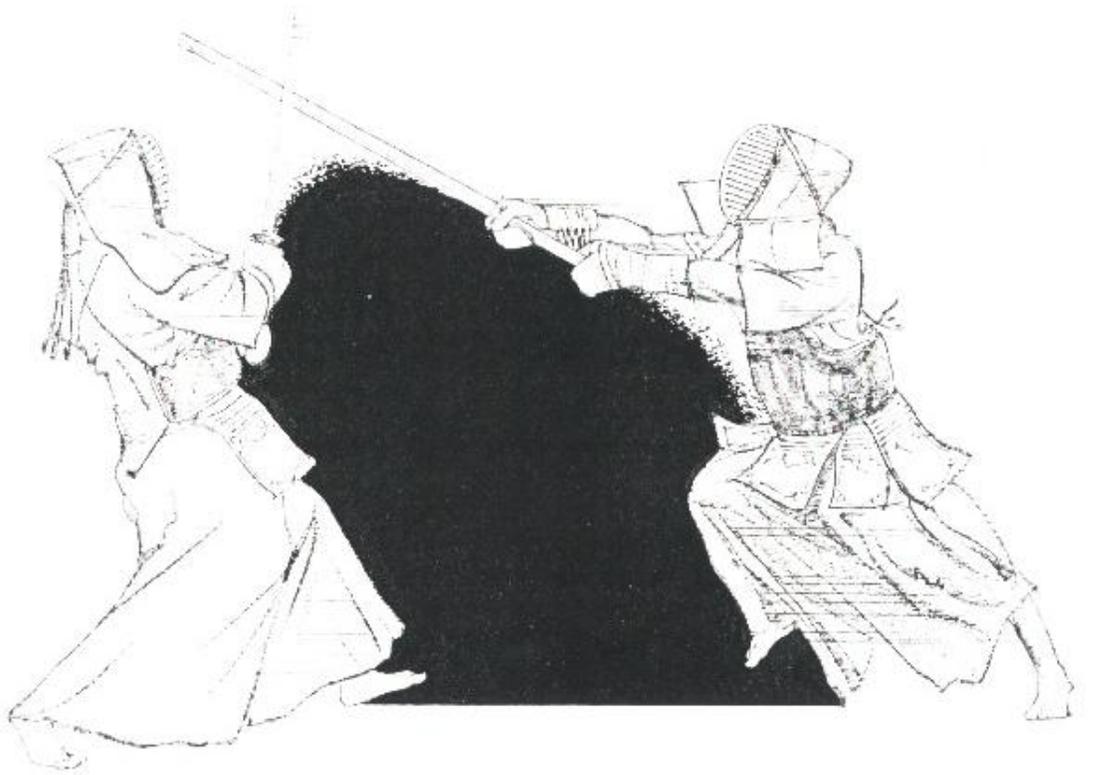


Figure 1.16: Keep attacking Jodan players to pressure them spiritually.

Jodan players advantage in terms of reach. Furthermore, since Jodan no Kamae leaves the Tsuki unguarded, it makes it naturally easier to attempt a tsuki strike against them.

You should attack their tsuki often, with the intent of agitating or disrupting the Jodan player. Once you have attained this situation, you will be more able to attack them successfully on other targets. The key is that you must take the initiative against them.

The secondary target when attacking a Jodan player is Hidari-Kote-Uchi. If you can force a Jodan player to lower their arms in order to defend their Tsuki, immediately hit Hidari Kote. There are two reasons for hitting Hidari Kote and not Migi Kote.

The first is that the Hidari Kote is closer to you than the Migi Kote, and thus much easier to reach.

Secondly, and more importantly, what if they attempt a Men strike when you go for Kote? If they attempt a Katate-Men-Uchi, their Migi Kote will be released from the shinai. Your attack would miss, and they would be free to attack your Men with their left hand.

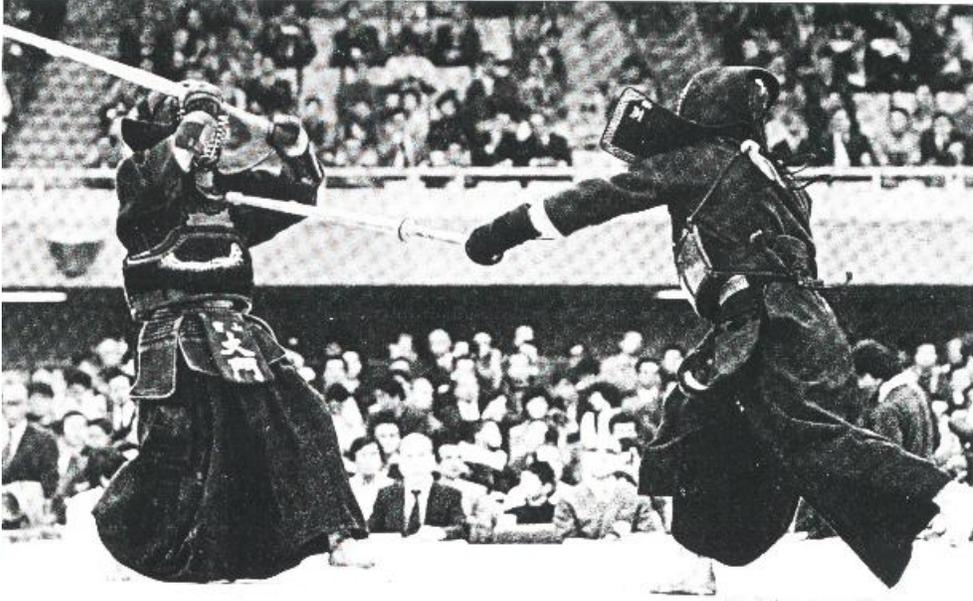


Figure 1.17: Use Katate-Tsuki as your primary strike against Jodan players.

When taking a step towards a Jodan player, you should move farther than you normally do towards a Chudan player. Otherwise, your shinai will not be able to reach the target because Jodan players tend to have a maai larger than that of Chudan no Kamae. You need to increase your step distance by an additional 20-30cm for fighting Jodan players relative to fighting a Chudan player.

1.6 Conclusion

I have explained many strategies for defeating a Jodan player. What is important is that you must have experience with these strategies by putting them to use. You must practice them, as merely knowing them will not suffice.



Figure 1.18: Take rapid and energetic steps forward to help prevent a Jodan player from attacking you..