

BJA IAIDO SUMMER SEMINAR CAMBRIDGE AUGUST 2024

The official delegation sent by the All Japan Kendo Federation in Japan consisted of Yamazaki Sensei, 8th Dan Hanshi (member of the research committee), and Ishida Sensei, 8th Dan Hanshi. During the two-day seminar, these teachers conveyed the latest interpretations from the central workshop of the AJKF in June 2024. Chris Mansfield 7th Dan Kyoshi and John Burn 6th Dan Renshi compiled this information.

The following notes are a record of such items.

Opening Reihou - stand in the correct Keitou Shisei i.e. sword held with the base of the left thumb touching the left hip, with the sword at 45 degrees. The right hand is placed on the right side and lightly pressed against the right leg. As the sword is transferred to the right side, close the heels of both feet. When the sword is transferred back to the left side, the hands should meet in the middle of your center. As you sit in Seiza, perform the Hakama Sabaki (parting the Hakama) describing the Kanji letter 8 (八) starting with the left side first. When placing the sword in front of you, ensure the center of the sword is in line with your center. Start the bow to the sword with the body followed by the hands. The finishing Shomen Rei is the same in reverse. Tie your Sageo per the Koryu style of Iaido you practice.

1. Mae - the Nukitsuke of the All Japan Kendo Federation Iaido should be done so that as you rise the sword is extended through your centerline directly towards your opponent. As Sayabanare is done, move the sword to cut across the eyes of the opponent, finishing at their left temple. The sword must finish at 45 degrees, and the upper body open to a corresponding angle. The legs are not completely 90 degrees. This means the upper and lower leg angle not their relationship to the floor. Since the rear toes are raised under the heel, the left hip is slightly forward of the knee, facilitating the movement. Do not let the sword drop below a horizontal position in the Furi Kaburi. The right-hand movement during Chiburi should pass through the right upper temple and be performed in one action. Do not allow the right elbow to point forward. continued - To allow a natural Noto movement the upper body is slightly turned to the left when the sword is brought to meet the Koiguchi. When the sword is half-sheathed the upper body should be square to the front and the remaining half of the sword sheathed as you kneel to the floor on the left knee.

2. Ushiro - The same points as found in Mae. Keep your head neutral, but turn using the body. Don't overdraw causing an imbalance during Nukitsuke. The left foot should be used in the manner of Fumi Komi. The timing of the AJKF Chiburi action should now be done in a one-timing movement.

3. Ukenagashi - when preparing set your body angle to 30 degrees. The left foot must also be set to 30 degrees. The opponent cuts straight and their sword is moved off the centerline. The Furi Kaburi must be made as the left shoulder moves back. Before doing Sagate Noto, you should place the sword in contact with the right leg, just above the knee. Your Metsuke must be kept until the cut is finished and only lowered when the enemy falls to the ground. Your right hand must stay in the same position to allow the sword to cut from 1 pm to 7 pm. NB. Your sword makes contact with the opponent's sword after Sayabanare has been completed. NB. The left Shinogi of the sword is used to deflect the opponent's sword. Your navel should face 30 degrees after turning, but your feet should point to about 10 to 15 degrees. NB. Do not overturn when taking this action.

4. Tsuka Ate - new change - look immediately to the rear as the sword is drawn, turning the cutting edge outwards. Place it at the height of your solar plexus. To facilitate this do not move the body into full Hanmi position. NB. Previously the back of the Monouchi was placed on the left chest. This should now be done by placing the middle of the sword on the left side of the torso. This allows the Kissaki to be further past the left arm. Keep a firm square grip with the right hand. Thrust the sword at the same height. After Chiburi and Noto, step back with the right foot allowing your body not to be fully square to the front. Take care not to show the Koryu version of this. NB. The correct grip is important to allow the sword to move in a straight and horizontal line. 5. Kesagiri - new change - you should now take hold of the Koiguchi before you step back. This point is now consistent with Kata 9. It was again emphasized that the initial drawing action must stay with the width of your body. The angle of the cut should be from 7 pm to 1 am.

6. Morote Zuki - you should draw the sword on the left foot and cut the target on the right foot. The angle of the cut should now enter from the top right corner of the opponent's head (your left top corner). There must be a real threat from your centerline. If it says Chudan no Kamae, then it means the height of the Kissaki must be the same as that of your solar plexus. It is advised not to move the left foot when making the first cut. Cutting now means moving the sword directly through Furi Kaburi, by raising the Tsuka. It is also not required to perform the Hikitsuke action before making Kirioroshi. All cuts from Kata 4 onwards, should be done with the shape of Ukenagashi, except Kata 11.

7. Sanpogiri - draw about one-fifth of the sword when attacking the first opponent. When you turn to face the opponent to your right, move the body slightly ahead of the turn, to facilitate a full one-handed cut. The angle of the upper body in this position correlates to one not being able to completely see your Nafuda from the front. Turning to cut the second opponent must be done in one quick and complete action. The Chiburi action from Jodan must be done in one action as you step back. This means you should leave the sword above the head as you square your hips and then as the left foot passes the right complete the action using Ki-Ken-Tai-Ichi.

8. Ganmen Ate - after the first strike, look, draw, and turn in one action the same way as Kata 4. The thrust is made with the right hand placed at the right front hip, with the thumb touching the hip. In this position, both Saya and the sword should be horizontal. Thrust straight.

Do not over-pull the Saya when thrusting the sword. NB. Look at the same time as you draw. This is the same as Kata 4. The rear opponent is slightly off the centerline to their right.

9. Soete Tsuki - everything is unchanged up to the point of the thrust. NB. There is no real need to move the back foot when taking the thrusting position, as the opponent is already close. The sword must be thrust straight into the opponent's central abdomen. When extracting the sword, the height of the right hand must be the height of your solar plexus. Make this action in one movement. Do not change the position of the left hand. Execute the Chiburi AFTER first gripping the Koiguchi with the left hand. When you step back to complete the movement ensure both left and right hands finish at the same height.

10. Shihogiri - there is no movement with the back foot on the initial striking action. Similarly, there is little movement with the back foot on the first cut. The remaining two cuts use natural Okuri Ashi. There is no Fumi Kae placement of the left foot when assuming Tsuki Kamae. The sword must move directly from the solar plexus position to thrust the opponent behind you. This is the same as Kata 4. Before you execute the last cut, turn your body 180 degrees, then lower your sword. Use the Fumi Kai to place the left foot as you pass through Waki Gamae not stopping.

11. Sougiri - do not move the left foot on the first cut. All other cuts employ Okuri Ashi style movements. There should be no delay between the right foot stopping and execution of the first cut from Furi Kaburi. Prepare the sword by allowing the left side of your body to open slightly to the left. Execute the horizontal cut from 8 pm until 2 pm allowing the sword to naturally move outside these points i.e. 9 pm to 3 pm. Do not pause to execute the last cut. NB. To make an efficient horizontal cut, both hands should align with the grip on the handle. The tips of the fingers should be in contact with the handle. Keep both hands flexible and ready to be used. NB. Overall the cuts should be performed with a closer sense of timing between the right foot and the Monouchi. However, the right foot must stop before the Monouchi makes contact.

12. Nuki Uchi - there is no forward movement of the left foot when stepping forward. NB. In this Kata, it is enough to avoid the enemy's Monouchi cut. Step back with "sufficient distance" does not mean taking a large step.

General comments: These points further consolidate the overall efficiency of applying ZNKR Iai. This is an attempt to prove the techniques work. A general smartening up of sharper timing also contributes to this image. It should be remembered that the distance between you and your opponent in Zen Ken Ren