

The Dignity of the Jo; Analysis and Commentary



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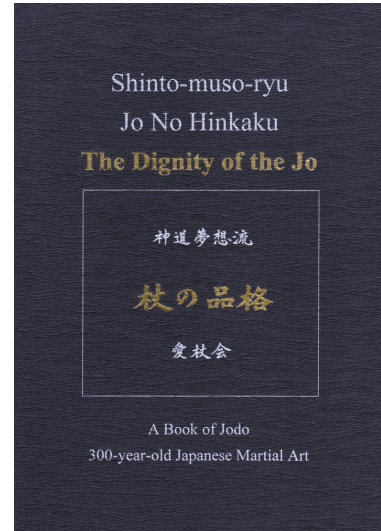
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The following text was written by Kim Taylor Sensei over the summer of 2018, and contains a thoughtful analysis on the "Shinto Muso Ryu, Jo no Hinkaku (the dignity of the jo)" by Koichi Hamaji. As Taylor Sensei himself notes the translation of this text by Hiroshi Matsuoka and edited by Russ Ebert, is widely available on the internet, though in an effort to support the work of the authors and translators I would encourage everyone interested in the source material to purchase a beautiful bound copy here -

<http://budoguten.futagotrader.com/books>

For ease of understanding I have signified all Japanese language quotes from the Jo no Hinkaku in *Caveat font* and the English translation of Shinto Muso Ryu, Jo no Hinkaku in **Times New Roman**.



Introduction

The following series of essays are on to the book; "Shinto Muso Ryu, Jo no Hinkaku (the dignity of the jo)" by Koichi Hamaji. This is available on the net, the details are as follows;

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The book consists of two parts, the first a conversation between **Koichi Hamaji** and **Gerald Toff**, and the second, a discussion on the 13 golden rules of Jodo.

I'll discuss the 13 rules here, but the first part of the **Shinto Muso Ryu, Jo no Hinkaku** is well worth reading as it contains some history you may not have heard, so we shall begin there...

Jo no Hinkaku I - The first golden rule of jodo

*Mi o motte hito o tasukeru tsue no goto kono sugata koso
mononofu no michi*

As the jō helps a man, it is also the path of the samurai.

Shinto-muso-ryu Jo was created by a swordsman named Gonnosuke Muso, who was a master of both Katori-shinto-ryu and Kashima-shin-ryu during the Keicho era (1596-1615) when swordsmanship was highly developed.

The weapon of Shinto-muso-ryu Jo is a stave measuring 1.28 meters long and 2.4 centimeters across, made of oak with a straight grain. In the ryu (school), there are 64 techniques to fight against an opponent armed with a sword.

The Jo symbolizes three virtues:

Wisdom, symbolized in the straight shape of the Jo;
Benevolence, shown in the Jo's round shape;
Courage is represented by the Jo's tough material.

According to the founder's interpretation, bushido is:

- (1) to cultivate the three virtues constantly
- (2) not to kill or injure others with the weapon
- (3) to sacrifice oneself in case of social crisis and to support society with all the might which one has acquired through Jo practice.

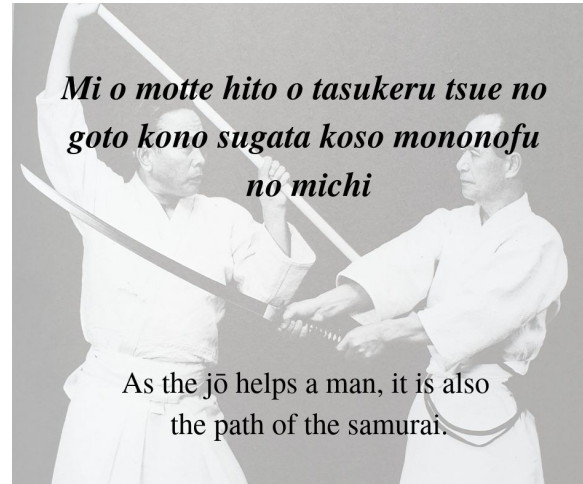
Muso Gonnosuke named his martial art "staff" (Jo) so that it might support and guide people. He intended to spread the martial art among samurai as well as those who wanted to cultivate the spirit of bushido. He also wanted the spirit of Jo to be the fundamentals of a peaceful nation governed by virtue.

Much as you have to smile at the beginners who have memorized all the martial virtues associated with each specific pleat of the hakama, you do have to appreciate just what those things mean, or you miss the point of practicing some old martial art that has no use in a world of nuclear bombs, and world leaders who wonder why they can't use them. A stick against a sword? Why is that still here?

The three virtues of wisdom, benevolence, and courage are not trivial qualities. I suspect they were in short supply in 1600, as they are today, otherwise why mention them?

How about the three interpretations of bushido? First is to work on the three virtues. **To Work On Them.** They don't come naturally, if you read them and forget them you don't have them. Putting them in your head doesn't do any good, no more good than reading about a kata. You have to put them into your body, you have to practice to make them your default reaction to the world, as you make the techniques of jodo your default movement.

- **Wisdom**, the straight connection between cause and effect without going through some sort of filter, like "principles".
- **Benevolence**, do you even know what that word means? When was the last time you heard it? It is the essence, the core of true religion. Go think about it.
- **Courage**. Can you go against the flow? Can you deny yourself the easy path in order to do the right thing?



*Mi o motte hito o tasukeru tsue no
goto kono sugata koso mononofu
no michi*

As the jō helps a man, it is also
the path of the samurai.

The second interpretation is not to kill or injure with the weapon you're learning to use. This takes courage, benevolence and wisdom. It is easy to kill, but hard to give life back. Whenever I read some brave bunny saying things like "*oh that guy who stole gas from a cottage, I'd set a man trap and shoot him with my 50 cal sniper rifle*" I get a little sick to my stomach. I really do. It's not brave to kill someone with a gun, it's cowardly. It's certainly not brave to drop bombs or shoot missiles from drones. It's cowardly governments who are willing to kill "the other" without taking the flak for their own dead sons.

On a more specific level, if you understand that the jo is not a "*battlefield weapon*", that it's not for killing, you will understand the kata.

It's a stick against a sword. Think about that, you have chosen an inferior weapon... on purpose. How do you refrain from killing and injuring with your stick? By self-sacrifice, by considering others to be as worthy, as valuable, as yourself. This is a policing weapon, the old policeman with a stick and a whistle and poor pay, not the armoured car riding fellows with automatic rifles and flac jackets who can't imagine wrestling some mentally challenged fellow to the ground when they could stand off and double tap him.

Am I being harsh? Certainly I am, martial arts are nothing if not harsh, even those, especially those, that are all woo woo and soft.

Woo woo and soft is hard, dude, really hard. You get hurt doing the woo woo stuff. If you're not up to it, buy a gun.

Do the hard thing.

Jo no Hinkaku II - The second golden rule of jodo

*Shinbutsu mo koe no chikara de arawaruru ikkatsu hittou
kisei yashinae*

*The power of the voice
can evoke the gods.
Cultivate a powerful voice
that defeats your enemy.*

We sometimes hear even in this modern world that one experiences magical phenomena when one's strength is channeled into a powerful voice. For example, you can visualize an image of Kannon (the Buddhist deity of mercy) thanks to a constant voice of prayer; you can kill a man by imprecating a thousand curses upon him; or you can let a restless spirit sleep peacefully in the grave with a thundering scold.

Regardless of its loudness, one can use a powerful voice to defeat their adversary with just a single Jo technique, as it discourages and diminishing the opponents fighting spirit.

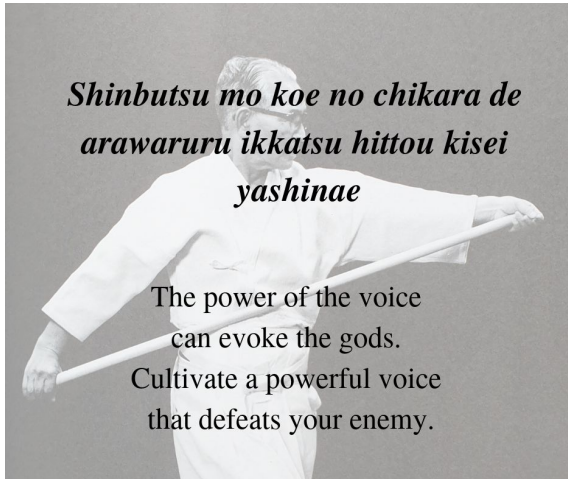
Jo students should develop a powerful voice while they practice the techniques of hitting and thrusting of Jo.

We are speaking here of kiai of course, and it is indeed powerful. With your kiai you can stop tachi from cutting. I have done it often, not in the middle of a practice where everyone is full of energy and working hard, as you go a bit deaf at that point, but after a quiet space. Perhaps after speaking softly to explain a technique, try suddenly turning your entire focus on tachi while starting the Seitei jo kata, Suigetsu. Move from absolute stillness to the right front and make a piercing kiai with which you imagine driving the sound right through his face.

See what happens.

Kiai is not a matter of screaming and yelling, that's just chaos into chaos. My mother once told me that she would get the attention of us warring brats by speaking quietly. We would stop yelling to hear what she said.

Just as speed is relative, so is a kiai. It must come from a calm place, a kiai is not a startled yell or a terrified scream, it is a directed blast of attention directed at a target. Musashi talked about the three yells, the yell before the battle to bring up your spirits, and the yell after the fight to let the enemy know they have been defeated. The shout during the fight is more of a grunt of effort, we breathe out as we cut.



This sounds a bit different than today when we are told you must kiai as you cut, but that particular kiai is a tool, it is to teach us to breathe out. To startle your enemy as you cut him is really not very useful, he is being cut, the kiai is a waste of energy, in fact, the kiai can distract you from a proper cut. Startle him, and in his frozen moment, cut him down with a grunt.

Your voice is important, even away from the kata. How much evil is done in the world because good people keep quiet? Your kiai, your voice can extend to things like voting in the election that is coming up. If you see an

injustice, speak up. If you have an idea of how to improve things, speak up. You can shout the roof down while people are swinging sticks at your head, how hard is it to speak to power?

It's very hard. Today I hear people tell me they are afraid to speak to a stranger, they will be accused of harassment or bullying. If you want to "pick up a girlfriend" you have to use an online dating service. No more going to the bar or having an affair with someone at work, you must have signed terms and conditions to protect you from the lawyers.

I understand that, I have, for most of my life, been accused of intimidation by standing in a room. I'm a big fellow and apparently when I think my brow furrows like Musashi's (vertical line between the eyes). From my experience, staying quiet is the problem. If you speak kindly and smile your scary size shrinks down to personhood. A kiai can be very quiet. Social noise is a kiai, learn how to use it.

Be courageous, speak up when you see injustice. Be benevolent, speak up with a kind word to someone who needs it. Be wise, know when you are seeing injustice and know when you are seeing pain.

Make these your three kiai.

Jo no Hinkaku III - The third golden rule of jodo

*Uchidachi wa furereba kireru ken naruzo kokoro ni tomete
ken o osoruna*

*Keep in mind that uchidachi is a sword
that will cut you if it touches you;
but one should never fear swords.*

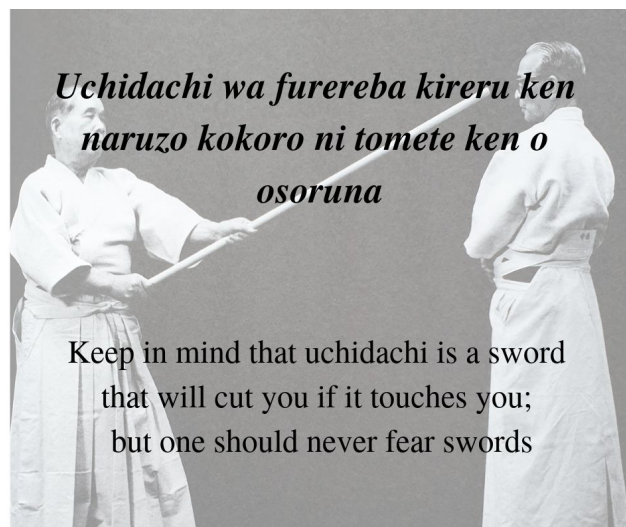
The techniques of uchidachi in Shinto-muso-ryu Jo are called "Real Sword Techniques," which means that the founder of Jo created the techniques based on the idea that uchidachi is a sword that can cut.

I am afraid that there are many Jo students who regard uchidachi as merely a piece of oak. I am sorry that many students today are using uchidachi unaware of the difference between a sword and a stick. Uchidachi is, of course, a piece of wood, but unlike a shinai (bamboo sword), which is used in sport kendo games, you must handle uchidachi just like a real sword which can cut your enemy.

Also, shijo must regard uchidachi as a real sword. Jo students must believe in traditional techniques, follow them with faith and without doubt. Also, they should not fear swords unnecessarily.

Consider a martial art where one of the weapons is the actual weapon and the other is a representative of the weapon. This is jodo. The stick (**jo**) is the actual, real weapon. The **bokuto** is wood, it is not a sword. This is done (of course, we say) for safety, everybody can see that, but I don't know how many students of jodo actually understand that. Uchidachi, the swordsman who attacks, can often be seen grabbing the edge of the blade in moments of inattention, as if that would be possible with a sword. The stick can of course be grabbed in any way by shijo, it's a stick. Treat your bokuto as if it is a sword and you won't cut yourself with a sword.

"But of course I won't, I'll know it's a sword". This statement reveals that you are afraid of the sword. Being afraid of the edge of a sword is fine, it is useful, just as being afraid of the edges of sawblades is useful. But too much fear is almost as dangerous as none at all if you must use a power tool. Being "skittish" can mean losing control of your tool. I have often seen people drop a drill when



they feel the torque as a bit binds. Being afraid of a sword means you will back away when you should move in. You will flinch and hesitate and miss the timing.

Paradoxically, being unafraid of a bokuto is dangerous as well. You will not learn the lessons of the kata if you cannot feel the edge of your partner's wooden sword as he threatens you. So you must believe, or at least behave as if, the curved piece of wood is a sword that can cut. One might say "*respect it but don't fear it*", but that will only make pretty kata. You must, instead, **fear a bokuto, but be unafraid of a shinken**. That way you can learn.

Many people claim that in iaido you should use a shinken, a sharp sword, because that teaches you the proper respect for the edge. If you have not treated your bokuto and then your *iaito* (or *mogito*, a dull-edged sword) with proper respect for the edge, you will fear your shinken, you will cut yourself.

Fear is not respect.

Long ago a westerner stated "*toy swords make toy swordsmen*". This shows a poor understanding of the situation. You must NOT drive on the street as you do while playing with the toy/game "**Grand Theft Auto**". This is using a bokuto as a toy and then a shinken as a toy. The problem with the video gamer driving a big quiet car is that it seems like a toy. A car is a more effective weapon than a sword, much more deadly.

I have often thought that everyone should be taught to drive in a dune buggy, low, open, wind in your face with all the monster cars around you. Will never happen, but how about allowing people to drive a motorcycle three or four years before driving a car? Would this not provide a core of SUV drivers who understand they are using a shinken?

I hope I have expressed this so that you can understand how a bokuto becomes a sword, and how you can train yourself to be afraid of a bokuto so that you can be unafraid of a sword.

On the sword (uchidachi) side, at the end of each jodo kata you must feel that you have been defeated. If you are doing sword/sword kata you must feel that you have died. If you do not, you are wasting your practice time, just playing at it. If you are practicing iaido and you do not feel as if you have killed the (invisible) man in front of you, you are wasting your practice time, you are just waving a stick around. Your kata is not "real", it does not make sense combatively.

Shijo must feel, at the end of each kata, that he has escaped with his life, and be grateful that he has, once again, chastised the sword without killing or injuring him. ***ichi go ichi e***.

In jo we bow to 15 degrees, we do not lose uchidachi from our peripheral vision. This is not an empty instruction, it is not some sort of cute "*always be ready, everyone can be your enemy*" instruction, nor is it an empty expression of respect (obeisance). Etiquette in the martial arts must be treated the same as your bokuto, as if it means something. It means something. You must learn what it means.

To "*make enemies*" in a video game, or to choose sides for a sporting competition is usually treated with little thought to what this represents. Children's games are a model for life. (You should also treat your shinai as if it had an edge.) Too little concern with "*toy enemies*" in a

video game can lead to unconcern in your "*business life*". What happens when the leader of a country, treats politics like a play, armies like a game of toy soldiers? Like a football game? What happens is that young men die. "***Toy generals make dead soldiers***".

Be careful too, about how you treat your business rivals, they may not be a bokuto, they may turn out to be a shinken. Treat your kata seriously so that you can treat real life with light-heartedness, knowing that you can deal with it. We fear what we are unprepared for, we fear what we cannot understand, what we cannot cope with. If we neglect our education we are fearful in life. How many bosses can you name who can't do their job? They create dangerous and toxic workplaces.

They did not treat their bokuto like a sword.

Jo no Hinkaku IV - The fourth golden rule of jodo

*Sen atari hamono motsu mi no kou ejiki ten de utu koso jo
no uchi nari*

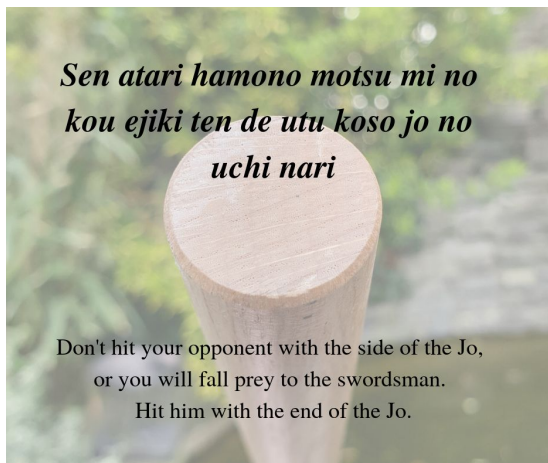
*Don't hit your opponent with the side of the Jo,
or you will fall prey to the swordsman.
Hit him with the end of the Jo.*

Even if you hit a swordsman with the side of the Jo to "cut" him, a mere hit is not fatal because he is guarded by a powerful will to kill you. He ignores your bladeless stick, enters your defense range, and tries to cut you. Therefore, don't use the Jo like a sword. You must hit him without giving him any chance to invade your defense territory. You must hit his face with the end of the Jo. The moment you hit his wrist, aim the end of the Jo at his stomach and discourage his intention to enter your territory. Such a hit is called ten de utsu (to hit with either end of the Jo) as opposed to sen de utsu (to hit with the side of the Jo trying to "cut" him as in Kendo). The length of a sword is 3 shaku (90.9 centimeters), and that of the Jo is 4 shaku 2 sun 1 bu (128 centimeters). You must make the most of this difference in length.

The difference in length between a jo and a sword is even less than the 27cm you might think it is from the measurements. Consider where we grip the jo, at 1/4, and then compare this to the sword, you will find that you have perhaps 10cm difference.

Distance is time, and time is distance. To take best advantage of your small advantage, you need to "get in quick" on the sword.

Why not increase the length of the jo so that we can hit with the side? First, lengthen it long enough and it is a **bo**. This would be slower, and a swordsman would be coming inside, down the bo, by the time you hit him from the side. Japanese swords are fast because they are light.



The jo is the length it is because we move our hands around the ends, we don't switch our grip in the middle. By moving around the ends we can keep the josaki, the end of the jo on tachi's face for as long as possible, then we drive the other end forward to "hit/thrust" his face. We must not only hit him with our stick, we must also prevent him from coming further forward to hit us. We cannot afford to trade cuts, the side of the stick is not the edge of a

sword, he will ignore the bruise on his side to cut us down, his focus is on cutting us, not defending. A sword is overwhelming when faced with a stick, so he will not be thinking about defense.

Amongst the stick weapons, consider the jo the "*small sword*", it's fast, use the tip to keep the distance, not the edge. It hasn't the weight and length of the bo to strike from the side at a safe distance, but if used properly it does have an advantage of distance compared to a cane or a baton. The difference between a cane and a jo is 30cm or so, and the cane is a lighter weapon. With the cane we use one hand to achieve the distance, which means we lose the strength of that second hand. We "*cut*" with the cane to do the most damage, and we "*thrust*" with the jo. Not "*half way between*", not "*sword, spear and naginata*", a jo is its own weapon with its own *riai*, part of which is the thrust to beat the cut.

The idea of leveraging a small advantage is central to the jo. To defeat an opponent with overwhelming force is not so difficult, smashing an ant with a sledgehammer is something anyone can do. To smash an ant with a chopstick or a toothpick is another matter, it requires finesse. The jo requires finesse, a light touch, control and precision. Ham-fisted swings will not work at 10cm.

Did you think about hitting an ant with a sledgehammer? Did you think about skewering an ant with a toothpick? Which would you do in real life? This is why "*overwhelming military superiority*" is so difficult to avoid using, it's too easy, too impersonal. You can't see an ant at the end of a sledge, you have to get down where you can see it squirm to kill with a toothpick. Think about the lessons of your jo against the sword.

To take the lesson of a small advantage into real life is to understand that one needs to be grateful for what one has, and use it well. To wish for more than one has is to be defeated before one starts. Use what you have and use it well. Don't try to cut with a stick, don't try to drill holes with a scalpel.

Understand your tools, use them well. Understand your people, use them well. Read Musashi's parable of the carpenter [editor's note: Taylor Sensei's commentary on this Musashi's writings, including the parable of the carpenter, can found in the [The Go Rin no Sho of Miyamoto Musashi](#)].

Jo no Hinkaku V - The fifth golden rule of jodo

*Tachi wa kane jo wa kasha gatsun to atezu ni maruku
zurashite inasu kokoro de*

*Tachi is steel; Jo is oak.
Don't hit tachi hard.
Parry it by sliding the Jo along its length
as if to scold the tachi.*

Since Jo is made of oak and tachi is made of steel, tachi is made of far better material than the Jo, and is more fatal. Just the sight of tachi frightens you. But when you duel with a swordsman, never fear tachi.

Don't simply hit the side of tachi. When you hit tachi, remember that flexibility is stronger than stiffness.

You must swing the Jo down from above, and the moment the Jo has contacted the sword, adhere to it and slide it along the length of tachi as far as the tachi hilt.

When you parry the tachi, do so by zuri-age or zuri-oroshi (to slide the Jo along the length of tachi upward or downward). Always avoid hitting the side of the tachi, but instead, try to slide the Jo along its length as if to soften the speed of the tachi's movement.

The idea of scolding the tachi has been mentioned before, as has fear of the tachi. The idea isn't to smash the sword out of uchidachi's hands, or to bend the sword in half. It's to move it aside gently. The sword is steel, the jo is oak, the materials are not the same. You don't cut through a sword with an oak dowel, even if it is made of magical Japanese wood.

I have heard it said that "*Shiro Kashi* (editor's note: white oak) *is the only wood that will stand up to a katana*". Nonsense, if that were true the samurai would have used sticks instead of swords.

It has much more to do with how the weapons are used, a statement like "*a jo will defeat a sword*" refers to the techniques of jodo vs the techniques of the sword. If you don't believe that wood can defeat metal, you are in the wrong school of budo. Respect but don't fear the sword if you are a jodoka.

Wood, even Japanese oak, is not magical. I have regularly broken wooden weapons while demonstrating to a class that gravity and body weight beats tight muscles and willpower. The sequence goes something like;

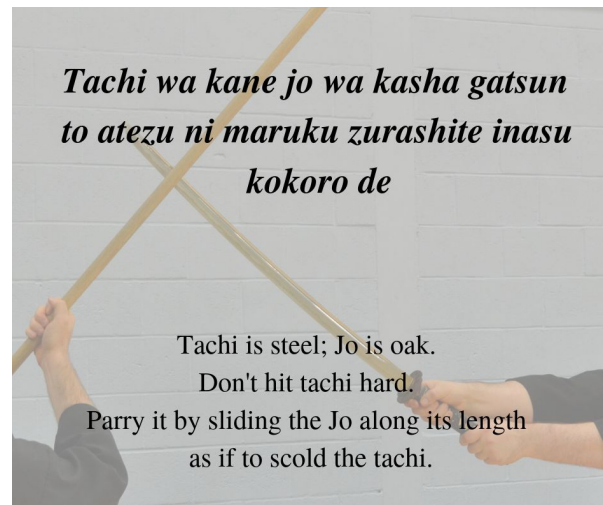
1. Drop the arm holding a bokuto in a loose grip. Nothing much happens, bokuto bounces off target.

2. Grip a little.
3. Perform shibori, squeeze thumb and index finger.
4. Breathe out.
5. Tighten armpit.
6. Drop weight into strike.

Somewhere between 3 and 6 the bokuto often breaks in half. Now, if I say "*I'm going to break this bokuto*" and swing it for all it's worth, often nothing happens because my squeezing and tightening of muscles will work against each other. Basic Aikido that. Also the person holding the target tends to flinch away, robbing the impact of power.

I know a couple of bokuto makers who offered guarantees on their work, they didn't count on people going out and beating their products against telephone poles. Telephone poles do not flinch, there is no such thing as unbreakable.

On the other hand, I've done jodo with a cedar bokuto, my students aren't particularly gentle with the hands, but I can soften the reception of the jo to the point where a stick you could break over your knee does not get broken by an oak jo. The slide that was mentioned above means that the sticks meet gently, then the jo applies more and more acceleration to the tachi and it flies away. If I were to flinch the bokuto outward in anticipation of the strike by jo, and jo were to hit the bokuto at 90 degrees, it would break. Especially if I were clutching it hard.



Yes, I make these things so I don't feel bad about breaking them. I have experimented quite a lot.

The **slide is the key**, when doing *hiki otoshi uchi*, meet the tip of the bokuto with the part of the jo near your front hand. This moves the sword due to the difference in leverage, in the west you have met the *foible* with the *forte*. We might say you meet the "*satsu*" with the "*bo*" as in the three parts of the blade, *bo, sei, sats*. You've met the tip with the base, of course the tip will move. Now you slide down to the base (*tsuba*) of the sword with the length of your jo. You have gone from base to tip of your weapon. While you do this you accelerate to keep contact with the sword. Acceleration comes from *shibori*, from driving more and more power into the tip of the jo with your wrists and your grip. All this while your arms drop with the acceleration due to gravity.

Add muscle into it and, maybe not your, but my shoulders scream in pain. I learned this soft stuff out of necessity.

This extended power into the sword can be demonstrated without your weapons. Stand opposite your partner, now shove him back as hard as you can. He moves maybe a step or two.

Now, shove him with somewhat less power but as he moves back keep pushing with that same power, you'll have to speed up to keep up. Stop before you hit the wall please.

This small displacement followed by chasing soon creates a huge displacement. It's the idea of knocking your opponent back on his heels and then never letting up as you chase him. For my students, this is the principle of *kissaki gaeshi* in **Niten Ichiryu**.

Soft hands, soft contact with the sword means your jo can defeat the metal of the sword. Smacking the sword from the side may feel satisfying, but a good swordsman can receive this and be back on line before you can blink. Move him a little but keep your jo in contact, slide down the sword, chastise his position, and he can't disengage. He must fold the sword back, yielding the center to you.

Think of *maki otoshi*, *zuri-age* to receive, *zuri-oroshi* to drop the sword to the side. Slide up the sword to receive, slide back down to throw it away. If you drop down from above, you will slide from tip to tsuba on one side, then as your jo goes over the sword, you will slide from tsuba to tip as it moves behind uchidachi. All this in one motion of the jo.

Again, for my own students, think about the sword side of this equation, think about *uke nagashi* in Niten Ichiryu. The same thing happens, the attacking sword slides down one side of your sword from tip to tsuba, and then from tsuba to tip. What is the difference? Why is the receiving sword driven back in Jodo but not in Niten Ichiryu? That is your homework for the Tuesday class. Remind me to test you. Hint: *kissaki gaeshi*.

Jo no Hinkaku VI - The sixth golden rule of jodo

*Orikaesu tekubi no nigiri de teki o ute ushirode no chikara
makase wa waza o kuruwasu*

*When you strike with the Jo
use the grip of your orikaesu-te.
If you strike with the gote too forcefully,
you cannot attack effectively.*

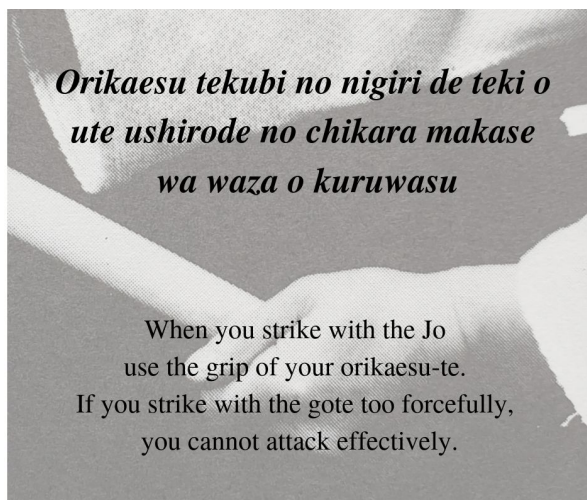
Orikaesu-te is the hand holding the end of Jo in each position of *Honte*, *Gyakute*, and *Hikiotoshi-uchi*. *Gote* is the other hand. (When you use *tachi*, *orikaesu-te* is the left hand.)

If you make the most of *orikaesu-tekubi* (the wrist of *orikaesu-te*), you can not only "extend" the length of the Jo but also make a powerful attack even if the distance between you and your opponent is short. If you follow this technique, you can strike the *tachi* more easily. The technique can be applied to *tachi* and *tanjo*, too.

Make the best of *orikaesu-tekubi*.

There's not a heck of a lot I can write on this one. If you started your career with the sword, you heard it the very first day you were in class. Cut with the left hand. The left hand is power, the right hand is control. Too much right hand! On and on it has gone, and you're still hearing it aren't you?

Me too.



With the jo, the Orikaesu-te is sometimes the right hand, which is truly messed up for those who learned sword for 20 years before picking up a jo. Did I mention that the jo is a lot harder than the sword? The Gote (kote I'm assuming) is the right hand on *tachi*, so that's the Kendo target "kote".

Orikaesu tekubi, the wrist that folds back? I don't think there's anything mysterious there, the back/bottom hand folds up and down as the weapon goes up and down. Let's go to the sword so we can say left hand. If we strike with the right hand we lose length on our sword, the rotation point is in

the right hand and we end up swinging short and crabbed/cramped.

If we swing from the left hand that rotation point is at the base of the sword so the effective length of the sword is greater. But the rotation point, the fold, is in the wrist, another few inches yet, even better. Now consider you're swinging a jo, where the length of the weapon is your only advantage. You'd better swing from the orikaesu-te.

Note that it says if you strike with kote, the right hand, too forcefully, you can't attack effectively. While this doesn't say the left hand is more powerful, to swing the tip faster means more power in the strike. To swing the tip faster means the josaki gets to uchidachi's eyes faster. More leverage means a more effective attack.

Now, what happens when you thrust, or cut to a thrust? Compare the right hand with the left hand as you drive the jo into a wall. Right hand (gote) tends to be a bit "cocked" doesn't it? So there's some stress on the wrist at the base of the thumb. Moreso if your grip is thumb up. Turn your thumb side down so that the palm is facing the floor and that angle is reduced. This is for one handed thrusts, for two handed thrusts, just use the right hand (the gote) to keep the tip from deflecting upward, and thrust from the left (orikaesu-te) where, if you have gripped with the little finger at the base of the stick, you can get the base of your palm over the edge of the jo. You're almost driving straight down your forearm, no bend in the hand at all.

Nice.

Cut with your orikaesu-te, it's what you've been told forever. Just trust everyone that's ever told you things and do it. Gote is only to keep the weapon from bouncing back up as you hit, thus putting all the force into the target rather than the elastic rebound.

And like you just got told, use this for the tachi (sword) and tanjo (cane) too.

Base of rotation is the sticky-outy bone on the little finger side of your wrist. Think about it for the next few practices. Pay attention to that place.

Jo no Hinkaku VII - The seventh golden rule of jodo

Kawashitsutsu kote o uchiage me o seishi taisei kuzushite waza kakeyo

*When parrying the sword with the jo,
hit the wrists from underneath and aim the tip to the eyes.*

Before using Kuri-techniques, unbalance the posture.

The seventh rule explains the techniques of Kuri-tsuke, Kuri-hanashi, and Tai-atari. The Kuri-techniques practiced in recent years teach the correct ways to parry the sword:

(1) how to avoid the sword;
(2) how to hit the sword's handle;
(3) and how to apply the techniques. These basic forms are not incorrect, but in actual combat, you cannot apply the techniques by just hitting the handle of a swordsman who is desperately trying to cut you. Therefore, as the Kyohan teaches, you should hit your opponent's wrists as if to scoop them up, and at the same time point the end of Jo right at his eyes to discourage any further intention to attack you.

This movement breaks his balance. Never miss this chance. It is the very moment you apply Kuri-waza. When your opponent brings his raised sword down on you with lightning speed and steadiness, you cannot apply the techniques by just hitting the handle from underneath.

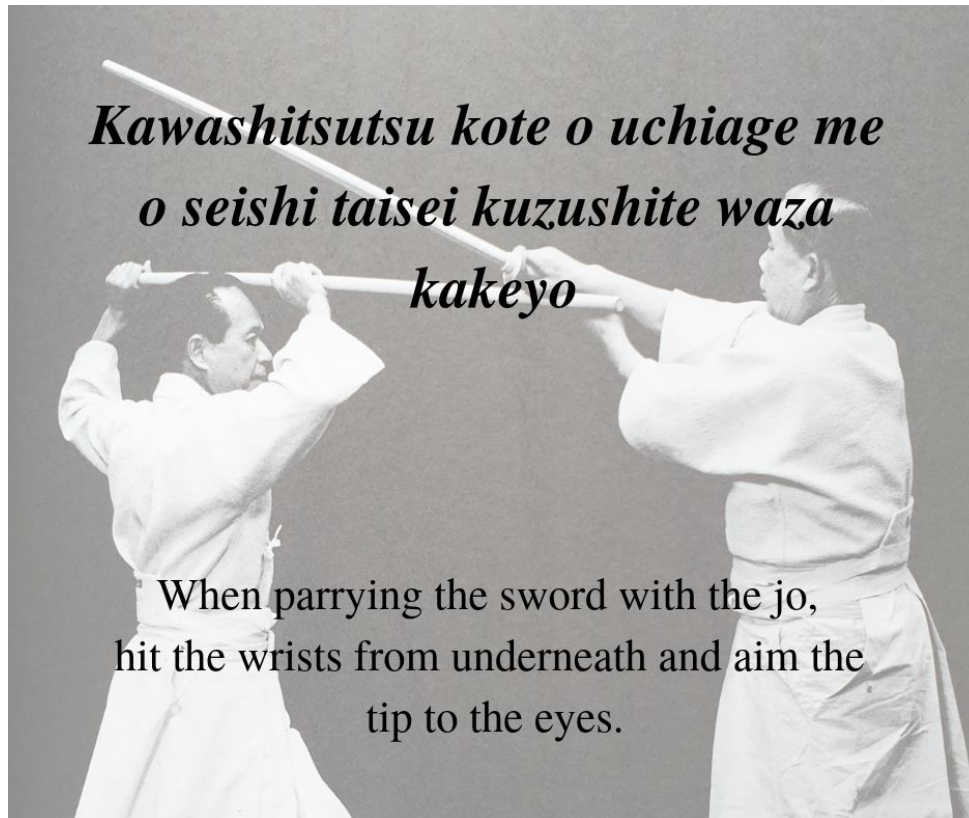
Generally speaking, you cannot apply any technique to your opponent when he is well balanced in posture, mind, and alertness. Therefore, before you apply the techniques, you must sense the opponent's Okori* and immediately take advantage of it because he is off his mental and physical guards at the very moment; or you must disturb his equilibrium.

* Okori or Okori-gashira: the very moment when your opponent intends to hit you; the very moment when he intends to move his sword to attack you

One of the most common statements I hear from my students when learning jo is that it isn't very practical. My students are swordsmen, and to have someone with a stick move to the side and catch the hilt at 45 degrees (or 60 these days, in seitei gata) and then move the sword somehow, just doesn't make any sense to them.

Then they get hit on the knuckles and I explain "*because safety*". We do a lot of things in jodo that don't make sense from a combative point of view, until you consider how you would do them "*on the street*". One of these is to catch the swordsman's wrists out of the air and smash

them into his hips as you disrupt his cut with *kuri tsuke*. In *Kuri hanashi* you throw him away if he tries to cut you on the way down in *kuri tsuke*. In *Tai atari* you follow him in if he tries to disengage from your *kuri tsuke*. All three of these techniques would be done without pause and without regard for the safety of the swordsman. If his fingers are broken or he loses an eye, fine, he is chastised.



The very first contact with an opponent should unbalance him. This is true of whatever art I have learned. You cannot throw someone in Aikido if you allow them to remain in balance after you've stopped their attack. First the balance, then the throw. As my iaido sensei tells me, first you kill him, then you attack. If you have someone's balance you have already thrown them.

Yet in *kuri tsuke* we see students catch the hilt, and the swordsman load up on that connection and prevent the jo from moving. This is *seitei gata*, this is a clear, precise way to practice with larger class sizes of mixed experience. Tachi has his balance because jo hasn't taken it. Jo doesn't take it because this is how we practice when we are being precise, when we are learning to check our posture. Check, check and check.

The method of catching the wrists from under and pointing at the eyes is more dynamic, more practical, it takes the balance (or at least the equilibrium) instantly, at the moment of contact. The swordsman is set up strongly on the attacking line, right foot forward, arms moving down his centerline. If the jo catches his wrists and twists him to the outside of his right leg by pointing the josaki to his eyes, the swordsman will lose his equilibrium and his power instantly. If he doesn't get his right foot back in time he will fall. If the jo stomps on his right foot as he drives

tachi to his rear, along the weak axis of his stability, tachi will fall heavily with much damage to his right ankle.

Speaking of kuri tsuke, if tachi does manage to step back and soak up the drive of his hands down to his hip, if jo straightens his back leg he will "*break tachi's hip*", he will keep tachi off balance by bending him over, disrupting his posture.

Take the balance at first contact, "*stick like laquer and glue*" and make sure tachi never recovers his balance.

Kuri hanashi is taught as something different than kuri tsuke, but consider that, as you are performing kuri tsuke, you feel the sword folding over your jo, keep the josaki up and throw the swordsman away from you keeping the blade away from your head.

If you are performing kuri tsuke and you feel tachi moving away from you, move in with him, keep his sword up over his head, and drive him back over his heels.

The three movements are not really different, just three ways to keep tachi off balance after the initial disruption of his equilibrium.

How do we practice tai atari in seitei gata? We stop on the catch, then we struggle as tachi loads up on the jo but maybe we smash his little finger so he flinches, then we leave him his balance (feet not together to receive tai atari in seitei jo) and try to push him back.

No, those are artifacts of a safe practice. When we catch in seitei, at an angle, not aimed at the eyes, we are safe but tachi can resist. If we wish to play with balance, turn the hips first so that the josaki does move to the eyes. This physically takes the balance. Move ever so slightly toward the eyes with the josaki and you have now taken tachi's equilibrium. His mental balance is yours as he twitches away from the stick.

In tai atari there is a second sticking point as you try to lift the sword upward after catching it. Drive it up and back at 45 degrees with a pulse from your hips. This throws tachi's balance up over his head, now move in.

Or perhaps tachi isn't an idiot, trying to drive through an attack that has failed. (Loading up on the jo.) Perhaps he lifts the sword, and now jo only has to move in. But wait, there's a third sticking point where tachi moves back to "not feet together." Here he can resist the final push, especially if jo tries to punch him in the solar plexus and lets his jo collapse. Tachi simply crushes the jo down onto tachi after taking the hit.

Seriously, you think you can punch tachi in the suigetsu hard enough to stop him if he is trying to kill you with a sword?

No, you have to maintain pressure on the tachi over your head (keep him off balance), being VERY careful you don't let tachi move either right or left and escape. If you hit him in the gut as you keep his balance and drive him back, fine, but that's not what moves him. Balance (the lack thereof) moves him.

Practice safely but beware of misunderstanding the importance of balance. If he can "*load up*" you don't have his balance.

As for "*okori*", if you can detect the instant that tachi is about to begin his attack, kiai. See what happens, have you disturbed his equilibrium? When you can do that, try shifting toward him by half an inch, nothing more, when you detect his intent. Fun? Wow!

Jo no Hinkaku VIII - The eighth golden rule of jodo

*Furuki kata sukoshi mo tagawazu kurikaese shizen ni
minituku ki jo tai*

*Practice the time-honored techniques repeatedly.
Imitate them exactly as your teacher shows.
Aim at attaining a perfect unity of body and spirit with the Jo.*

Believe in the techniques handed down from teachers to students for hundreds of years. Do not doubt, but practice them hundreds and thousands of times, and you will learn the unity of Jo, body, and opportunities for offence and defense, that automatically corresponds to your opponent's movements. This is similar to typewriting. The beginner looks at the words, find the keys, and types them. A well-trained typist does not look at the keys, but they just look at the words and automatically type them.

My father once told me about the art of war. When he was learning calligraphy from an honorable teacher Shin Kei Ho, he said to my father:

"Begin with the rules which calligraphy teachers created when they, after practicing thousands of times, reached the level where they could write without thinking about the techniques. It is only after practicing the rules innumerable times that you can write well.

"This is the order of practicing calligraphy:
first, don't write with your finger, but write with your hand;
second, don't write with your hand, but write with your arm;
third, don't write with your arm, but write with your shoulder;
fourth, don't write with your shoulder, but write with your body;
fifth, don't write with your body, but write with your heart;
sixth, don't write with your heart, but write with non-attachment;
seventh, write freely."

It means that you can't write as long as you have something to say or think about calligraphy.

In Chikuzen (present western part of Fukuoka Prefecture), where Jo was founded, there is a place called Hari-suri (needle-grinding). A long time ago, when Tenmangu-sama (Michizane Sugawara *) left Dazaifu ** and climbed Mt. Tenpaizan to pray to Heaven ***, he saw a peasant sharpening an ax, and asked him what he was doing. The peasant answered that he was making a needle out of the ax.

Tenmangu-sama was surprised and realized that his prayer had not been enough. So, he began to pray much more heartily, and finally he became the god of Tenjin Shrine.

My father said to me, "When one shoots an arrow from a bow, he can hit the target if he takes a correct stance as his teacher instructs. He doesn't have to make a particular effort in aiming at the target." Shimizu Sensei said to me, "Don't intend to hit this or poke that. You can hit or poke the target without making efforts. Your loaded intention will fail the correct wielding of Jo. Don't doubt kata or the set form of techniques, but use Jo exactly as instructed. You cannot hit the target as long as you take a wrong posture."

*61 Michizane Sugawara (845-903) a Japanese politician, poet, and scholar

** one of the military and administrative centers of Japan in 8th and 9th centuries, located in present

Fukuoka Prefecture

*** Sugawara fell into a trap of his rival in 901 and was demoted to a minor official of Dazaifu. He pleaded his innocence on Mt. Tenpaizan every day

Trust the kata. Trust your teacher. Don't think too much.

Does this sound a bit strange coming from me? Perhaps it should, since I'm the fellow who is daily questioning this stuff over coffee. Still, I've been at it for almost 40 years now, and when I started I absolutely did trust my teachers. It was those teachers who eventually taught me to question what and how I'm doing with this stuff. They did this so that I could continue learning and teaching because sooner or later you run out of teacher. Not all teachers, but the one who taught you first, it's just a fact of life, unfortunately. Still, if you no longer have your teacher, if you wasted that ten years you had with him on arguments, girlfriends, or life in general, you still have the kata. You will always have the kata to teach you if you allow it to do so.

Yesterday was Aikido class, and we went through the first four *Shindo Muso Ryu tanjo jutsu kata*. I've been doing those kata for over 20 years now, but last evening while teaching three beginners I learned something about distance.

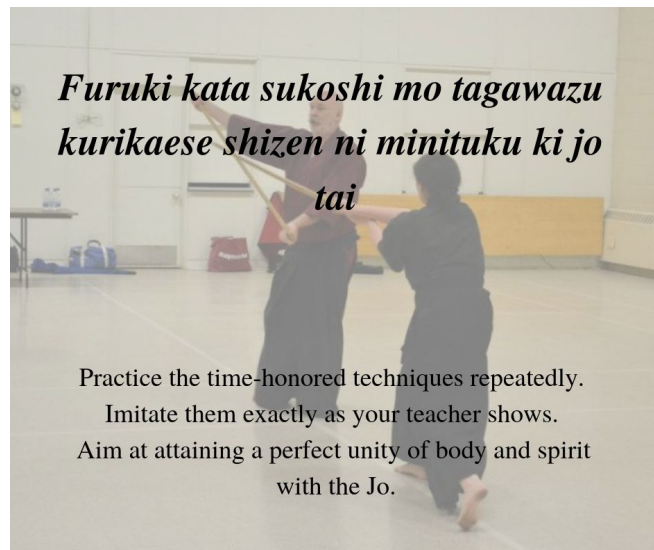
While driving home I was asking myself why I am still practising, my right knee, both shoulders and my right forearm were throbbing. This morning as I drink my coffee and type this (not looking at the keys) I remember why I am still on the mat. It's nice that those who practise with me are kind and do not crank my arms around.

Jo Ha Kyu. Copy your teacher and the kata. Think about it. Leave the kata behind. This is the usual order of learning, and why not? If you are learning calligraphy, or typing, you are learning a tool, you are learning a skill and you must eventually let it go. If you're thinking about typing you aren't writing freely. If you're worried about your brush you aren't writing freely.

If you're worried about your grip, you aren't hitting the target with your jo. How do you get to the point where you can use your skills, use your tools to express your needs? You must first

learn the basics, you must repeat the kata, then you can understand how the skills work, and eventually you can forget the mechanics of the skills and they are yours at need.

Keep, break, leave. Do you think this means you learn a school and then you change the kata to make them better and found your own school? You can. But why bother, why not just make it up in the first place? You're a clever fellow, and lots of people have done that before you. Lots of people have made a living doing just that, so feel free. Remember that when you cut yourself off from your teacher, you cut yourself off from his teaching. If you want to continue learning from the kata your teacher taught you, do them exactly as he taught them to you. Did he change them? Perhaps he did, but that's no concern of yours. You can learn from him through his kata or you can go out on your own. Change his kata and you have left the dojo. Do half the kata from one fellow and the other half from another fellow and you are learning from neither, you are *"taking the best and leaving the rest"* only if you are better than both of them.



Is Jo Ha Kyu a one way process? It can be. My typing could be better, I make some mistakes because the shift keys are never in the same place on different keyboards. I get that and I could practice some to fix my mistakes but my typing is *"good enough"*. I get there in the end without too much fumbling, I type about as fast as I think, so I don't bother. Perhaps I should, but I don't teach typing. Jo Ha Kyu for typing was a one way process for me.

I do teach budo, so I return to the kata, always. I can examine the kamae carefully, every time I move through them, and each time, I have the opportunity to learn something else. Sometimes I listen and learn. The kata contain movement, I can learn something each time I move, kata on wood are different than kata on wrestling mats, I can learn from that. Kata contain a partner, by practicing with hundreds of different partners I have learned about timing, and distancing and reading minds. This is how a student teaches a teacher through a kata.

Students can use the skills to go fight or write and never worry about the process of acquiring the skills again. A teacher cannot afford to ignore the kata because a teacher must learn for his whole career, otherwise how to stay ahead of his long-time students? How to keep them moving forward? How to keep them around to pay the rent on the dojo?

Budo is a skill, it's a tool, but it's also a life-long process. The process requires the kata, those vessels of instruction that our previous generations have developed for us. We can ignore those vessels and their contents, but we will be poorer for that.

Jo no Hinkaku IX - The ninth golden rule of jodo

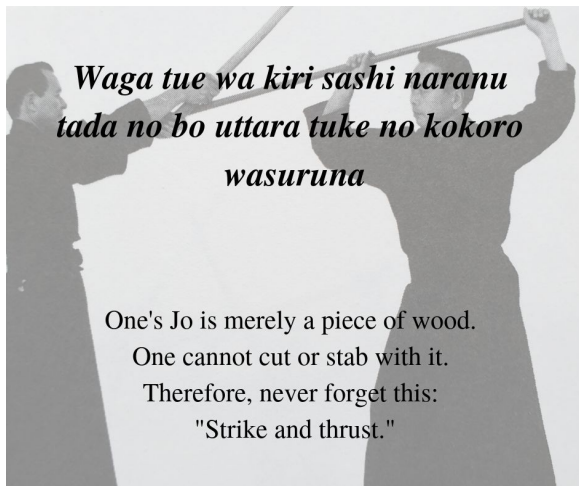
*Waga tue wa kiri sashi naranu tada no bo uttara take no
kokoro wasuruna*

*One's Jo is merely a piece of wood.
One cannot cut or stab with it.
Therefore, never forget this:
"Strike and thrust."*

The ninth rule supplements the fourth one and the phrase "strike and thrust" is not literal. It means that one must perfect techniques so that one can strike and thrust simultaneously.

The jo is indeed merely a piece of wood. It is not a sword, the primary weapon jodo is designed to oppose. As was mentioned earlier, the role of the jo is to chastise without death or injury, hopefully to both sides. The jo can strike and it can thrust but not cut or stab. It doesn't penetrate the skin.

What is "*strike and thrust*"? The suggestion here is that the phrase is not literal but means one should train to be able to strike and thrust simultaneously. This is true by definition, a cut is a swing of the weapon to strike with the side, with the edge. A thrust is to move the weapon, the sword, down its axis to pierce with the tip. Can you do them at the same time?



I am somewhat confused by the explanation above, perhaps a better word than simultaneously might be instantaneously. I know it's a small thing, but "*at the same time*" is not quite the same as "*in the same instant*". Regardless, to understand this, I will consider things by definition, strikes first.

We strike with the jo, we strike the wrist quite often, coming down from above in several cases, for instance in the first movements of *Monomi* and *Tsuki Zue*. We also strike upward into the wrists as for *kuri tsuke*.

When we strike the wrist from above in *Monomi*, we strike down the centerline so that once the strike is made, we can thrust to tachi's center to stop him from attacking. The same for the wrist strike in *Tsuki Zue*. In the second strike of *Tsuki Zue* we also strike the wrist, this time above

tachi's head so we cannot thrust to his center, yet we can thrust forward to unbalance tachi after making contact with his wrist. This is the same unbalancing we do in Tai Atari, pushing tachi's arms and bokuto back over his head to lift his balance and force him back.

Strikes to the wrist are not strikes and thrusts "*at the same time*"? Perhaps not, depending on the internal mechanics of strike and then thrust, or how you define a single movement. They can certainly be done "*all at once*", strike and thrust without a pause between. In the case of Tsuki Zue we move in with our body to strike the wrist, while in Monomi we move back as we strike. These are distancing movements and as Musashi says, you can step in or you can strike but you can't do both together. You can't strike while still moving into the correct distance to strike. Well OK you can, but you will miss or strike with the wrong part of your weapon. But in Tsuki Zue can you not be moving forward, strike the target and continue moving forward so that the strike becomes a thrust?

Now consider the striking of the wrists from below as in Kuri Tsuke. Is there a thrust there as well?

With a sword, you want to pull on the cut, not push. Yes I know there's an idea out there that Kendo does a "push cut" and yes I've tried this in tameshigiri. It works, you can cut by striking down and pushing the sword edge forward with your body, arms extended. But it isn't a natural movement and the push from the body is slow. To cut with the sword moving back due to the rotation of our arms in the shoulder joint is more efficient than trying to cut with a thrust. Remember that in Kendo the cut is stopped at the top of the head, it isn't completed, the "*pull*" part is eliminated and the "*push*" of the drive through and past the opponent is done instead.

Might I suggest that a "*pushing cut*" is an artifact of safe practice?

Yet what about the jo? Are we to stand "*toe to toe*" with the sword and exchange strikes? I will argue that, as the sword strikes and pulls to cut, we might benefit from striking and thrusting. If we strike the wrist (from outside tachi's cutting range) and then continue with a thrust we might do more damage than the strike alone, or attempting to strike the head and moving into tachi's cutting range.

The jo is wood, it does not cut or pierce. Although an arm movement can cause damage when using a sword, we must not use arm movements with the jo, but rather use our body. Yes, cutting with the body is also best with a sword, but damage with arms alone is possible. With the jo, about the best we can hope for is to poke an eye if we're just using our arms.

What of striking to the head? Do we strike downward onto the top of the head? Perhaps, but it is much more common to strike to the face. Take for our example the *kihon* hiki otoshi uchi. In partner practice we strike down the sword and then thrust to the face in the same movement, but sequentially, with two different motions of the jo, a "*cutting*" movement and then a "*thrusting*" movement. In the solo practice, on the other hand, we "*cut*" to the face. Is this not a literal "strike and thrust"? If you try to make this a sword-like cut to the front of the face and then switch to a thrust, you will open yourself up to a counter, tachi can move into the space created as you lift your arms well over your head. Remember he is not intimidated by your stick. If you swing to strike the front of the head rather than the top, you end up with a strike that is a thrust.

Sort of?

And thrusts? Is a thrust not a strike? Of course it is, we must strike rather than push most of the time when we thrust. This is now in the realm of "*semantics*", yet beginners often feel thrusts are pushes so it's worth making the point.

Strike and thrust. Consider them as vectors for the josaki and see if this helps.

Jo no Hinkaku X - The tenth golden rule of jodo

*Shi mo uchi moshintai tomoni utsu kokoro korega
nakereba odori douzen*

*Both shidachi and uchidachi should always keep in mind the spirit of
attack in both forward and backward movements.*

Without this spirit, Jo techniques are simply a dance.

You are practicing Jo faithfully following the instruction of your teachers and the predecessors. Both uchidachi and shidachi should practice Jo with unfailing aggressiveness.

When you are the uchidachi, you should have a sense of dignity. Never give the shidachi any chance to attack you. It is natural that when you are taking a forward step, you are intending to cut the shidachi. You should take the same attitude when you are taking a backward step, too. Even if a bout is over, don't step back just following kata. When you are stepping back, don't lose your concentration. Be alert and ready to cut shidachi if you find any chance. On the other hand, when you are shidachi, don't avoid uchidachi's eyes, but read his spirit, and attack him if you have any chance.

Since you know beforehand where to hit next and where to poke next, you tend to overlook the movement of uchidachi. Jo is not dance.

Any martial art can be done as a dance. By dance we mean "*just going through the movements*", now the dancers out there are going to grit their teeth once more and say "*dance that is just going through the movements isn't dance*". Still, if you will allow my iaido sensei his definition of dance without getting too upset. He also used to say "*you move like Robert*". That took me a moment to hear as "*a robot*", yes, accents are hilarious, you all sound strange.

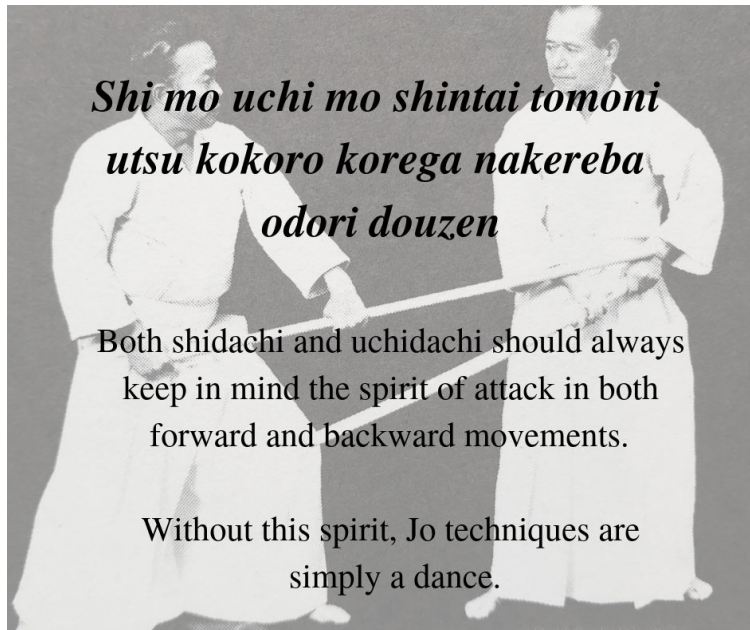
We have all seen kata "*danced*", it's what you do when you are learning the steps. It's what you do to learn. Some people never get over this, especially in solo kata like Karate or Iaido. Just moving through, the next turn is to the right, so turn to the right without even glancing that way beforehand. Certainly not using *mettsuke*, obviously not having an invisible enemy.

You partner kata types think you've got it easier? Perhaps, you do have someone to look at, but do you have multiple opponents? Solo kata folks do. You just need to look at one opponent who is actually in front of you, yet the author of the comment above feels it necessary to tell you not to avoid uchidachi's eyes. Are you sure you're looking at the guy in front of you? Really?

We start with simply going through the motions, then we hope we survive the "*half learned*" stage. You know the feeling, where you're walking through something with a partner who

suddenly remembers the next bit, and comes in like a ton of bricks falling from the roof. As you scramble back trying to avoid being hammered on the head you remember the advice given above, never give shidachi a chance to attack you. This is why, jo can go crazy at any moment, you have to watch him carefully. (Jodoka are insane by definition, choosing to use a stick against a sword? Insane, reckless, keep your eye on them so they don't get hurt.)

Learn the whole kata, dance it until you do, all of it, then, after you know it all well, leave the dancing behind. I spend most of my time while practising both koryu and seitei gata, trying to get people to let go of the dance steps and to pay attention to their partners. One good way to do this is to start looking for openings, suki, and imagining an attack to that opening. Don't attack, don't "break the kata" (like this essay will "break the internet"), but note the openings and your partner, if he's paying any attention at all to you, will probably pick up on this. Then again, perhaps not, but keep it up. What is "read his spirit" if not this?



To understand the moment your partner is about to do the next step is a good thing, no doubt. But that's just reading the micromovements in his body, the weight shift in his hip, the tipping of his head, as he gets ready to move. You know what he's about to do, so it's no great feat to know what he's about to do. Try to figure out, eventually, what he's thinking about doing instead. Try to read his imaginary attack into your weak spot and fix that weakness.

Work with enough beginners for long enough and you can do this. Being smacked on the head often enough (when you were supposed to be thrust in the stomach), is a good incentive to learn. This "reading" the opponent is sort of where freestyle and competition arts like kendo start, while it's where the paired kata types get after a decade or two. The solo kata folks? Maybe, it's hard to be surprised by an imaginary opponent.

On a mechanical level, you really do need to keep attacking when moving both forward and backward. An uchidachi who reads (in the book in his mind), "step back here", will often step back out of range. If tachi steps back out of range, jo is also out of range and you have taught your beginner to break his posture and be more concerned with running to catch you than learning about distance and timing and, yes, posture. If tachi, when he reads "step back here" instead understands, "escape this stalemate situation and move to an attacking distance and then cut jo", tachi will be in the correct range for jo to perform his next strike or thrust.

Keep a spirit of attack.

Jo no Hinkaku XI - The eleventh golden rule of jodo

Shiai kojo negau nara okite suburi to nete kufu

*If you want to make progress in Jo,
practice suburi* during the day;
Exercise ingenuity during the night.*

The eleventh rule is meant for those who cannot go to dojo because of some business and for those who want to improve their Jo techniques.

You may practice Jo hard at dojo but once you leave there, you tend to forget about the Jo. You won't spend enough time to digest the techniques.

You just learn new techniques one after another but you don't practice them until they become your own. I regret that I often see students who don't think deeply about Jo techniques. Such students, who don't have a teacher nor an uchidachi to practice with, tend to gradually begin to abandon what they have learned. This is a waste of time and energy.

Who do you think was uchidachi for Gonnosuke Muso? He was a master of "kenpo" or swordsmanship. He was probably his own uchidachi. He devised the techniques against an imaginary uchidachi based on his rich experiences in actual combat with his enemies. Not being satisfied with the imaginary uchidachi, he worked on creating techniques by secluding himself away at Kamado Shrine in Mt. Homan**. And finally he is said to have received an oracle and then founded Shinto-muso-ryu Jo. His original techniques have undergone the test of time and have developed into 64 kata or forms today. The last form of Okuden is *Aun*, which is just a single hidari-honte-uchi.

With the spirit the founder cherished we, the Jo students, should practice suburi in the correct form fully aware of the importance of the basics. Night and day, we should study and brush our techniques with untiring perseverance: characteristics of the Jo and sword, the intention behind the form, eyes, an effective connection between one technique and another, movements of hands and arms, movements of feet and legs, timing of hitting, and posture. Without studying them, your Jo is superficial. You can never grasp the quintessence of Jo. If your teacher is away from you, heaven is your teacher. You should make the most of his absence, regard it as a chance for self-practicing and improvement of your techniques. I sincerely hope that you will keep brushing up your techniques.

*64 to practice the movement of wielding Jo by yourself

**65 a mountain in Dazaifu (present Fukuoka)

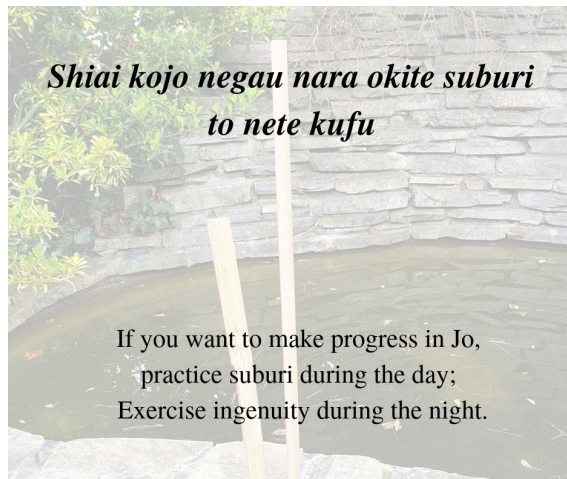
This is what we are doing right now, you and I, we are thinking about jodo while out of the dojo. While driving to the cafe I was once again practicing my grip on the steering wheel. Chopping some wood yesterday I was checking my foot position, comparing it to my iaido stance and my jodo stance. I came to the conclusion (just now) that chopping wood is more similar to hiki otoshi uchi than to most kiri tsuke in iai. The chamber of the axe is done with the left foot forward, and the cut can be done with the right foot moving or still. Hiki Otoshi Uchi.

Didn't help much on the knotty pine, it still isn't going to split nicely.

When I was stressed on the job I used to put my hands into my sword grip and the tension would drain out of me. This too is a way of practicing while out of the dojo.

Having trouble sleeping? Go through a set of kata in your mind. Visualize watching both sides do it, then do each side. If you're still awake after that, get up and read, you're wasting time lying in your bed.

If there is no class today, take out your jo or your bokuto and do "*solo jo*". We were reminded to do this at the recent seminar, add the 12 seitei jo tachi sides to your seitei iai practice for another 12 kata to work on. Why not?



The author suggests that Muso devised his jo techniques as if they were iaido kata, solo, imagining an opponent. I hope the iaido people don't get too impressed with themselves about this. Muso was well experienced in partner kata and in duels. It's not surprising he could develop new techniques. In fact, many would say that only someone who has had actual "*battlefield*" experience can develop kata that "*work*". It's not hard to invent kata, but it takes something special to invent kata that actually work. Have faith that your jodo kata, as handed down, work as they are supposed to work.

Is your teacher out of town? Work solo, do it without a stick in your hand if you are indoors and want to keep your lamps. Work on the kata you have been taught, make sure you learn them well. If you know you are moving on to the next one, look it up, we can do that now, walk through the steps so that you learn it faster when sensei comes back. He will be impressed with what a good student you are and give you more difficult instructions until you are at the limit of what you can absorb. This is a good thing.

You don't have to consciously think of your kata to work on your art. Practice your grip while driving but don't go through your kata in your mind. Instead pay attention to the road. Look three or four vehicles ahead and see if you can predict speed changes. Watch the cars around you and see if you can predict who is going to suddenly change lanes or turn without signalling. You may be amazed at how good you are at this. Take that skill back into the dojo.

We don't actually drive "*on automatic*", if we did we'd crash, a lot. We drive with mushin instead. We allow ourselves to react and respond, not reflexively, not thoughtlessly, but without excess rationalization. The first time I noticed this while driving was in a girlfriend's car, taking four or five of us to the beach. An accident happened in front of us, a "*T-bone*", a side impact at an intersection on the highway, without stopping my conversation I steered between the separating cars and continued on for a few seconds before someone said "*umm....* " Then my rational brain caught up with what was happening.

I suspect you've done the same, pay attention when you do, learn from that. You should use your time out of the dojo to refine your art, but you should also use your time in the dojo to refine your skills for outside. After all, it's not just obscure questions of philosophy, or preparing for the off-chance that we will confront a swordsman in the back alleyway while carrying a broomstick that we practice. Is it?

All that we do should inform all else that we do. It happens regardless, by thinking about it, we can direct that process. We can make it deeper.

Jo no Hinkaku XII - The twelfth golden rule of jodo

*Iroiro to shuju ni heihou utaedomo shinken shobu ni
kimari nashi*

*However many various Jo techniques there may be, there are no
rules in true combat.*

It may be good to know many techniques, but if you are bound by them, you are their slaves and lose your freedom. Moreover, you may miss the chance to attack and make a heedless mistake. All you have to do in a real combat is to discourage your enemy's fighting capability.

Your Jo will run as fast as lightning and the flower of practice will bloom when your body and mind are united and concentrate only on fighting. In actual fighting there is no rule, no technique, no yourself, or no enemy. The only thing there is your soul. Don't decorate your body and mind. Fight with your "gloves off."

All fights go to the ground. If you go to the ground you'll lose the fight. But sensei, what if he does this? But then he could do that!

How do we know which kata to use when someone is attacking us?

The simple answer, which isn't really very simple for most students, is that kata are not about fighting. If you figure you need to learn 64 kata to cover all the situations you'll face with your jo, you will find the 65th the first time you are in true combat.

Good thing we don't get into true combat with our stick against a sword any more, but if we do, remember that what you're trying to get out of the kata is the riai, the principles of combat they teach you. You are not looking for formulae that will solve your problems.

Hmm, like economic theory. One theory fits all, just shoehorn life into your dogma and away you go.

Do we help things along by gradings in the Kendo federation? I'm talking about seitei gata, representative forms which have now become more accurately translated as standardized forms. Do we help with golden rule number 12 by insisting that everyone, everywhere in the world must do the kata the same way? That all gradings at all levels need three hanshi on the panel? That all people must do the kata the same way or get a doctor's note that exempts them from the "correct form"? What does this produce?

Students who are more concerned with the shell than the peanut? More worried about the pretty packaging than the food inside? No matter how nicely it is wrapped, rotten meat still stinks.

When the body and mind are decorated, and the soul neglected, you have a log cabin riddled with carpenter ants, a fiberglass body on a K-car. Me, I liked our old Volvo wagons, they looked like hell but would carry a tonne of lumber and that tractor engine just went on and on. Point A to point B or big shiny airfoil and fat tires to get as loudly as possible from red light to red light?

Take your pick, you can concentrate on one or the other.

Now, in the interest of doing "combative" jodo are you going to ignore the shape of the kata? Never grade? Just imagine what your opponent is going to do and counter it spontaneously?

How do you test your "combative" jodo, except by taking it into combat? I know lots of folks who are convinced they are rough tough martial artists who might want to be careful about testing that opinion. Make pretty kata, draw the outlines, then fill in the lines. Once you can do that, you can probably go outside the lines if you need to.

Just don't think that colouring inside the lines is the purpose of crayons.

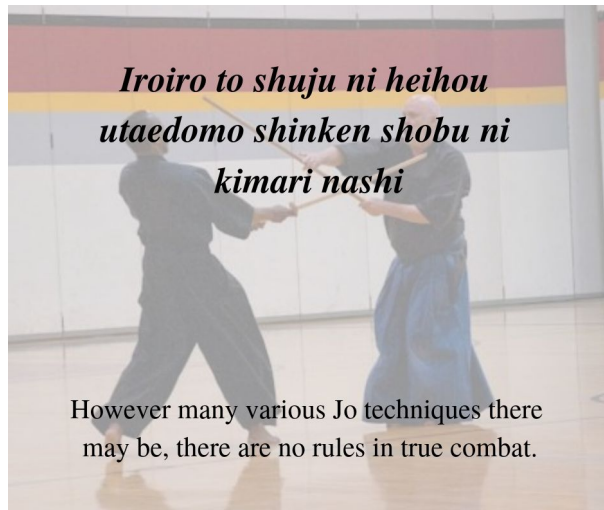
Your sensei, your grading panel need to get beyond the rules (standards) at some point, to make your testing something that isn't just superficial. You can see combative jodo within kata if you look properly. This golden rule doesn't say you should ignore the kata, it says you need to go beyond it.

The author states that all you need to do in real combat is discourage your opponent's fighting capability. That is a deep, deep thought.

In self defence class do you teach your kids how to defeat their attackers, how to win the fight, or do you teach them how to break away and run? What is the purpose of self defence?

In warfare is it important to match tank for tank, jet for jet, or do you set things up so that warfare is impossible? Do you bomb civilian areas to destroy factories? Do you cut off supplies of raw materials? Do you create nuclear weapons that nobody dares to use? Or perhaps we globalize so that fighting makes no more sense?

The jo is to chastise without death or injury. How do we discourage the sword?



*Iroiro to shuju ni heihou
utaedomo shinken shobu ni
kimari nashi*

However many various Jo techniques there may be, there are no rules in true combat.

Pay attention, be in the best position on the board when playing go, shut down your opponent's attack before it starts. If all else fails, don't be there trying to figure out which kata to use, when the attack arrives.

Jo no Hinkaku XIII - The thirteenth golden rule of jodo

*Jo ni yori butoku o tsumishi sono chikara ware ni todomezu
suenagaku*

*Do not confine the virtue and power attained through practicing Jo.
Hand them down from generation to generation.*

Try to win the understanding of as many people as possible about Jo, which was established on a true bushido spirit. Don't use the Jo improperly. I sincerely hope that each of you will make your best efforts to serve as a foundation for the peace of the world when it is confronted with enormous difficulties.

The thirteen rules are excerpts from "***Shinto-muso-ryu Jo To Sono Densho***" (Shinto-muso-ryu Jo and Its patrimony) written by **Koichi Hamaji**, published in the Showa 55 (1980).

If there were not a line of teachers from the mid-seventeenth century down to now, you would not be practicing Jodo. Your teacher taught you, and you certainly have a responsibility to pay him back, but you also have a responsibility to pay him forward, to pass along his instruction to the next generation. If not, the practice you have done, the good it has done you, will be lost to the next generation.

That doesn't mean you should feel any great pressure to run out and start teaching after a year of instruction. Lots do, to mixed results. Even after five or ten years you should feel little pressure to go teach, as long as your teacher is still around, and you are too.

But what if you move? Are you in a town with no jodo, with no teacher there? You are there. If you wish to keep practicing you will teach. There is nothing special about this, you don't have to call yourself "*leader of a study group*" or some such, that is just a phrase meaning "*the guy who tells the rest of us how to do this stuff*". Teacher.

Go ahead, you aren't going to break anything by teaching what you know. If your teacher is good (of course he is), and you were a good student (modest too), you will have lots to teach. Nobody, not even the top-top guy in the world, can teach more than they know. Teach what you know and you will still be "*Mr. Gone Before*"

And for those back in the dojo with sensei? When do they know when to start teaching? It's hard to tell, perhaps the pressure of curiosity builds up, or interest from another group happens,

and a student asks sensei if they can go teach what they know. If sensei says yes, off you go. Come back and visit.

Occasionally, sensei will tell a student to go teach. Maybe there is a group elsewhere that needs teaching and sensei wants to help. Go teach, it won't hurt you, and sensei will want you back in class as per usual.

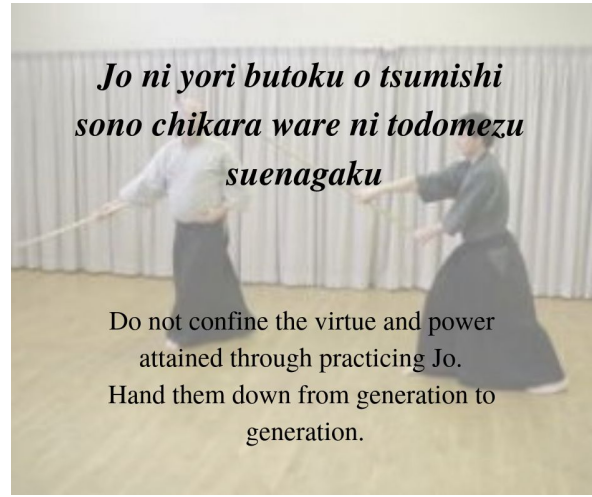
Then there are those that sensei tells to go find some students and start a dojo. In many student's careers there comes a time when they are stuck, and likely to remain stuck, at a certain level. Often the student is thinking too loudly to actually hear what sensei is saying. Perhaps they are looking in too many places to find anything, visiting too many sensei too late in their career and remaining the confused beginner because of it.

Those students need to go teach. Sensei can't do anything more for them, they know too much and don't know what to do with it. They need to organize their practice and understand why there are many ways to do something. They need to go think and stumble and fumble and figure it out for themselves. Sometimes sensei will let them teach in the dojo, but this often becomes a problem, especially if the student is teaching the beginners. Who else would they be teaching? What sensei would pass up the chance to download the beginners and concentrate on the seniors?

So whose students are the beginners? The student teacher will be trying out his theories, the beginners will be looking down the dojo at the head instructor and the head instructor will be getting annoyed at the garbage the student is teaching his beginners.

If sensei says "*you need to go teach*", you should, for the sake of the kids, go start a new club somewhere. Find another dojo that wants to add jodo, or find a community center somewhere. You don't have to start from scratch, but you are probably best to go teach somewhere other than sensei's dojo. You need to be free to make unsupervised and unremarked upon mistakes. You need time to figure out how much of your knowledge is deep (probably from your sensei) and how much is shallow water splashing about (bits and pieces of information thrown about, with no context, by other sensei). As a teacher you soon learn which parts of a building are supporting walls and which parts are decoration.

Teaching isn't just altruism, not just "*passing it forward*", it can also be necessary. You may be the only choice as a teacher in a remote area, or you may need to teach to learn. Regardless, someone needs to pass the art along to the next generation. If it's just you, if it comes down to you alone, you might ask why. There are, occasionally, revitalizers who bring an art back from the brink. There are also arts that disappear without notice, or despite everything the last teacher tries.



If there are many teachers in your generation who are passing the art along, join in happily and do your bit to expand the art.

Teaching is learning, but more importantly, teaching is the way an old man can extend the years he is active and involved in the art.

Teaching is part of the process.

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Jo no Hinkaku VI - June 4, 2018
Jo no Hinkaku VII - June 5, 2018
Jo no Hinkaku VIII - June 7, 2018
Jo no Hinkaku IX - June 9, 2018
Jo no Hinkaku X - June 10, 2018
Jo no Hinkaku XI - June 11, 2018
Jo no Hinkaku XII - June 12, 2018
Jo no Hinkaku XIII - June 18, 2018

About the Author:

Kim Taylor holds renshi seven dan rank in Iaido and sixth dan rank in Jodo from the Canadian Kendo Federation. He is the chief instructor of the *Sei Do Kai* and a member of the **CKF Iaido** grading committee, chief examiner of the **CKF Jodo section**.

Along the way he has been president of the *Ontario Kendo Federation*, associate editor of the [Journal of Asian Martial Arts](#), and editor of *The Iaido Newsletter*, a "little publication that could" which has gone from a local club newsletter to an internationally-distributed monthly paper and finally to an internet journal named The Iaido Journal. He publishes the *Electronic Journals of Martial Arts and Sciences*.

He also published the *Journal of Japanese Sword Arts*. This journal is now out of publication, but if you would like to purchase back issues of the Journal of Japanese Sword Arts on paper (they've got cartoons!), [click the link](#).

Kim is the author of several books and videos as well as almost daily essays concerning the sword and is also the "owner" of the Iaido-I mailing list. You can purchase several of the books and videos at the [sdksupplies website](#).

Kim teaches: ZNKR Iaido, Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iaido, Hosoda Ryu Iai, Keshi Ryu Iai, Kage Ryu, Niten Ichiryu, ZNKR Jodo, Shindo Muso Ryu Jodo, Uchida Ryu Tanjo, Shinto Ryu, and occasionally Aikido as well as the Gryphon Claws self defence course. You will note that most of these arts are very similar and Kim has been practicing since 1980.

Kim can be reached via email to kataylor@seidokai.ca

About the Editor:

Paul 'Batman' O'Brien, Sandan (3rd Dan) is an instructor of Musō Jikiden Eishin-ryū (無双直伝英信流) under the International Division of the Dai Nippon Butoku Kai, Nidan (2nd Dan) in ZNKR Iaido, and Nidan (2nd Dan) in ZNKR Jodo. O'Brien is a direct Iaido student of Peter West, 7th Dan Kyoshi, studying the Harasuke-ha line of MJER under the direction of Oshita Masakazu Sensei, 8th Dan Kyoshi. Within Jodo O'Brien is a direct student of Elena West, 5th Dan Jodo, studying under the direction of Ueda Kayako Sensei, 8th Dan. He began his study of Niten Ichi Ryū in 2011 and received direct instruction from Kajiya Soke, (12th headmaster of Hyoho Niten Ichi Ryū) in 2014.

O'Brien is a two time Medalist in Iaido, has represented Ireland at the European Iaido Championships and received the Fighting Spirit Award from Oshita Masakazu Sensei at the Masamune Taikai in 2015.

O'Brien is an author and columnist for Irish Fighter Magazine and has been writing on the martial arts and other topics for over 10 years.

He has published a number of works on martial arts, koryu bujutsu and traditional medicine including:

- Tanren: The Method of Samurai Strength
- Knife Combat & Defence
- Samurai Nutrition Vols 1&2
- Living the Warrior's Way, The Secrets of Samurai Philosophy Vols 1&2.

These are available on his website; way-of-the-samurai.com.

To train with O'Brien he can be contacted through <http://kenjutsu.ie>

Additional Works by Taylor Sensei

For those who wish to purchase other manuals, you can find them at <http://sdksupplies.com/> where they include:

Niten Ichi Ryu: The Sword Of Musashi Miyamoto

8x11" 100 pgs. Kim Taylor.
\$36 (includes shipping in North America)

This book contains all the kata from the three levels of the Niten Ichi-ryu, long vs long sword, short vs long sword and "long and short" vs long sword. There are quick descriptions, detailed descriptions and over 200 illustrations. The book is cerlox bound for easy opening and use. Also included is a detailed history of Musashi, genealogy tables, and an interview with Sei Do Kai instructor Matsuo Haruna.

The Little Book Of Jodo (I)

8x11" 140 pgs. Eric Tribe and Kim Taylor
\$48 (includes shipping in North America)

The Little Book of Jodo covers the ZNKR seitei jo. With over 500 black and white photos it covers the kihon tandoku (solo exercise), kihon sotai (partner basics exercise) and the kata (partner applications).

IAIDO MANUALS

These Manuals are cerlox bound for ease of use while training. Kata are presented by a quick key reminder, general instructions on the physical movements, and then advanced notes including hints on movement and explanations of meaning. Each kata has two illustration sets, one showing the purpose of the kata and one detailing the movements from the front, and from the side.

BBI-1 Kim's Big Book Of Iaido (I): The Manual

8X11" 108 pgs. Kim Taylor:
\$36 (includes shipping in North America)

Pronunciation guide, History of Japanese Sword, Sword schools and Kendo, Iai ranking requirements, List of waza names, Care and use of equipment, Etiquette, Sword basics, stances, suburi, Glossary of terms.

This book is not restricted to Iaido practice but forms a good general introduction to Japanese sword training.

BBI-2 Kim's Big Book Of Iaido (II): Seitei Gata (Zen Ken Ren Iai)

8x11" 100 pgs. Kim Taylor

\$36 (includes shipping in North America)

All Japan Kendo Federation (ZNKR) Iaido forms (Seitei Gata Iai): History of Seitei Gata Iai, Forms 1-10, Quick Key, General Instructions and Advanced Notes. Lavishly illustrated. One of the easiest books to learn from.

BBI-3 Kim's Big Book Of Iaido (III): Omori Ryu

8x11" 94 pgs. Kim Taylor

\$36 (includes shipping in North America)

Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Seiza no bu (Omori Ryu): History of Omori Ryu, Forms 1-11, Quick Key, General Instructions and Advanced Notes. Notes on All Japan Iaido Federation practice are also included. Illustrated.

BBI-4 Kim's Big Book Of Iaido (IV): Eishin Ryu

8x11" 127 pgs. Kim Taylor

\$36 (includes shipping in North America)

Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Tate Hiza no bu. (Eishin Ryu): Detailed genealogy and history of Iai and other sword schools, Forms 1-10 and Haya Nuki (quick practice).

BBI-5 Kim's Big Book Of Iaido (V): Oku Iai

8x11" 100 pgs. Kim Taylor

\$36 (includes shipping in North America)

Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Oku Iai. Forms 1-8 Oku Iai Zawaza (Tate Hiza no Bu), Forms 110 Oku Iai Tachi Waza (standing forms) and Oku Iai Itomagoi 1-3 (Seiza no Bu). Six older practice forms not contained in the school curriculum are also included in this volume.

The Riai of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu: The Meaning of the Kata

This is an interpretation from Kim Taylor on the meaning of the Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu Iaido kata, the way they are arranged in the school and what each level of training teaches the student. This ebook is intended for those who are advanced students in the art who wish to begin moving deeper into their study.

\$12 epub format

TIN/JJSA collected issues

Here is the modern history of Japanese sword in the west, collected in one place. The Iaido Newsletter and its successor the Journal of Japanese Sword Arts ran from 1989 to 2001 when the print versions were retired and the Electronic Journals of Martial Arts and Sciences EJMAS.com took over. TIN/JJSA Collected are cerlox bound 8.5 x 11 inch manuals of approximately 100 pages each. (includes shipping in North America)

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Hammerterz Forum collected issues

Hammerterz Forum ran from 1994 to 1999 and remains the premier journal of western sword arts. While most of the world was getting their information from Hollywood, editor Christoph Amberger was publishing articles and information that would eventually spark and anchor a massive research boom in European swordsmanship. Amberger not only researched the subject, he is one of the very few people I'm aware of who has actually participated in duels with "*sharps*". As a member of two of the most respected duelling fraternities in Germany he fought seven *Mensuren* with the bell-guard and basket-hilt *Schläger* between 1985 and 1987.

Chris has given SDKsupplies permission to collect and offer Hammerterz Forum to those who were not fortunate enough to obtain the journal as it was published. This is "*must have*" information for any serious student of the sword and SDKsupplies is extremely pleased to be able to provide it once again. Some reprinted articles from HF can be seen at The Journal of Western Martial Arts.

Hammerterz Forum Collected is 8x10 inches, and cerlox bound. It is 364 pages covering the Summer of 1994 to the Fall of 1999, the complete print run.
\$95 (includes shipping in North America)

OTHER BOOKS

A Student's Guide to Self-Defence: A Discussion of Practical Self Protection

8.5 x 11" 150 pages by Kim Taylor
Cerlox bound to lay flat
\$36 includes shipping in North America

This book is the manual for the University of Guelph "Gryphon Claws" women's self defence course taught since 1987 by Kim Taylor. The book was written in 1992 and contains material relevant to courses dealing with self defence and sexual assault of University age adults. This book contains the material from both free ebooks below and more.

Resisting Sexual Assault: A manual of resistance strategies for escaping a sexual assault

8.5 x 11" 130 pages by Kim Taylor

Cerlox bound to lay flat

\$36 includes shipping in North America

This book contains the academic research upon which the U.G "Gryphon Claws" women's self defence course was based. The book was written in 1992 but the research was monitored for another 15 years and no changes were noted which led us to change our conclusions for the course.

Songs Of The Sword

5x8" 100 pgs. by Kim Taylor

\$17 (includes shipping in North America)

Philosophy of sword practice in sayings and poetry. Readers must assemble the book before reading it. Assembly instructions are included.

Free E-Books From SDKsupplies.com

These books are in epub format. You will need an e-reader such as Calibre on your computer/tablet, or a dedicated reader such as Kobo. Firefox also has an add-on reader. If all else fails, open the file with a zip program and read the html files.

Much as I'd love to offer these ebooks for sale, they would likely not be big sellers.

I spent several years researching each book, and I believe they have a contribution to make so they are here for your use. If you figure they are worth something to you, recruit a new student to your club, try a class yourself, organize a self defence session or buy something from this catalogue.

There's always a way to pay it back.

The Psychological Effects of Martial Arts Training

This e-book by Kim Taylor, written in 1996, is being offered to customers of SDKsupplies.com free of charge. It is a literature review of the research into, you guessed it, the psychological effects of martial arts training. For anyone who would like to say that their martial art or self defence course does some good, download it, read it. E-pub format.

Little Pearls of Wisdom: On teaching a self defence course

Kim has taught the women's self defense course "Gryphon Claws" at the University of Guelph since 1987. This is a two-part e-book in epub format (zipped). The first part contains advice relevant to instructors of any self defense course. The second part contains common sense advice which can be given as a handout to your class. Feel free to share this book with other self defense instructors. If you like the writing style consider purchasing one of the manuals above. This is an excerpt from the hard copy of "A Student's Guide to Self-Defence: A Discussion of Practical Self Protection" above. E-pub format

A Student's Guide to Self-Defence: A Discussion of Practical Self Protection

This book is the manual for the University of Guelph "Gryphon Claws" women's self defence course taught since 1987 by Kim Taylor. The book was written in 1992 and contains material relevant to courses dealing with self defence and sexual assault of University age adults. This is an excerpt from the hard copy of "A Student's Guide to Self-Defence: A Discussion of Practical Self Protection" above. E-pub format

This free ebook was produced because I thought the hard copy self defence book had just not sold since 1994, turns out it wasn't listed on the website! So... if you want to buy the much more handy hard copy book, for instance, if you wish to teach the course, it's above. I'm also available for seminars.

Resisting Sexual Assault: A manual of resistance strategies for escaping a sexual assault

"Resisting Sexual Assault" is a manual of sexual assault prevention based on published literature. It defines the problem, gives an analysis of resistance, strategies and the aftermath of assault. Written by Kim Taylor, published by SDKsupplies.com and offered free to you here. Hardcover version is available for sale above.

Free Art E-Books From SDKsupplies.com

Patterns of Thought

This book of photography and poetry from Kim Taylor, has nothing at all to do with the martial arts or self defense. It contains some of Kim's fine art nude photography (nothing graphic) so don't download it if you're looking for yet another way to smack someone with a stick. The book is here because I told some folks it would be here. By the way, it's a big book, byte-wise because of the photos so be patient with your kobo as it loads. E-pub format