

A Study of Datotsu Movement in Kendo

Consideration of Morita's Theory (森田理論), written by Eishi Kidera (木寺, 英史), translated by Ted Imoto, 5/01/14

Forward

What should we be searching to improve kendo population in today's declining trend? One way is to discuss the kendo's Ningen Keisei (人間形成), cultivation of human mind, as the subject,^{1),2)}. However, this is isolated from the reality of kendo, the idea that we want to improve movement techniques. To develop kendo, we should study the movement techniques as the main subject. We need to establish a system that we can easily master the techniques of kendo's athletic movement keeping its cultural value of the Ningen Keisei (人間形成).

It is said difficult to rationalize kendo technique from the standpoint of sport movement techniques. The modern kendo has potential value as a competing game or sport, but the technique is considered as very old, fixed and cultural³⁾. In general, the sport movement techniques are used to win a competition under strict rules and regulations searching for a rational and economic aspect of the sports. By losing or winning in sports competition, it is a charm and fascinating to see that an individual can master such a high skill level by pursuing the rational and economic movement techniques. However, kendo is different in that the fixed traditional techniques take priority over the rational and economic movement techniques. That is said the kendo's technical characteristic indeed, but on the other hand, this fixation might make it difficult to pursue the kendo techniques. Therefore, we must study diversified kendo techniques, leaving the fixed characteristic, and develop leadership methods and teach the rational and economic techniques.

Now, in this study, kendo Datotsu movement is discussed as the main subject. A succession of Kendo techniques is mostly from talking mouth to mouth, one era to another era since the establishment of various kendo styles. And, there is no written concrete script about kendo Datotsu movement. There is kendo instruction book titled "Kendo" by Takano Sasaburō (高野佐三郎) sensei who is representative of modern kendo, but there is no specific and concrete instruction about the Datotsu movement⁴⁾. After the war, the study of kendo Datotsu movement was done by Mochida (持田) sensei⁵⁾ and Mibashi (三橋) sensei⁶⁾ but Morita (森田) sensei announced a new Datotsu theory⁷⁾. This theory is based on an observation of Datotsu movement that relates to the principal of walking whose theory has never thought before. Later this point of view was examined^{8),9)} but the theory was said difficult and not enough. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to discuss the subject of modern kendo's Datotsu movement centered about Morita's Datotsu theory.

1. Outline of Morita's Theory

"Koshi to Tanden de Okonau Kendo (腰と丹田で行う剣道)" by Morita Monjyurou (森田文十郎)¹⁰⁾ was published in 1941. The title means "Kendo executing with hip and lower abdomen." That is composed of three books; namely, Gihō-Hen (技法篇), Shinpō-Hen (心法篇) and Gorinsho Kōsatsu (五輪書考察). Gihō-Hen (技法篇) is considered here. This book describes in detail Morita's theory different from all other published books about kendo. The Gihō-Hen (技法篇) is composed of five chapters, but the summary with my view is only depicted herein.

A. Common Problems of Modern Kendo

First, Morita sensei points out problems of kendo in those days. The problems, then, are not much different from today's problems. He itemized the common problems. All of these problems have to do with the fact that left half body has not utilized in kendo Datotsu movement. Morita sensei tells the cause of the problems. When two hands hold one sword, there are conflict, disorder, ambiguity and confusion to manipulate the sword correctly; therefore, we need to work extra hard to get correct movement¹¹⁾. He expressively states that the reason for these problems lie on restricted hand movements and for this reason, the basic principle of walking is neglected. To apply the principle of walking to kendo Datotsu movement, it is indispensable that you use hip and lower abdomen, two sides of the same coin, as one movement. He claims that you can make any Datotsu movement with the use of hip¹²⁾.

B. Rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動)

"Taikakusen" means "diagonally opposite line" and "Katsudō" means "activity or movement." Rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) is a common rule of movement applicable to all four legged (two feet and two handed included) vertebrate including human being. The principle of walking is based on this rule. Concretely speaking they are:

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- When left arm moves forward, right leg also moves forward.
- When right arm moves forward, left leg also moves forward¹³⁾.

And he (Morita sensei) describes kendo's Rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) as follows:

This movement does not require any efforts since walking is natural. If this rule is ignored, you feel a lot of resistances. It is not easy to walk with two hands holding a sword, but easier with one hand. That is because the Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) is natural with separate hands¹⁴⁾. To apply this Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) effectively for kendo Datotsu movement, he says, it is necessary to use hip rotation accompanied by shoulder rotation.

C. Sword's Complete Process (Kanzen Sōsa, 完全操作)

He defines a complete process (Kanzen Sōsa, 完全操作)¹⁵⁾ of kendo Datotsu (剣道打突) as operations of the following three things executed simultaneously: **1)** rotation of the hip, **2)** diagonal movements and **3)** body advance movement. The hip rotation is accompanied inevitably by the strength of lower abdomen; therefore, he named this method of kendo Datotsu movement as "Koshi to Tanden de Okonau Kendo (腰と丹田で行う剣道)." And he explains in detail conditions of the Datotsu movement when Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) is applied as follows:

- While moving forward with right foot from Kamae Chudan with Okuri Ashi, you can strike in one count rhythm time if you make a suitable Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動).
- Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) is initiated from left hip. It flows from left hip to lower abdomen and left hand almost simultaneously. The left-hand starts moving forward with left hip. Since the diagonally opposite of the left hip is right arm, the right arm also carried forward with the left hip same time. Thus, initiating forward movement from left hip carries the wave to the abdomen, left hand and right arm almost the same time.
- Right hip follows left hip with the left hand almost instantly or slightly delayed depending on different waza for the movement. Depending on individual skill level, personal character and mentality, the form will be different.
- When the right foot hits floor, left hand changes to pull hand, right hand push-hand and finish Datotsu movement in one count rhythm timing with immediate return of left foot which may be positioned behind, same level or in front of right foot depending on the situations such as different waza, skill level, personal character, and mentality.
- It is important that the Datotsu movement is while you are breathing air out but not completely out because the Datotsu moment demands strength of abdomen. Calling the name of Datotubu with good Ki-Ai at the same time is one way to satisfy this purpose.
- The above Datotsu movement executes instantly. Therefore, it is difficult to catch the true picture to explain the detail analytically with illustration¹⁶⁾.

D. Advantage of Sword's Complete Process (Kanzen Sōsa, 完全操作)

Morita sensei compares modern kendo with his "Koshi to Tanden de Okonau Kendo (腰と丹田で行う剣道)" which means "Kendo executed from hip and abdomen," and he considers this method as Sword's Complete Process. There are following advantages for this method:

- Because the movement is based on natural walking principle, there is no difficulty, no strain, and therefore easy to continue kendo as you age. Since the Datotsu starts from the center of body at hip and abdomen, it seems slow, but the action is unexpectedly satisfied.
- When you strike from the hip using this technique, there is practically no difference in setting up for Men, Kote or Dō strike; therefore, an opponent will have difficulty catching a chance of Debana Waza.
- This technique enables to strike in one count rhythm time because it does not use unnecessary up and down motion of Shinai to strike.
- Since left hip, left hand and left leg are starting point; there is no delay on left half body and, therefore, the important left hand and left foot it works well in this method.
- Movement of left hip accompanied by the right hand (diagonally opposite relation) demands action of left hand and left foot and establish a complete process.
- Footstep becomes narrow in the Complete Process (Kanzen Sōsa, 完全操作) because there is no need to increase the width of step after you learn to strike with the hip.

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- Because the Complete Process (Kanzen Sōsa, 完全操作) initiates the technique from the center of the body, that makes it possible to change on your way waza or make it easier to change immediately.

Last, Morita sensei says the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) is frequently seen in any other games and contests such as skating, gymnastics, boxing, Sumō, three-step jump, hurdle, etc.

2. Subjects relating to Datotsu Movement

Morita's Theory has offered us many tasks, problems to solve. They are classified into the two and described as follows:

A. Walking Principle (Rule of Taikakusen Katsudō) and Datotsu Movement

There will be no objection to agreeing that the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō is our basic movement which centers about the vertebrae, move diagonally opposite hand and leg in the same direction and is accompanied by hip and shoulder rotation.

Morita sensei thinks we should adopt this rule of Taikakusen Katsudō to kendo Datotsu movement, but it is questionable to do that so easily.

First of all, let's discuss currently adapted kendo Datotsu movement. It is practiced to start from Kamaye Chudan (中段), Migi Shizentai (右自然体), right foot in front of the left foot and right hand at Tsuba Moto (鐔元) and left hand at Tsuka Gashira (柄頭) and face opponent squarely. From this posture move right foot and then left foot using Okuri Ashi (送り足) and at the same time bring Shinai up and then down. This movement is clearly not by walking principle.

Well then, should the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō be adapted for kendo Datotsu movement as he says? Regarding this point, careful consideration is necessary, because it can be considered that the kendo Datotsu movement may come from a completely different rule. First, it is "NANBA (ナンバ)"¹⁸⁾. The "NANBA" does not use current walking principle but walk by moving together with same side foot and hand. It is said that Japanese body was using NANBA until the era of Edo period (the year 1603-1867). If the kendo Datotsu movement is inherited based on NANBA, then, it is a question of right or wrong in asking to adapt the walking principle.

Second, it is the way of handling Japanese sword. One other reason, though this is a hypothesis, that the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō was not adopted is that "pull to cut (引き斬り)" is mostly the method of handling Japanese sword. It was necessary to keep correct Hasuji (刀筋) after striking (pull to cut) with a sword. That is done easily with a pull to cut (引き斬り) by simply moving left foot back followed by right foot. Another word it was necessary to stand in Migishizentai (右自然体) or Hanmi (半身) stance to enable correct Hasuji (刀筋). That is also considered the reason that the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) was not adopted.

B. About Okuri-Ashi (送り足) Accompanied by Datotsu Movement

Morita's principle of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) is clearly not used in currently practiced kendo Datotsu movement. As mentioned earlier this is because the movement was inherited from the traditional Japanese culture of practicing forms and handling a sword. What should be discussed here is the direction of the kendo Datotsu movement change in the future. How should the traditional Datotsu movement be inherited from now on? Although the traditional Datotsu movement has an important cultural characteristic, a rational Datotsu movement should be studied. In other words, the diversified study of Datotsu movement based on the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) should be done.

However, there is a point of view, Morita Sensei did not consider, that relation between kendo Datotsu movement and walking principle is a problem. That is the footwork. Knowing the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動), he presupposes to use Okuri-Ashi (送り足) to move forward right and then left foot when you strike. However, Ayumi-Ashi (歩み足) is necessary to demonstrate this rule fully. Contrary, If enough hip and shoulder rotations are used, then, the footwork becomes Ayumi-Ashi and not Okuri-Ashi, and left foot is stepped in front of right foot naturally after Datotsu

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movement. At present, the reason that the Datotsu movement uses Okuri-Ashi is, as mentioned earlier, considered to be the fact that Japanese sword is handled with Okuri-Ashi. The Okuri-Ashi must be said to be an unreasonable form if modern kendo is pushed to cut and presuppose to move forward after striking since the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) universal and basic in any sports.

Conclusion

Finally, we would like to set forth a direction of the study of kendo Datotsu movement. First of all, we must realize that trying to adapt the rule of Taikakusen Katsudō (対角線活動) to kendo Datotsu movement is indeed to lay out the new technical foundation.

In the history of pursuing kendo technique, there seems no concept of merging the walking principle with Datotsu movement. That is because of the way of handling Japanese sword as mentioned earlier. After all that we need is to realize that the techniques of handling Japanese sword and Shinai are different. Modern kendo technique is based on Shinai Uchi kendo¹⁹⁾. Therefore, this study, besides that of traditional and existing techniques, concludes that changes by kendo lovers are indispensable for new and novel ideas. We wish to develop Datotsu movement technique by discussing Morita's theory more in detail.

Reference

- 1) 拙稿「剣道人間形成論考（１）一現代剣道における人間形成的課題一」 1998（平10）、久留米工業高等専門学校紀要第14巻第1号
- 2) 拙稿「剣道人間形成論考（２）一技術的要素と「道徳的精神性および行動規範」について」、1999（平11）、久留米工業高等専門学校紀要第14巻第2号
- 3) 剣道の技術を考察すれば、その結果性を主目的とする技術（結果技術）と経過性を主目的とする技術（経過技術）に大別できる。剣道技術の経過性は日本刀の操法から受け継いだものと「型」稽古から継承されたものがあると考えられる。筆者は現代剣道の技術をその結果性と経過性に着目し、「芸術的結果技術論」として提唱している。拙稿「現代剣道技術論序説一しない打ち剣道の技術的特性について一」、1994（平6）、久留米工業高等専門学校紀要、第9巻第2号（「剣道日本」スキージャーナル社、1997、7月号掲載）。
- 4) 正面撃の打突動作について次の様な記述がある。「爾腎の間より敵の頭部の見ゆる程振り冠り、右足より踏み出し其反動にて左是は之に伴ひて進み敵の正面を眞向に撃ち込む、此の場合爾腎を伸ばすを度合とす。」高野佐三郎、「剣道」、1915（大く）、良書普及会。
- 5) 持田盛二、中野八十二、坪井三郎、「図説剣道事典」、1970（昭45）、講談社、p80～81。
- 6) 三橋秀三、「剣道」、1972（昭45）、大修館書店、p24～245。
- 7) 森田文十郎、「腰と丹田で行う剣道」、1966（昭41）、剣道ゆうき会。
- 8) 平川信夫、坪井三郎、「剣道の打撃に於ける体の回転について」、1972（昭47）武道学研究、5（1）。
- 9) 山神眞一、百鬼史訓、「剣道における正面打撃時の肩と腰のねじれに関する研究」、1990（平2）、武道学研究、22（3）。
- 10) 森田文十郎は大正5年東京高等師範学校卒、その後千葉県、東京府の師範学校・高等学校に奉職、後東京高等師範学校教授となる。戦後は防衛大学剣道部・武道学園剣道部師範を歴任する。
- 11) 前掲書、「腰と丹田で行う剣道」、p16～17。
- 12) 同前、p18。
- 13) 同前、p23。
- 14) 同前、p24。
- 15) 同前、p26。
- 16) 同前、p35～36。
- 17) 同前、p70～71。
- 18) 「ナンバ」とは「ナンバン（南蛮）」が省略された言葉。広辞苑によれば「歌舞伎や舞踊の演技で、右足が出る時右手を出すような、普通とは逆の手足の動作をいう」とある。剣道の技術と「ナンバ」についての研究はなされていない。
- 19) 筆者は現代剣道の技術を「結果技術」と「経過技術」が共存する特性を有するとして「芸術的結果技術論」を提唱している。「芸術的結果技術論」では現在の剣道の技術の源は日本刀発現にあるとするのではなく、しない打ち剣道の発現とする。