

## *Defensive Keiko?*

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GIVEN THAT **shiai** or **shiai geiko** tends to cause people to forgo standard practice in lieu of what they perceive to be faster, and in particular more “safe”, it is important to remind oneself what specifically the methodology of **kendo** combat is.

**Kendo** is based on offense through the **mitsu no sen, sutemi**, and fostering the notion of *mutō no kokoro* (the heart of no sword). Even though defensive<sup>1</sup> **waza** (**oji waza**) are present in **kendo**, blocking, dodging, or skewing one’s posture for defense sake alone, i.e., to not get hit, is simply not present.

<sup>1</sup> It is of particular importance to note that even oji waza opportunities are created through one’s aggression and are in essence no different than shikake waza.



These defensive actions accomplish three things: (1) to cover weak points in our own **kendo**, (2) over time to weaken our **kendo** and inhibit the strength and growth of our spirit, and (3) to detract from other important aspects of **kendo**, i.e., the “do” aspects. During **shiai**, **shiai geiko**, and in fact *all* of your **keiko** keep this prominently in your thoughts.

“Strong form produces strong kendo, weak form produces only weaknesses.”

Figure 1: (Right) San-po-mamori: (lit.) *three direction defense*. Men, kote, and migi do are all “blocked” simultaneously. Hidari (gyaku) do is exposed becoming a primary target. However it is the exposed gap in one’s spirit, focus, and zanshin signified by this maneuver which is the greater concern.