

# JŌDAN MANUAL

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# JŌDAN-NO-KAMAE

"Jōdan ha Ten no Kurai, Hi no Ikioi ni aru." The Characteristics of Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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.

## JŌDAN WO TORU: POSITIONING IN JŌDAN

Key Points: (1) assume "Hi no Kamae"; (2) hidari Katate Men Uchi is crucial for Jōdan; (3) use the power of your right and left hands when hitting.

About five or six years ago, Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan, as well as face them in competitions.

There seem to be a number of players who assume Jōdan, but do not have a firm understanding of it. Also, I have seen, in competitions some players lose their matches quite badly against a Jōdan player simply because they were unfamiliar in fighting against Jōdan. This tends to happen to Kendoka who, because of no interest in using Jōdan 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 Jōdan-no-kamae - to learn about it. Even if you do not assume Jōdan, learning about Jōdan will teach you some important points and will also improve your Kendo.

# HI-NO-KAMAE IS CRUCIAL FOR JŌDAN

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

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

If you assume Jōdan, 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-myō-ō still stood without being afraid. You must stand and position yourself like him.

# HIDARI KATATE MEN UCHI FROM JŌDAN

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.



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

Hidari Katate Men Uchi is the primary attack in Hidari Jōdan. 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 Jōdan as it should be.

Therefore, if you want to achieve success with Jōdan, 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 Jōdan and stay with Chudan.



**[Picture 1]:** Jōdan players must have both a strong spirit and confidence when playing Kendo.

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

If you can learn from somebody who knows about Jōdan, you will be able to succeed at katate Men Uchi.

Because it is said, "Use only your left arm and hand when doing Men- Uchi in Jōdan," 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 right arm and hand, they may have trouble hitting Men correctly. Or, their aite may be able to easily defend themselves from the strike.

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 picture 1].

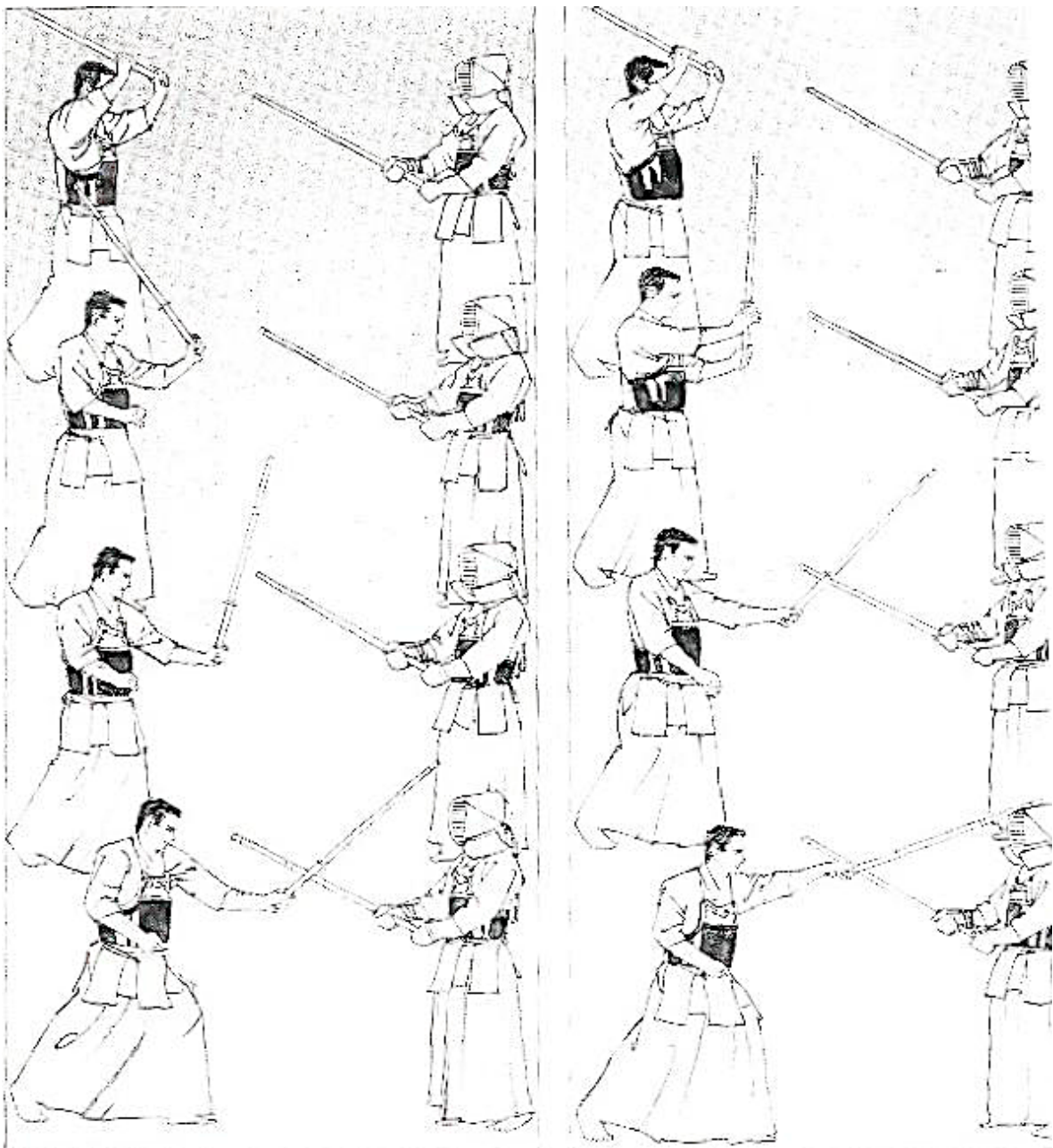


**[Picture 2]:** (1) Hidari Jōdan; (2) push with your right hand; (3) hit Men.



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 picture 1]. 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.



[Picture 3]: (left) Poor Katate Men Uchi; (right) Proper Katate Men Uchi.

## A POWERFUL MEN-UCHI HELPS YOU SUCCEED AT KOTE-UCHI

- Accomplish an appropriate Jōdan no Kamae first.
- Don't miss an opportunity to strike Men.
- A strong Men-Uchi helps you achieve Kote-Uchi.
- 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 jōdan 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 Jōdan no Kamae.

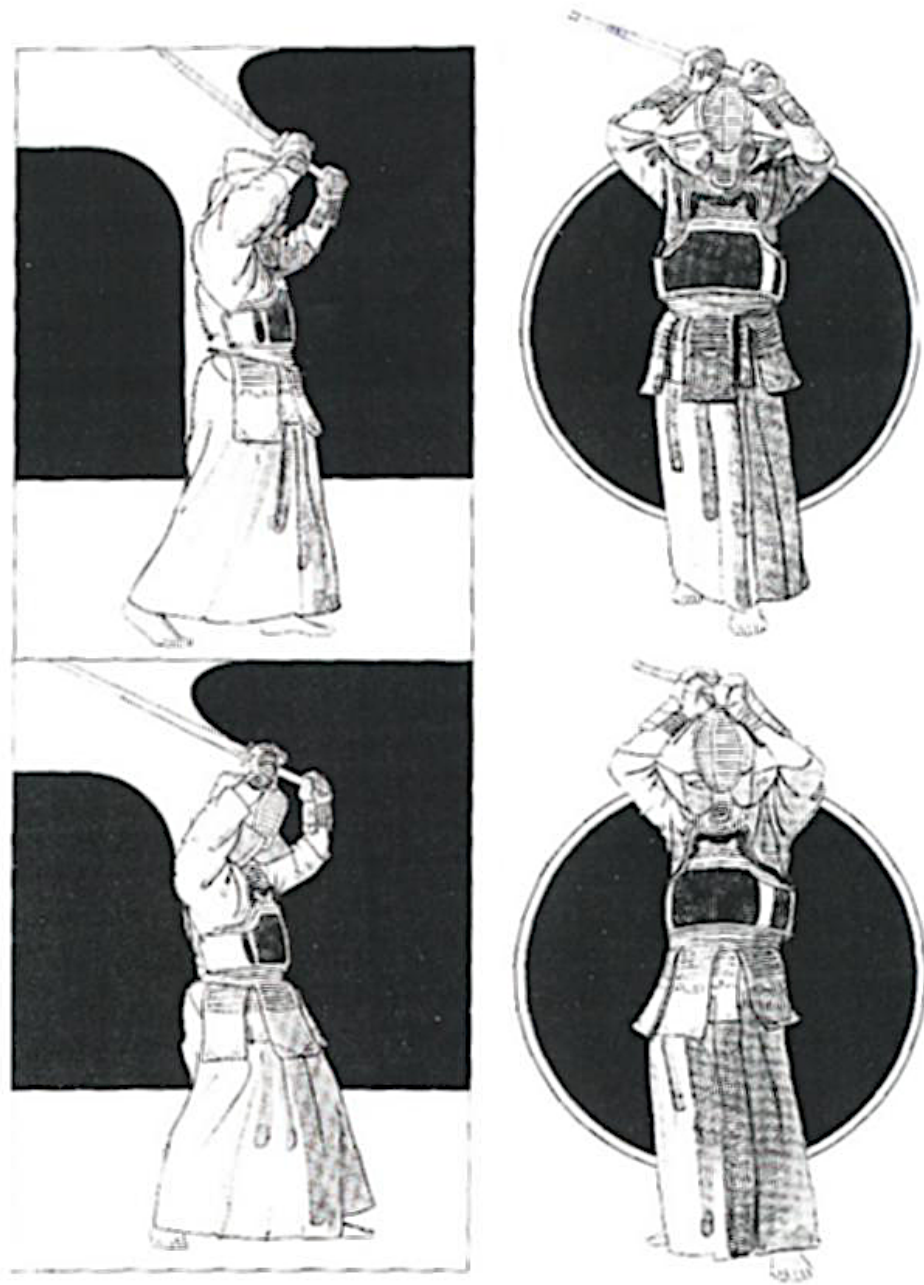
- Both of your feet should point straight to the front. (Your right foot should not be twisted towards the right front).

- 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.).
- When you assume Jōdan, 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.
- Your left hand should grasp the shinai, and your right hand should support it; do not grasp it with your right.
- 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:

- When your shinai is about to hit the opponents Men, grip your shinai tightly with your left thumb.
- 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.
- 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 Jōdan player.



**[Picture 4]:** Top: Proper Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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.

## 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan no Kamae's ability to attack from above.

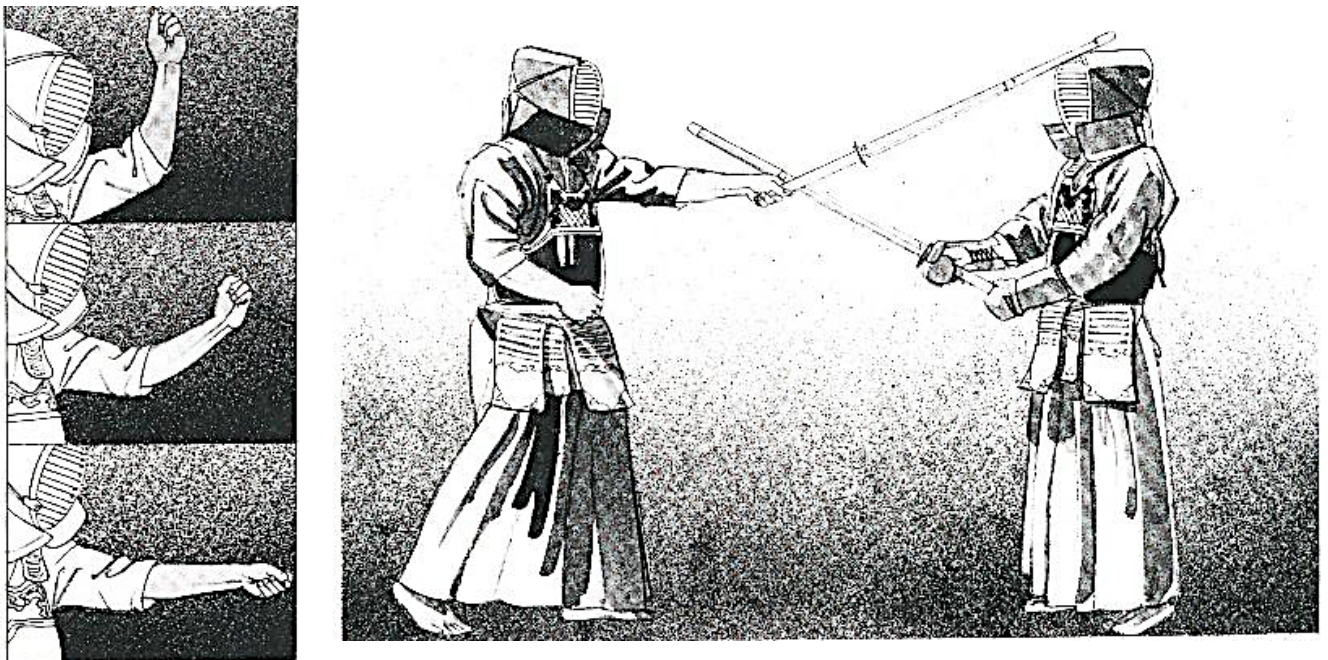
When your opponent does not come towards you and attack, actively go towards them instead. It is a perfect opportunity to hit Men when your opponent defends themselves by moving backwards due to you cornering them.



# WHEN YOUR MEN-UCHI BECOMES POWERFUL, YOU CAN ACHIEVE KOTE- UCHI AS WELL

When playing a Jōdan 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.



**[Picture 5]:** 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.

- Pretending to hit Men, then hitting Kote.
- Pretending to hit Kote, then hitting Men.



A Jōdan player's ability to hit Men impacts their ability for Kote-Uchi the same as a pitcher's 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.



**[Picture 6]:** 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 .

# THE WAYS YOU USE YOUR LEFT WRIST AND ELBOW IN KOTE-UCHI DIFFER FROM THAT OF MEN-UCHI

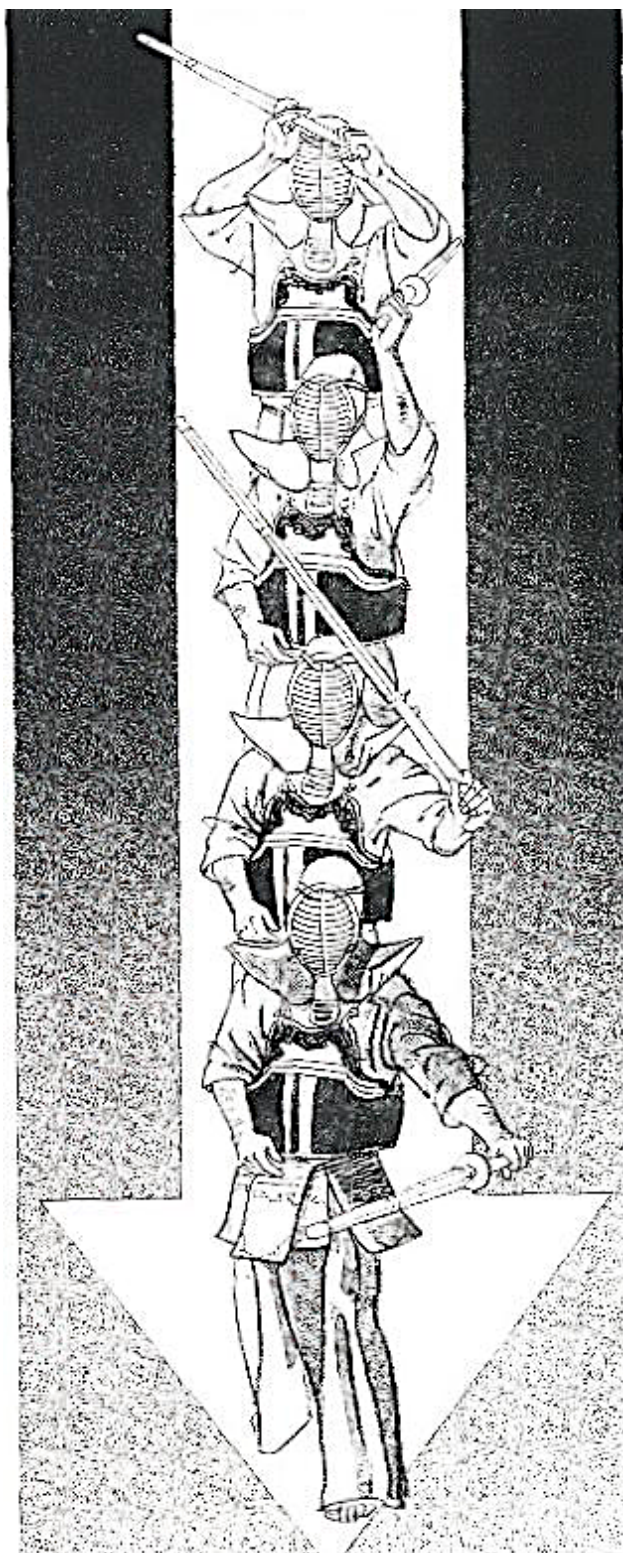
As mentioned above, there is a similarity between Kendo and baseball in terms of the effect of one skill to another. Interestingly, there are more similarities between these two sports. The way of hitting Men is similar to that of throwing straight balls, and how you hit Kote is similar to that of throwing 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 Jōdan 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 opponent's right Kote.



**[Picture 7]:** Front view of Kote-Uchi.

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.

## MOROTE-UCHI IN JŌDAN

- 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.
- 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 Jōdan, you must be good at Katate-Men-Uchi and Katate-Kote-Uchi. Otherwise, you cannot say that you have "achieved" Jo- dan. However, if your opponent is familiar with Jōdan 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 Jōdan kara Morote-Uchi: two-handed strikes from Jōdan.

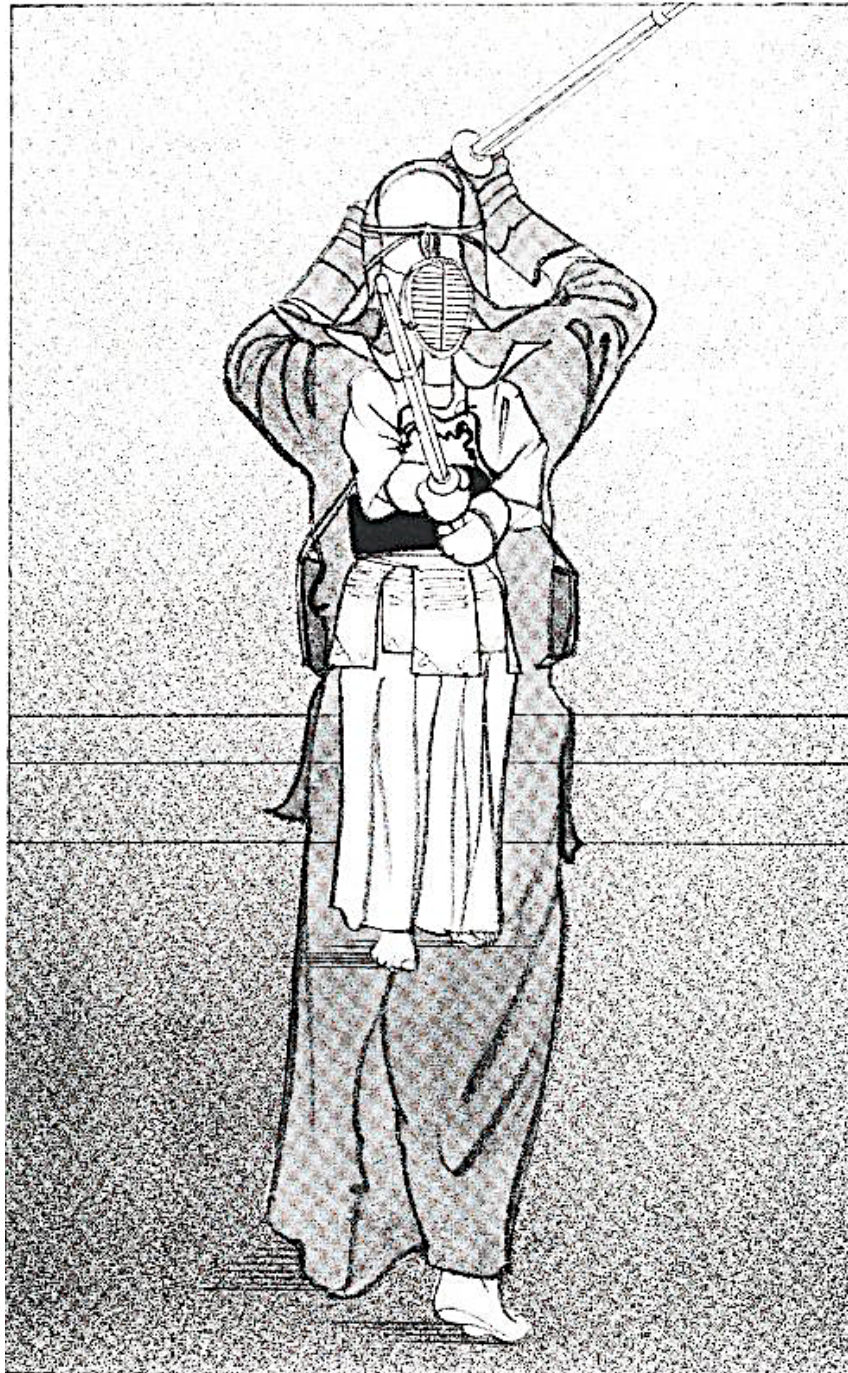
Jōdan players used to use Morote-Uchi exclusively; in the past, it was quite common and Katate-Uchi was very rare. It was thought that striking with a heavy katana would be difficult, if not impossible, with the use of only one arm.

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 Jōdan, and that Morote-Uchi - not Katate-Uchi - is the original Jōdan.



[Picture 8]: Opponent in Seigan no Kamae.

## **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 Jōdan players. When you position in this kamae, you take an oblique stance against your opponent (a Jōdan 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...

Jōdan 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 Jōdan player is pressured backwards, they will lose.

So, how does a Jōdan 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 Jōdan, you must change your way of thinking.

When you assume Jōdan, pretend to hit Men by showing the opponent a small portion of the beginning motion for Men-Uchi. Then step forward, tilt your 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.

**[Picture 9]:** 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.

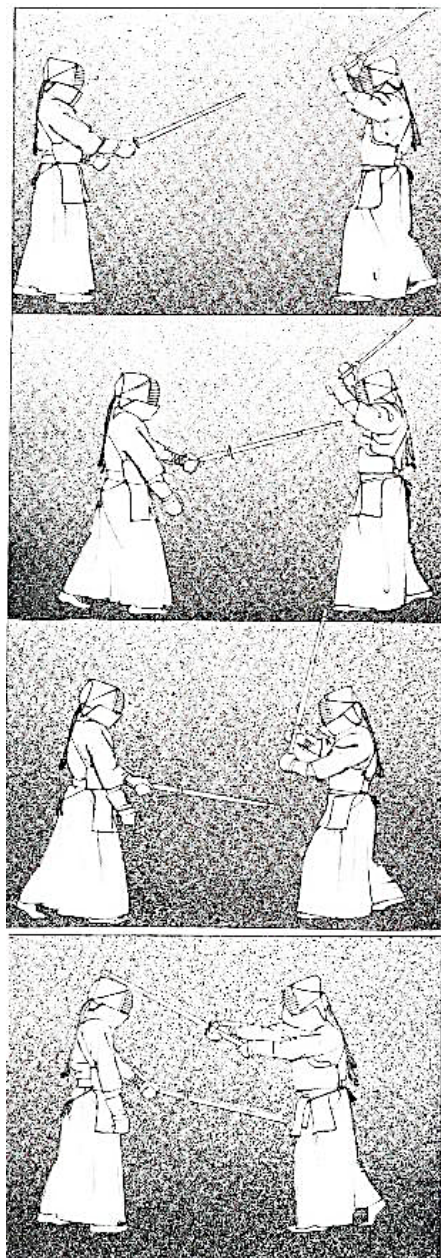


# WHEN YOUR OPPONENT USES TSUKI, USE UCHI-OTOSHI-MEN. USE NUKI- MEN AGAINST THEIR KOTE-UCHI, AND NUKI-DO AGAINST THEIR TOBI-KOMI- MEN.

Chudan players primary method of attack against a Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan no Kamae, your Tsuka is above your throat; therefore, it is very easy to hit your opponent's shinai downward away from your Tsuki.



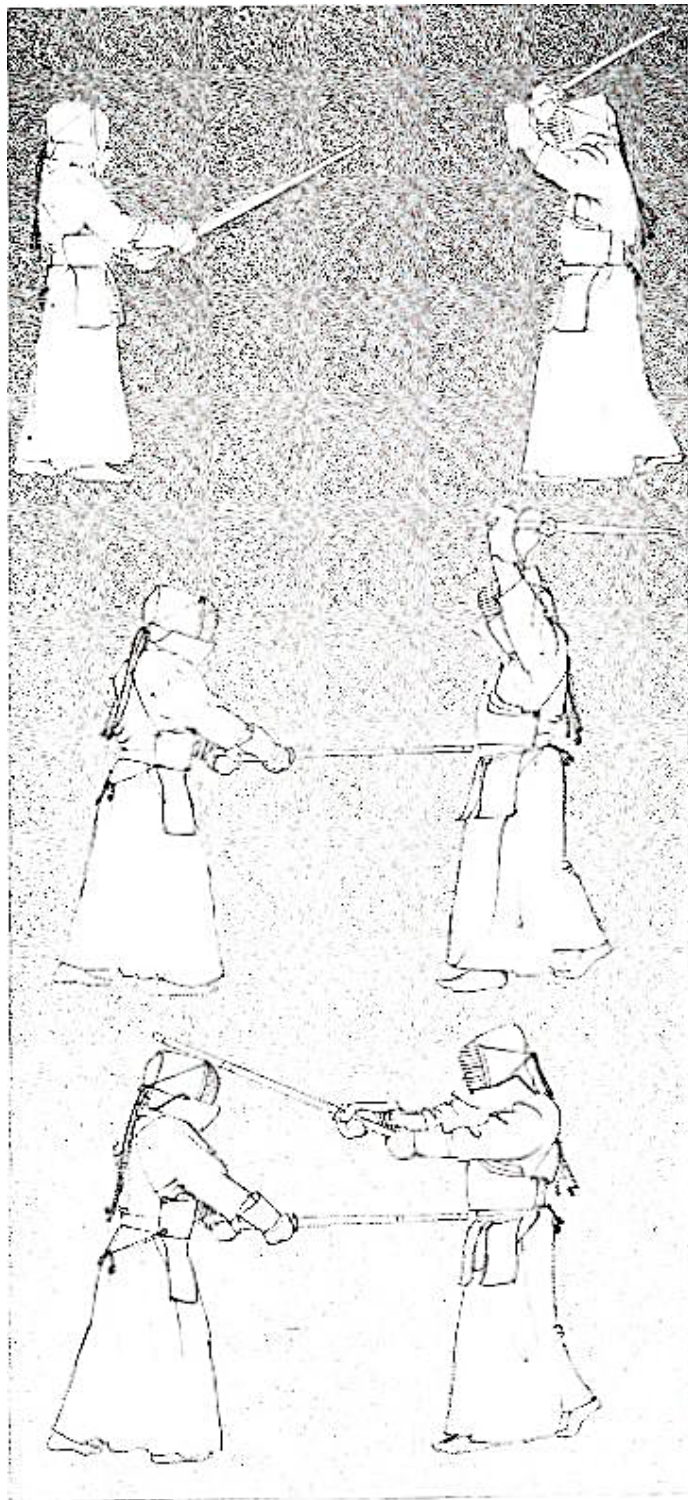
**[Picture 10]:** When your opponent's shinai reaches your Tsuki, hit their shinai with the Tsuka of yours. Then immediately hit Men.



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 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 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.

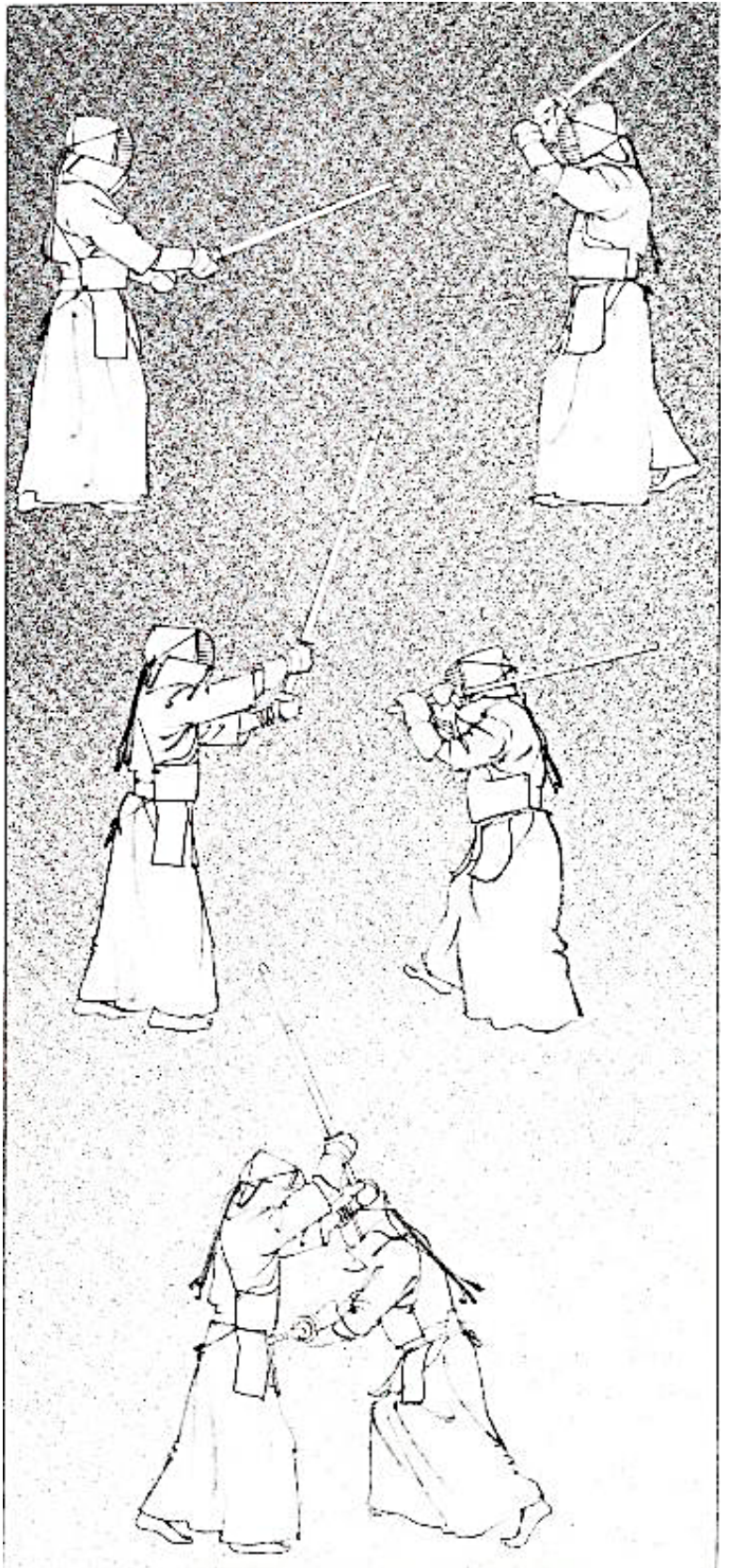
**[Picture 11]:** When your opponent's shinai is coming toward your left Kote, lift your shinai up with both hands to avoid the Kote-Uchi. Then, quickly hit Men.



If your opponent uses Tobikomi-Men, do not break your kamae from Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan. Learning them and practicing them is essential.



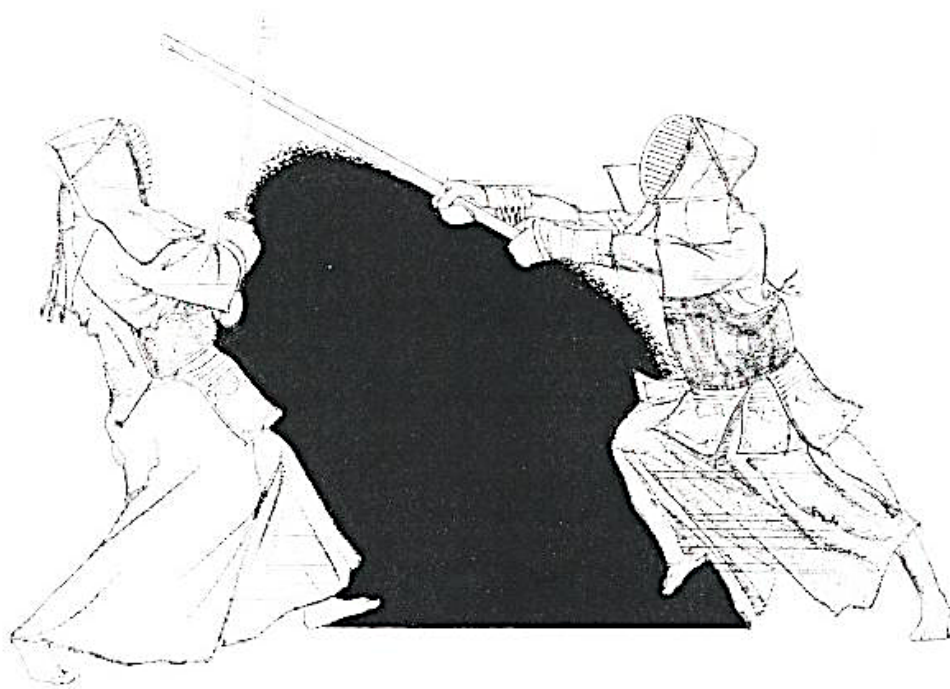
**[Picture 12]:** When your opponent attacks your Men, bend yourself to the right to avoid the hit, and then counter attack with a do strike.



# DON'T BE AFRAID OF JŌDAN PLAYERS

- If you learn about Jōdan, you will not be afraid of it.
- Be determined and energetic when playing against Jōdan players; don't think that you will lose.
- Move backward, forward, and to both sides to make it harder for Jōdan players to hit you.
- Keep attacking. Don't always defend yourself.
- 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 Jōdan players. You should learn about Jōdan. Try using Jōdan no Kamae yourself. By understanding how Jōdan players attack Chudan players, you will have a better understanding of how to deal with Jōdan instead of fearing it.



[Picture 13]: Keep attacking Jōdan players to pressure them spiritually.

**DON'T LET JŌDAN PLAYERS TAKE "HI-NO-KURAI". BE  
DETERMINED TO WIN.**

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

**DON'T STOP MOVING. KEEP MOVING FORWARD, BACK- WARD,  
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 Jōdan player, making it easy for them to attack. You must keep moving to prevent giving them the advantage.

**ACTIVELY ATTACK JŌDAN PLAYERS AND DON'T LET THEM HAVE  
A REST.**

Don't focus on defending yourself from a Jōdan 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.

**DARE TO USE KATATE-TSUKI AS A PRIMARY TARGET AND  
HIDARI-KOTE-UCHI AS THE SECONDARY WHEN PLAYING  
AGAINST A JŌDAN PLAYER.**



Katate-Tsuki is the most effective method in attempting to break a Jōdan players Kamae and spirit. It has been said, "Use tsuki to defeat Jōdan 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 Jōdan player would with Hidari-Katate-Uchi. This helps to eliminate the Jōdan players advantage in terms of reach. Furthermore, since Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan player is Hidari-Kote-Uchi. If you can force a Jōdan 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 Migī Kote.

The first is that the Hidari Kote is closer to you than the Migī 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 Migī Kote will be released from the shinai. Your attack would miss, and they would be free to attack your Men with their left hand.

When taking a step towards a Jōdan 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 Jōdan 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 Jōdan players relative to fighting a Chudan player.

## **CONCLUSION**

I have explained many strategies for defeating a Jōdan 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.