

Training Method for Fundamental Kendo Techniques with a Bokuto

(Bokuto-ni-yoru Kendo Kihon-waza Keiko-ho)



ALL JAPAN KENDO FEDERATION

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1. Reason for Conception

This training methodology consists of carefully selected *waza* for instructing proper reciprocal kendo skills. The student is encouraged to learn the fundamental techniques of kendo based on an understanding that the “*shinai* is a sword”. To this purpose, *bokuto* are utilised so that the student may become familiar with the “principles and theory of sword work” and “prescribed forms of etiquette”.

2. Structure

The techniques explained in this booklet are as follows:

Kihon 1 - Ippon-uchi-no-waza

“*Shomen*”, “*Kote*”, “*Do (migi-do)*”, “*Tsuki*”

Kihon 2 - Renzoku-waza (Ni/San-dan-no-waza)

“*Kote-men*”

Kihon 3 - Harai-waza

“*Harai-men (omote)*”

Kihon 4 - Hiki-waza

“*Hiki-do (migi-do)*”

Kihon 5 - Nuki-waza

“*Men-nuki-do (migi-do)*”

Kihon 6 - Suriage-waza

“*Kote-suriage-men (ura)*”

Kihon 7 - Debana-waza

“*Debana-kote*”

Kihon 8 - Kaeshi-waza

“*Men-kaeshi-do (migi-do)*”

Kihon 9 - Uchiotoshi-waza

“*Do (migi-do)-uchiotoshi-men*”

3. Basic Principles

- (1) The movements are based on those employed in the Nippon Kendo Kata.
- (2) Practitioners use *bokuto* to learn kendo correctly.
- (3) In principle, the *bokuto* is the same type used in the Nippon Kendo Kata. However, depending on the age and growth stage of young students, flexibility is permitted in the type of *bokuto* used.
- (4) The techniques should be taught in accordance with the “Kendo Shido Yoryo”
(The Official Guide for Kendo Instruction).
- (5) Generally speaking, the techniques are taught in groups. The terms *motodachi* and *kakarite* are employed to underscore the intention that both roles are carried out on equal footing.
- (6) In order to conduct group teaching effectively, it is important that the instructor’s commands are followed carefully at all times.
 - a. Instructors are advised to choose suitable techniques taking into consideration the level of the students.
 - b. Apart from directing the training session with commands, the instructor is encouraged to use his/her initiative to devise ways or routines for improving the level of students. For example, the instructor may first choose to focus only on the role of *kakarite*.

4. Points of Instruction

(1) *Kamae (Stance)*

a. All techniques are executed from *chudan-no-kamae*.

In *chudan-no-kamae*, the right foot is placed slightly in front of the left. The left hand is situated approximately a fist away from the lower-abdomen (*tanden*) with the joint of the left thumb placed at navel-height and on the centreline of the body. From *issoku-itto-no-mai* (one-step one-strike interval), the line of the *kensen* should extend to the point on the face between the eyes, or towards the left eye.

b. When dropping *kamae* to retreat at the end of each technique, the *kensen* should be lowered naturally to a height 3~6cm below the partner's knee, approximating *gedan-no-kamae*. The *kensen* points to the diagonal right slightly off the bodyline of the partner, and the cutting edge of the blade should face down to the diagonal left.

(2) *Metsuke (Gaze)*

The gaze should be focused on the middle of the face but the entire body should be observed. Both practitioners should look into each other's eyes.

(3) *Maai (Interval)*

a. The *tachiai-no-maai* or starting position is set at nine paces apart. After moving forward three paces, both practitioners crouch down into *sonkyo* simultaneously while the *bokuto* is drawn with the tips (*yokote*) crossing. When the practice has been completed, the final *sonkyo* before retreating is done at the same position.

b. The interval for attack is set at *issoku-itto-no-maai*. This distance may vary slightly depending on the student's physique, strength, level of proficiency and other factors.

(4) *Datotsu (Striking)*

a. Striking should be executed in full spirit with correct *tenouchi* (grip) and accurate blade angle (*hasuji*). The section of the blade that strikes the target is the *monouchi*. The rear foot should be snapped up immediately as the strike is made, and it should be executed smoothly in one tempo.

b. All of the attacks should stop just short of the actual target but made with the intention of cutting or thrusting with a *katana*.

c. *Kakarite* should make the attacks with proper vocalisation and *kiai* in sync with *motodachi* as the striking opportunity is revealed.

(5) *Ashi-sabaki (Footwork)*

In general, the type of footwork used is *okuri-ashi* (shuffle) with *suri-ashi* (sliding).

(6) *Kakegoe (Vocalisation)*

Clearly vocalise the targets "Men!", "Kote!", "Do!", "Tsuki!" while executing each attack.

(7) *Zanshin (Continued alertness)*

After completing the attack, continue to face your partner without letting your guard down, and move back the required distance to *chudan-no-kamae* demonstrating *zanshin*.

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Etiquette before and after the Tachiai

☆ Before and after practising the techniques, the *bokuto* is held in the right hand with both practitioners facing each other at a distance of three paces apart at the *shimoza* (opposite the *kamiza* or *shomen* of the *dojo*). *Motodachi* and *kakarite* sit facing each other in the formal kneeling position (*seiza*) with the *bokuto* placed to the right with the blade facing in, and the *tsuba* level with the knee. A mutual seated bow (*zarei*) is performed.

☆ The *bokuto* is picked up with the right hand and both move to the starting positions nine paces apart (*tachiai-no-maai*) carrying the *bokuto* in the *teito* position. Then a standing bow is made to the *kamiza* followed by a mutual bow. The *bokuto* is then swapped to the left hand holding it at the waist (*taito*). Lock the *tsuba* with the thumb. Both advance toward each other with three large steps and draw the *bokuto* while going down into the *sonkyo* crouching position, and then stand up together into *chudan-no-kamae*.

☆ When the sequence of techniques has been completed, go into *sonkyo* and sheath the *bokuto*. Stand up together and retreat five small steps holding the *bokuto* in the *taito* position. Then transfer the *bokuto* to the right hand (*teito*) and perform a mutual bow followed by a bow to the *kamiza*. Both then return top to the *shimoza*, perform a mutual seated bow (*zarei*), and then leave the floor.

☆ The *zarei* should be performed in the centre of the *shimoza*. (When there is a large group of students, the *zarei* may be omitted.)

☆ Sit down into *seiza* from the left foot first, and stand up from the right foot. The seated bow is performed with both hands moving together.

☆ The standing bow (*ritsurei*) to the *kamiza* should be performed at an angle of 30 degrees, and the mutual bow at 15 degrees.

☆ Transfer the *bokuto* to the opposite hand in the centre of the body.

☆ When holding the *bokuto* in the *taito* position, the *tsuka-gashira* (pommel) should be in line with the centre of the body.



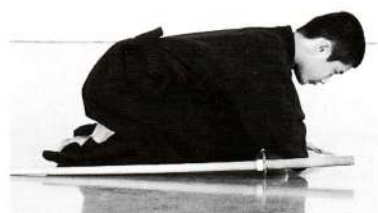
Seiza (front view)



Seiza (side view)



Zarei (front view)

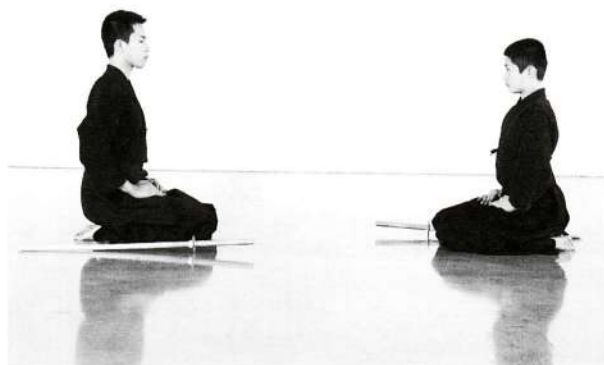


Zarei (side view)

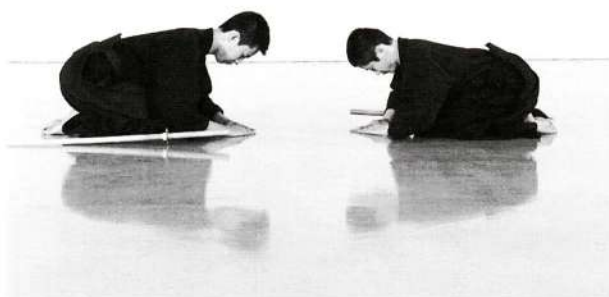
Kamiza
(*Shomen*)

● ← (3 paces) → ●
Shimoza

Position for the mutual seated bow (*zareï*)



Position for the seated bow (*zareï*)



Performing the seated bow (side view)



Teito (side view)



Standing bow (*ritsureï*) to the
kamiza (approx. 30 degrees)



Mutual standing bow (side view)
(approx. 15 degrees)



Swap from the right hand to the left



Taito (front view)



Taito (side view)



Drawing the *bokuto* (side view)



Sonkyo (front view)



Sonkyo (side view)



Distance where the tips (yokote) meet



Crossing at the yokote



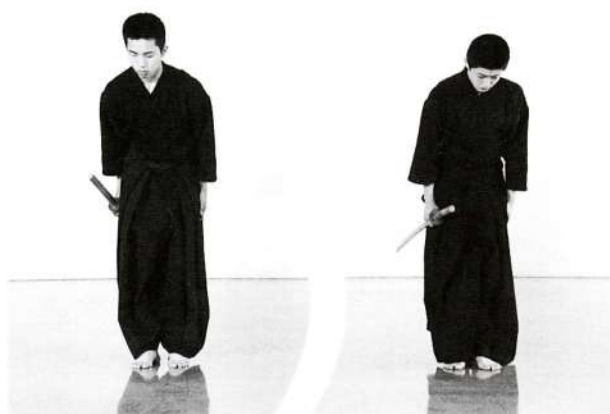
Dropping kamae (front view)



Sheathing the bokuto (side view)



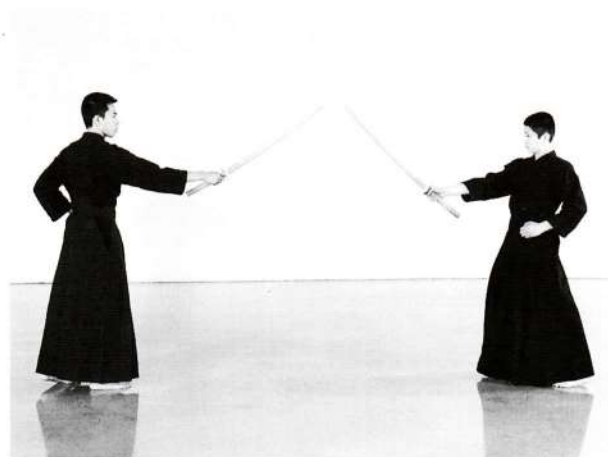
Tachiai-no-maai (approx. 9 paces apart)



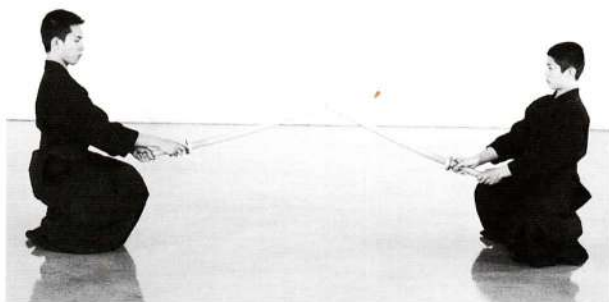
Bow to the *kamiza* (in the *teito* position)



Mutual bow (in the *teito* position)



Drawing the *bokuto*



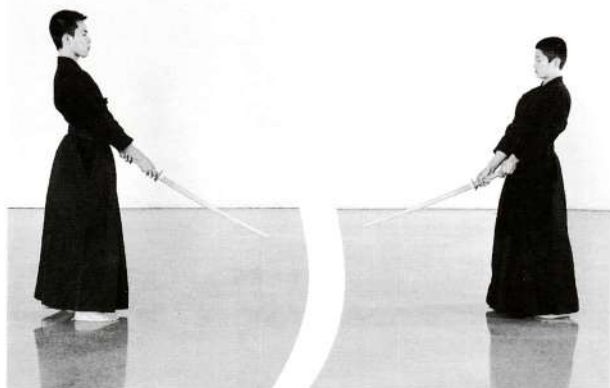
Sonkyo (bokuto crossed at the yokote)



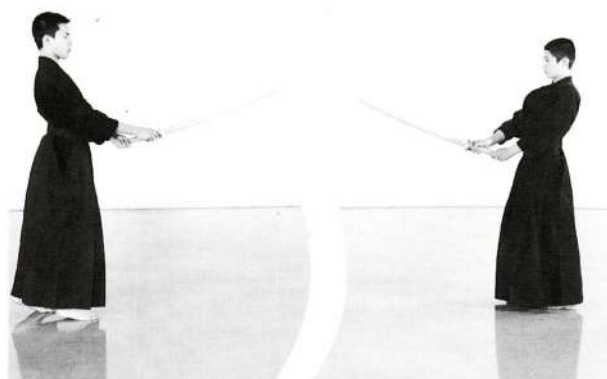
Standing up (tips crossed)



Dropping kamae



Retreat to tachiai-no-maai (approx. 9 paces)



Chudan at tachiai-no-maai

☆ Chudan-no-kamae

1. The left hand is situated approximately one fist away from the navel with the joint of the left thumb positioned at navel height.
2. The line from the *tsuba-moto* and the *kensen* extends to a spot between the partner's eyes or to their left eye (from the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval).



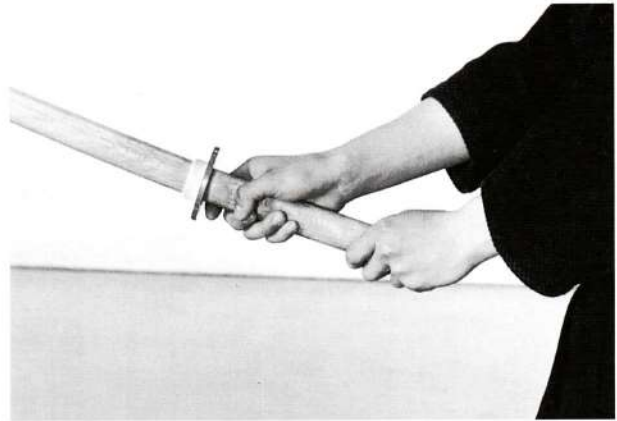
Chudan-no-kamae (front view)



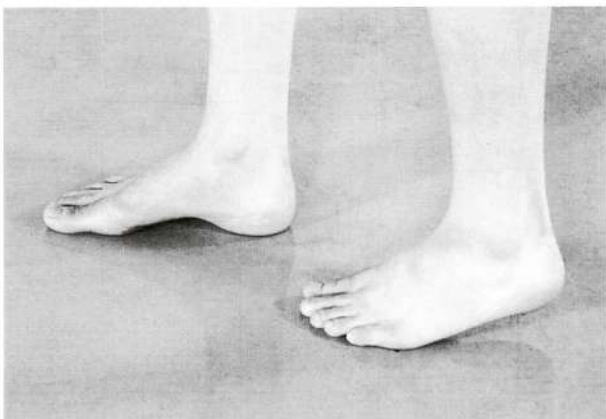
Chudan-no-kamae (side view)



Gripping the *bokuto* (right side)



Gripping the *bokuto* (left side)



Foot position (side view)



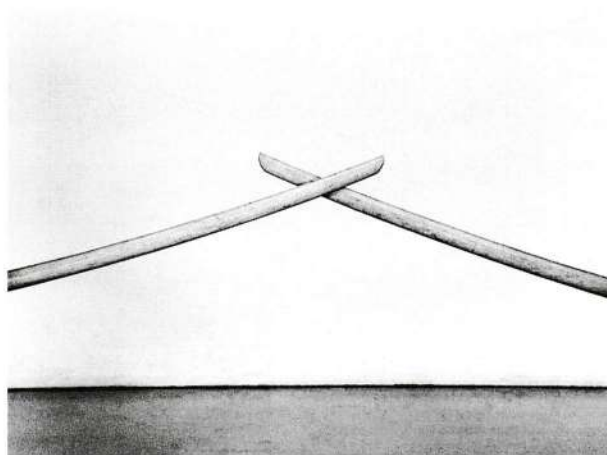
Foot position (front view)

☆ Issoku-itto-no-maai

The interval in which taking one step in would enable you to strike your partner, and one step back would enable you to avoid an attack.



Issoku-itto-no-maai



Issoku-itto-no-maai (blades crossed)

Kihon 1: Ippon-uchi-no-waza—'Shomen'

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* distance with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot. *Kakarite* then strikes *motodachi's shomen* while shouting "men".

1. The strike to *shomen* is made by stepping out with the right foot and lifting the *bokuto* overhead far enough to see *motodachi* clearly, making sure that the blade is straight. Also ensure that the *kensen* does not drop below the level of the hands.
2. *Motodachi* reveals the opportunity to strike by moving the *kensen* a little to the right.
3. After making the strike, *kakarite* moves back one step demonstrating *zanshin*, and then retreats another step into *issoku-itto-no-maai*.



Overhead swing (front view)



Overhead swing (side view)



Striking *shomen* (side)



Opening for the *shomen* strike

Kihon 1: Ippon-uchi-no-waza—'Kote'

From *issoku-itto-no-mai*, *kakarite* strikes *motodachi*'s *kote* while shouting "*kote*".

1. The strike to *kote* is made by lifting the *bokuto* overhead far enough to see *motodachi*'s right *kote*.
2. *Motodachi* reveals the opportunity to attack by moving the *kensen* slightly up to the left.
3. After making the strike, *kakarite* moves back one step demonstrating *zanshin*, and then retreats another step into *issoku-itto-no-mai*.



Overhead swing (side view)



Striking *kote* (side view)



Opening for the *kote* strike

Kihon 1: Ippon-uchi-no-waza—'Do'

From *issoku-itto-no-maai*, *kakarite* strikes *motodachi*'s right *do* while shouting "do".

1. Lift the *bokuto* overhead in a big movement and turn the hands to change the angle of the blade while moving straight forward to strike *do*.
2. *Motodachi* reveals the opportunity to strike by lifting their hands up in the air.
3. After making the strike, *kakarite* moves back one step demonstrating *zanshin*, and then retreats another step into *issoku-itto-no-maai*.



Striking *do* (side view)



Striking method



Revealing the target

Kihon 1: Ippon-uchi-no-waza—'Tsuki'

From *issoku-itto-no-maai*, *kakarite* thrusts at *motodachi*'s throat while shouting "*tsuki*".

1. With regards to *tsuki* techniques, the purpose here is to introduce the basic movement. Be sure to thrust not just by extending the hands out, but with the whole body moving forward from the hips. Pull the *bokuto* back immediately after making the thrust to the throat.
2. *Motodachi* reveals the opportunity to thrust by lowering the *kensen* down slightly to the right while taking a step back.
3. After making the thrust, *kakarite* moves back one step demonstrating *zanshin*, and then retreats another step to which *motodachi* simultaneously moves forward one step with *kakarite* to the starting position.



Thrusting (side view)



Hand position after pulling back



Receiving *tsuki*

Upon completion of this technique, both drop *kamae* and retreat five steps with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot to *tachiai-no-maai*, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae* once more.

Kihon 2: Renzoku-waza (Ni / Sandan-no-waza)—'Kote-men'

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. Stepping forward from the right foot, *kakarite* lifts the *bokuto* overhead and strikes *motodachi's* right *kote*.
2. *Motodachi* then takes one step back to which *kakarite* steps forward again from the right foot and strikes *men*. *Motodachi* reveals the targets by first lifting the *kensen* up slightly to show *kote*, and then moves the *kensen* slightly to the right while stepping back from the left foot to reveal *shomen*.
3. After making the *men* strike, *kakarite* takes one step back demonstrating *zanshin*. *Kakarite* takes another step back to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval. Then, both take one more step together to the original point of engagement.



Kote strike (side view)



Shomen strike (side view)



Opening for the *kote* strike



Opening for the *shomen* strike

Upon completion of this technique, both drop their *kamae* and retreat five small steps with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae* again.

Kihon 3: Harai-waza—'*Harai-men*' (*omote*)

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. *Kakarite* steps forward with the right foot while knocking *motodachi's bokuto* out of the way with the left *shinogi* in an upward motion (*harai-age*), and then brings the *bokuto* down to strike *shomen*.
2. After making the *men* strike, *kakarite* takes one step back to demonstrate *zanshin*, and then retreats another step to the position where the technique was initiated.



Executing *harai*



Lift overhead as you deflect



Move in and strike *shomen*

Upon completion of this technique, both drop their *kamae*, take five small steps back with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae* again.

Kihon 4: Hiki-waza—'Hiki-do' (migi-do)

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. *Kakarite* steps forward with the right foot and makes a strike to *shomen*. *Motodachi* blocks the strike with the left *shinogi* and both then take a small step forward so that the *tsuba* connect (*tsuba-zeriai*). *Kakarite* pushes *motodachi*'s hands down. *Motodachi* reacts by lifting their hands up, and *kakarite* responds by immediately stepping back with the left foot while lifting the *bokuto* overhead and strikes *migi-do* as the right foot is drawn back.

2. After completing the strike to *do*, *kakarite* takes one step back demonstrating *zanshin*, and then both take a step back together to return to the original positions.



Motodachi blocks kakarite's men strike



Tsuba-zeriai (side view)



Kakarite presses motodachi's hands down and then immediately steps back while making a strike to migi-do when they push back up



Upon completion of this technique, both drop their *kamae*, take five small steps back with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae*.

Kihon 5: Nuki-waza—'Men-nuki-do' (*migi-do*)

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. *Motodachi* steps forward with the right foot and makes a strike to *shomen*. *Kakarite* takes a step forward to the diagonal right while lifting the *bokuto* overhead and then strikes *migi-do* taking care that the blade is angled correctly. Eye-contact is maintained throughout the technique.
2. *Motodachi* stops at the position of the *men* strike, and *kakarite* stops at the *do* strike.
3. After the *do* strike, both take a step back and face each other with *kakarite* demonstrating *zanshin*. Then, *motodachi* and *kakarite* rotate to the left and return to the original starting position.



Avoiding *men* (side view)



The strike to *migi-do*

Upon completion of this technique, both drop their *kamae*, take five small steps back with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae*.

Kihon 6: Suriage-waza—'Kote-suriage-men' (ura)

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. *Motodachi* steps forward with the right foot and makes a strike to *kote*. The strike is deflected (*suriage*) with the right side of the blade (*shinogi*) by *kakarite* while taking a step back from the left foot and raising the *bokuto* overhead. *Kakarite* then immediately steps forward from the right foot and strikes *shomen*.
2. After the initial *kote* strike by *motodachi* has been deflected with *suriage*, *motodachi's* *kensen* naturally falls away from the line of *kakarite's* body.
3. After the strike to *shomen*, *kakarite* demonstrates *zanshin*, and then both take a step back to the starting positions.



Parry (*suriage*) the *kote* strike with the *shinogi* (flat area) on the right side of the blade



The strike to *shomen* (side view)

Upon completion of this technique, both drop their *kamae*, take five small steps back with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae*.

Kihon 7: Debana-waza—'Debana-kote'

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. *Motodachi* takes a small step forward with the right foot raising the *kensen* slightly in preparation to launch an attack. *Kakarite* reads the attack and immediately steps in from the right foot to strike *kote* in a small sharp motion.
2. After completing the technique, *kakarite* takes a step back demonstrating *zanshin*. *Kakarite* then takes one more step back, and *motodachi* simultaneously pulls the right foot back slightly to return to the starting position.



The beginning of an attack by *motodachi* (side view)



A small strike is made to *kote*

Upon completion of this technique, both drop their *kamae*, take five small steps back with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae*.

Kihon 8: Kaeshi-waza—'*Men-kaeshi-do*' (*migi-do*)

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. *Motodachi* steps forward with the right foot and makes a strike to *shomen*. *Kakarite* blocks the strike with the left *shinogi* while stepping forward to the diagonal right, then continues moving forward while flicking the *bokuto* around and underneath to strike *migi-do*. Take care that the blade is angled correctly, and that eye-contact is always maintained.
2. *Motodachi* stops at the position of the *shomen* strike, and *kakarite* stops at the *do* strike.
3. After the *do* strike, both take a step back and face each other with *kakarite* demonstrating *zanshin*. Then, *motodachi* and *kakarite* rotate to the left and return to the original starting position.



Receiving the strike to *shomen*



Flick the blade around to strike *migi-do* (side view)

Upon completion of this technique, both drop their *kamae*, take five small steps back with *ayumi-ashi* from the left foot, and then assume *chudan-no-kamae*.

Kihon 9: Uchiotoshi-waza—'Do (migi-do)-uchiotoshi-men'

Both sides advance three steps to the *issoku-itto-no-maai* interval with *ayumi-ashi* from the right foot.

1. *Motodachi* steps forward with the right foot and strikes *migi-do*. *Kakarite* simultaneously takes a step back to the diagonal left while striking the *do* attack down (*uchiotoshi*) to the diagonal right at the *monouchi*, and immediately follows up with a strike to *shomen*.
2. After the *shomen* strike, both take a step back and face each other with *kakarite* demonstrating *zanshin*. Then, *motodachi* and *kakarite* rotate to the left and return to the original starting position.



Striking the *do* strike down (*uchiotoshi*)



The strike to *shomen*

This is the last technique. After returning to the starting point, both crouch down into *sonkyo*, sheath the *bokuto*, stand up and retreat five paces back to the *tachiai-no-maai* from the left foot in *ayumi-ashi* while holding the *bokuto* in the *taito* position.

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