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A Comment on Modern *Kendō* (3) (Centering Round Method of Guidance)

By *Kunikichi Kaneko**

Synopsis

Concerning the modern *Kendō* I am of the opinion that, in view of the use of tools heterogeneous to the handling of the sword as well as of the fact of historical development having been achieved due to the restriction by external conditions, a series of technical theory peculiar to the *Kendō* should be thought out. Furthermore, with regard to the restriction by external conditions, it is natural for the expression in words of the regulations to be attended with difficulties. At any rate, the regulations for *Kendō* should be devised on the basis of actuality apart from the ideological technique of handling the sword. This signifies that the rule for *Kendō* must be established free from the illusion that regards the technique of handling "Shinai" (bamboo sword) as being imitative of the technique of handling the real sword and also as a result of the rationalization of the latter. It is to be noted that the modern *Kendō* does not exist on the extension of the technique of handling the sword.

On the basis of such understanding, I will consider the technical theory.

A. On Basic Motion

(a) The motion in *Kendō*, not being a cutting motion, consists of a continuation of quick thrusting-in motion.

(b) Performance of well-balanced movement is necessary.

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The foregoing represents what is required to be the basic motion. The "ashi-sabaki" (foot-management) now being practised is convertible into mobile thrusting-in motion. It is necessary that foot-management should be recognized as being "concerted".

1. *On Thrusting-in Motion*

Viewed from the standpoint of the connection with basic motion, thrusting-in motion should not be a continuation of tension. It is not to be represented by "motion-motion-motion" but is to take the form of "motion-rest-motion-rest". What is necessary for performing a pliable and elastic motion in the form of motion alternating with rest is how to use the left hand and left foot. It should not be forgotten that negligence of the foregoing would render the thrusting-in motion meaningless.

2. *Thrusting-in Distance*

In the *Kendō* circles, this distance is called "maai". It is not of a fixed length; nor is it unchangeable. Theoretically speaking, to retain one's space means non-performance of thrusting-in motion. On the other hand, one should be aware that thrusting-in motion cannot be effected unless the space is broken.

What should be taken note of in carrying out the foregoing training is that the items of training should be arranged in proper order and that giving partiality to any particular items should be avoided.

B. *On Applied Motion*

On the Method of Attacking:

With reference to the opportunity for thrusting-in, this has hitherto been illustrated by means of various expressions such as "where the fencer is at the end of his resources", "where he should retreat" and various others. For all that, setting aside the theory, there is, as far as the actuality is concerned, no other way but to strive to grasp or create the opportunity for performing thrusting-in motion, within the involuntariness.

On Kendō Match:

The *Kendō* match represents a scene for giving full play to the comprehensive power covering the acquired technique and the mentality. It is a matter of course that the *Kendō-ka* is required to acquire a technique in which a proper degree of the sense of tension is well balanced with pliable and nimble thrusting-in motion.

On Shouting:

Shouting naturally attends on the motion in order to quicken and invigorate it. Since shouting is connected with the expression of will, repletion of energy, tension of the mind, concentration of strength, and prevention of fatigue, shouting should be made so as to be adapted to the motion.

On Concrete Method of Guidance:

1st Period: Acquisition of Basic Technique by Means of Voluntary Thrusting-in.

- (1) Correct posture.
- (2) Quick and sure thrusting-in.
- (3) Quick motion.

2nd Period: Application of Technique Acquired during 1st Period and Grasp of Opportunity for Thrusting-in.

- (1) Making opportunities for thrusting-in.
- (2) Technical peculiarity. Distance.
- (3) Practice in positive thrusting-in.

3rd Period: Improvement of Technical Acquisitions during 1st and 2nd Period and Comprehension of the Main Point of *Kendō* Match.

Carrying out the main point of the match in all conceivable situations. Making practical application of the rules. Making a good use of energy, and other matters.