

Tachi Uchi no Kurai

When practicing iaido it is often difficult to learn various principles specific to dealing with an opponent. For this, Muso Jikiden Eishin ryu has partner practice. In this manual we will be working on the first set of ten kata called Tachi Uchi no Kurai.

These kata teach many things, amongst them are Maai or distance, spacing, and Ma, timing or tempo. The kata also teach the student how to deal with an unexpected variation in the situation. When practicing solo iai, this happens seldom, a cat running across the dojo in front of you, an earthquake, but with a partner it sometimes seems to be all variation.

As for the origin of these kata (and the other partner sets) it is rather shouuded. There is some suggestion that Oe Masamichi took them into the curriculum from the Shimomura ha side of things as he codified the Tanimura ha into MJER. They may originally have been called Hasegawa Koden Tachi Uchi no Kurai or the Shimomura-ha Inyo Koden Tachi Uchi no Kurai.

Oe sensei also created a set of seven kata from these which is today often called tachi uchi no kata. The techniques from that set are contained here as standard versions or are mentioned as variations so I will not be commenting much further on that set. The table below shows the two kata sets, note the change in order and names for the shortened set.

	太刀打之位 Tachi Uchi no Kurai		太刀打之位 Tachi Uchi no Kurai (太刀打之形 tachi uchi no kata) the abbreviated set
1	出合 Deai	1	出合 Deai (same)
2	附込 Tsukekomi	2	拳取 Kobushitori (same as tsuke komi)
3	請流 Ukenagashi	4	独妙劍 Dokumyōken (as per ukenagashi, both strike to match a third time and come to chuden, then uchidachi thrusts and shidachi does uke nagashi)
		6	請流 Ukenagashi (as per ukenagashi from oku iai tachiwaza, see later)
4	請込 Ukekomi	3	絶妙劍 Zetsumyōken (as per ukekomi version one, usually with shidachi striking sideways or down onto the shoulder with the hands below the shoulder)
5	月影 Tsukikage	5	鑢留 Tsubadome (as per tsukikage, uchidachi's strike is usually to the shoulder)

6	水月刀 Suigetsutō		
7	絶妙劍 Zetsumyōken		
8	独妙劍 Dokumyōken		
9	心明劍 Shinmyōken		
10	打込 Uchikomi	7	真方 Mappō (walk together, uchidachi in hasso, shidachi in chuden, shidachi cuts downward, uchidachi defends as per deai)

Closed vs Open practice

Iaido practiced solo can be defined as a "closed" sport, one where the goal is to reach an external model of perfection, to seek an ideal kata. There is only the student and the equipment (the sword) to deal with in an ideal environment (the dojo floor). Other examples of a closed sport would be gymnastics, diving or figure skating.

The partner practice of iaido can, in contrast, be called an "open" sport. This is one which involves another person to perform with or compete against. In this sense apt comparisons would be tennis, pairs diving or pairs figure skating. Having a partner forces us to open up and pay attention to the world outside our own mind and body.

How to perform the kata

With respect to iaido partner practice, we are attempting to develop a hara to hara communication. We must learn to "read" our partner's intention rather than to simply go through our dance steps while he goes through his. We must learn how to match his timing exactly, so that we can break it when we need to. We must learn how to pay attention, which sounds simple but is not.

When performing Tachi Uchi no Kurai we must strive to match our solo iai practice, so anything you have learned in the solo sets will be applicable to the partner sets. If we are overly mechanical in our solo iai, our partner iai will reflect this. An over-concentration on the form, counting of steps, exact measuring of angles, copying the motions of the instructor without any idea of the riai, (the principles and meaning behind those movements), will result in partner practice that looks like a couple of mechanical dolls. We try to fix that.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai is a set of ten kata which deal with the fundamental motions, the kihon of partner practice. There are several more sets of practice which were said to have been part of the school at one point, but few groups go beyond this one. In the Sei Do Kai we practice several further sets of practice. These kata will be outlined in other manuals. The Tachi Uchi no Kurai all begin from a standing position and are suitable for practice between the seiza no bu (Omori Ryu) and the tate hiza no bu (Eishin Ryu).

It should be stated that these kata, like those of the other manuals of Muso Jikiden Eishin Ryu in the "Big Book of Iaido" series, are described as they are taught in the Sei Do Kai. Anyone reading this book is free to perform them in the manner described, or to modify the kata to fit what they have been taught in their own line of practice. In other words, please use this book as a guide or a simple reminder as you see fit. I will be pleased if it is of some use to you at all.

Variations

You will find that there are several variations shown in this manual. I will always identify the most commonly practiced, or "standard" version of the kata, but I was taught three different sets of Tachi Uchi no Kurai and I find that using the combination of variants discussed here allows me to demonstrate the underlying principles more clearly. There are in fact, variations beyond what I outline here as versions and I will mention them in passing.

In general, the Tachi Uchi no Kurai set starts off with the bokuto (or saya bokuto) in the belt, working at a distance inside the usual maai. It then moves to kata which are performed at kenjutsu distance with the associated considerations of this maai. In other words we start with the swords already out and approach each other that way.

The Partners

Uchidachi is the "striking sword". This partner leads all through the kata, setting the distance, the timing and the intensity. This is the attacking sword and so it is the "teaching side". Uchidachi leads so that Shidachi can learn. Uchidachi loses so that Shidachi can learn to win.

Shidachi is the "killing sword", the finishing sword, the winner of the kata and the learner in the set. Shidachi follows Uchidachi as best he can, and never tries to lead. Shidachi tries to match the timing of uchidachi, to be in sync with him as he teaches.

Starting distance

There are 9 paces between the partners, three paces to get them to the correct distance and a fourth to strike each other with exact distance. The partners take five steps back to the starting position when they are done. As you might imagine, the regulation of pace size is very important in the partner practice.

Iai Goshi

In a simple manner this is called "iai hips" and means to bend the knees a bit and move so that you aren't bouncing up and down. More specifically, stand with the outside of your feet directly under the outside edge of your hips. Now drop down, bending your knees inward toward each other. When your knees touch each other you will notice that your weight is on the inside of your feet, make sure it is forward so that the base of your big toe is firmly rooted to the floor. Your little toes are touching the floor but not heavily weighted. Same with your heels. Keep this feeling of driving the knees inward when you move around the dojo and your stance and pace will be correct. As a default, you should have your weight evenly between your two feet.

Kiai

Breath control is vital in iai, and we use a verbal kiai during the partner practice to teach when to exhale. The specific sounds used are Ei, To and in a couple of places Ya

Ei is used when we strike during the kata. It sounds like eeeeeeeEII (as in Hay or Hey, drop the H and lengthen the first vowel, rise in volume on the second).

To is used for the final strike of the kata. It sounds like TOOOooo (as in Toe, stress the first bit and don't drag it out to ridiculous lengths).

Ya is used to intimidate, it's YAAAAAA (Jah as in German for yes, all the same volume or rising and it can be quite extended). Ya is used when running toward each other in katas 1 and 2, and when in tsuba zariai in katas 5 and 7. There is something quite satisfying about yelling Ya at each others face from four inches apart.

Kamae o Toku

If you have practiced partner kata in other sword schools you are probably aware of kamae o toku, releasing the kamae at the end of a kata after coming to issoku itto no maai (awase) and before backing away from each other. In the Tachi Uchi no Kurai there is no kamae o toku at this point, the partners simply walk back away from each other while maintaining a chudan kamae. For some of the kata you could assume the kamae o toku is the chiburi and noto action while separated by the starting distance.

1. De Ai (coming together)

This can be thought of as Mae from seiza no bu (Omori Ryu). It is a horizontal strike followed by a vertical strike. By horizontal strike, we don't mean the sword is parallel to the floor, but rather the strike travels horizontally, and the sword is angled downward as described below.

There are three versions described, all with the same rough description and all three taught to me at different times.

Version 1.

Quick Key

Uchidachi and shidachi run toward each other and as they get in range uchidachi strikes to the knee from the scabbard. Shidachi blocks from the scabbard. Both partners move to the awase (issoku itto) position, then uchidachi lifts his sword into a horizontal position above his head and shidachi strikes this target. Both partners return to the awase position, then walk backward to the starting position, do yoko chiburi and noto.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 1. De Ai version 1	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Stand 9 paces apart. Drop into iai goshi and grasp the hilt.	Same
Starting with the right leg, take five steps while drawing the sword and strike for shidachi's right knee on the fifth.	Starting with the right leg, take five steps while drawing the sword and block shidachi's strike to your right knee on the fifth *
Move back to issoku itto no maai (awase) *	Move back to issoku itto no maai (awase)
Without moving the feet at all, lift the sword over the head with the hands to the left and the sword horizontal *	Move the tip forward toward uchidachi and raise it to furi kaburi. Cut downward vertically onto uchidachi's sword directly over his head. *
Move back to awase, tips crossing about 10cm. *	Match your blade, tips crossing about 10cm.
If necessary, move to the centre of the practice space. Starting with the left foot, move back five steps to the original position.	Same
Yoko chiburi and noto	Yoko chiburi and noto

* notes with an asterisk are explained further in the details section below each table.

Details:

The first strike is to the knee, shidachi will block this strike to a dead stop, or will bounce it back away from the knee. Uchidachi withdraws at this point, why? Most people assume that this kata is about the block, but if that were so, the cut to the knee would succeed because it's a cut directly from the saya to an unexpected place. Instead, think of this kata is a safe way to practice the draw, and the second strike as per Mae of Omori Ryu.

Drawing and blocking the attack

Draw the sword continuously as you approach each other, timing it so that you are at saya banari (half an inch of sword in the scabbard) on the fourth step. Strike or block as you do the fifth step, timing it so that the sword hits the target just after you plant the right foot.

Blocking the initial attack involves driving the blade from the saya outward and down so that the tip of the sword is about four inches to the right and eight forward of the right foot. The right hand is in the normal grip on the tsuka and the wrist is bent backward so that the cut is received on the omote side of the ha, and then it snaps onto the shinogi. The blade is held almost vertically downward so that if the cut drives the blade back far enough the mune hits the shin. At this point the blade and the shin would form an X. You have encountered this block in Yae Gaki of Omori ryu, or Tora no Issoku or Sune Gakoi.

Shidachi should regulate his paces so that he steps a little short on the fourth step without uchidachi knowing. This means that uchidachi will miss his target even if shidachi does not get his block set in time.

Why does uchidachi back up?

Uchidachi strikes, and is blocked. Shidachi now has the inside position with his blade closer to the centerline, (the attack line) so uchidachi must respond. If uchidachi keeps attacking forward, lifting the blade to the centerline to thrust perhaps, shidachi can come in under the blade. This is for later, for now uchidachi pulls back to awase, the "start-line" the safety (neutral) position if you will.

Issoku Itto

This kata is the very first step and is all about maai, the swords crossed tip to tip by about 10 cm. in chudan kamae. Aim your tip at your partner's left throat to cover your kote (right wrist).

In this first variation of De Ai, uchidachi moves back to the matching distance, the one step cut distance (issoku itto) in order to establish this maai firmly at the beginning of our practice. This is the distance at which either partner can cut the other with a single step. It is very important to understand that this distance is not an "easy step" away, it is the extreme range at which you can attack strongly and correctly so it should not be easy for a beginner to strike uchidachi from here. This is the "range" of the sword, at this distance we are fighting, if you are inattentive you will be cut down. For this reason uchidachi is very careful to establish the range exactly so that shidachi can understand it thoroughly.

Inside this issoku itto distance is kiri ma or chika ma (cutting or blood distance). If you are inside you are "doing" and there can be no waiting or messing around.

Giving a target

Since you are at issoku itto no maai, all uchidachi should need to do is lift the blade into the target position. This should be just ahead and above the forehead, about a fist each. The hands are to the left and the tsuba moto (1/3 of the blade near the tsuba) is directly above the forehead. Hold the blade horizontally and receive the strike on the edge (ha).

Shidachi should take the chance to attack as soon as (but not while) uchidachi lifts his sword to the target position with no delay between target and attack. Although this is "target practice" it should be considered roughly as go no sen, an attack after the movement.

If shidachi can respond immediately to uchidachi lifting his sword into target position, then we can go on to the next step, where uchidachi lifts his blade (maybe to continue the attack) and shidachi waits only for the tip to be above his head (no longer in a position to thrust). This forces uchidachi to move up to the block instead of attacking once more from awase. This timing should be considered sen no sen, attacking into the attack. Note that nothing has changed yet except the timing of the movements of uchidachi and shidachi, the "space" between movements is no longer distinct, shidachi reacting as uchidachi is putting up the target. If shidachi attacks too soon, uchidachi can simply stand still and let him run onto the tip.

Of course uchidachi would not simply lift his blade like this in a contest, but this is teaching. Some practice comes in here so that shidachi is forcing uchidachi to block by movement or intent. This is a rather higher level of practice than our beginning Tachi Uchi no Kurai but if this is accomplished we could call it sen sen no sen, or an attack before the attack.

An immediate response is difficult if shidachi stops at awase and drops back on his heel. Shidachi must strain forward at all times.

Sei chu Do, Do chu Sei.

Calmness in action, action in calm. This is the sei and do of our dojo name Sei Do Kai, when standing still, the mind, the intent should be straining forward in attack. When attacking the mind must be still and calculating, ready to respond.

Furi kaburi (lifting overhead)

After the block your sword is inside that of uchidachi (it is closer to the centerline between the two of you). Threaten uchidachi's face with the kissaki as you move the sword from the block to furi kaburi then step forward and strike the target bokuto so that if it were not there you would hit uchidachi on the forehead with the monouchi. You must make the correct distance with one movement of your feet, you should not shuffle, shorten your stance or otherwise adjust to the distance. Step in and cut.

Finishing the kata

Strictly speaking, when matching swords after the kata, it is uchidachi that should move back to the matching position. Use common sense for this, if uchidachi cannot move back (small dojo for instance), or if it is difficult for him to do so in one smooth motion (as in Tsumi Ai no Kurai where both partners are on their knees) then shidachi can move as well.

After you match swords, move to the centre of the practice space if necessary, this is the place where you first crossed swords. Uchidachi leads this movement and it should be done with correct maai throughout the movement. Don't lose contact with each other.

Version 2 (Standard Version)

When shidachi can reach the target from awase, and can move immediately to the attack as uchidachi raises the blade, it's time to move to the next variation. This is the usual form of the kata, so you should pay extra attention to these instructions.

In a nutshell, the difference between this and the previous version is that there is no movement to the set awase position. Shidachi moves in to cut down as uchidachi moves back to provide the target.

Quick Key

Uchidachi and shidachi run toward each other and as they get in range uchidachi strikes to the knee from the scabbard. Shidachi blocks from the scabbard. Uchidachi lifts his sword to attack but shidachi takes the initiative and drives forward lifting his own sword overhead. Uchidachi then retreats while putting the sword into a horizontal position above his head and shidachi strikes this target. Both partners return to the awase position, then walk backward to the starting position, do yoko chiburi and noto.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 1. De Ai version 2	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Stand 9 paces apart. Drop into iai goshi and grasp the hilt.	Same
Starting with the right leg, take five steps while drawing the sword and strike for shidachi's right knee on the fifth.	Starting with the right leg, take five steps while drawing the sword and block shidachi's strike to your right knee on the fifth.
Lift the blade from the blocked position and raise it as if to strike, but back up to the original issoku itto position and block overhead. *	Immediately drive the tip forward toward uchidachi and raise it to furi kaburi. Cut downward vertically onto uchidachi's men. *
Move back to awase.	Match swords.
Move to center if necessary and then back 5 steps to the original position.	Same
Yoko chiburi and noto	Yoko chiburi and noto

Notes

Seme

The variation is the same up to the block. As uchidachi's blade moves back from the block, either by him moving it or by it bouncing away from the block, shidachi centers the tip of his blade and drives forward up the attack line to force uchidachi back into the blocking position.

Uchidachi must get back to a distance where he would have been should the awase movement have been used in the kata, this will allow shidachi to move forward fully and properly. Shidachi should strike from the correct distance to strike the target regardless of the distance uchidachi moves back.

Uchidachi must have every intent to lift his sword into a chudan position to attack further, but don't actually move in or both partners will be stabbed. As shidachi takes center, move back.

Flipping uchidachi's sword up and over

While this flipping movement can be done to show beginners how the swords are moving in relation to each other, shidachi does not actually force uchidachi's sword to move up and over, but a suriage movement (a brushing aside of the opponent's tip as the sword is raised to attack) can be examined here. Shidachi can tap uchidachi's blade to the right as he raises the blade overhead. This tap will actually help uchidachi move his blade into the blocking position.

Version 3.

In this case shidachi uses speed and the energy from uchidachi's initial attack to respond and counterattack.

Quick Key

Uchidachi and shidachi run toward each other and as they get in range uchidachi strikes to the knee from the scabbard. Shidachi blocks from the scabbard. Without hesitation, shidachi lifts his sword overhead and strikes down on uchidachi's head. Uchidachi responds by moving through to the right and sweeping his blade to the left side of his head to avoid the strike. Both partners return to the awase position, then walk backward to the starting position, do yoko chiburi and noto.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 1. De Ai version 3	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Stand 9 paces apart. Drop into iai goshi and grasp the hilt.	Same
Starting with the right leg, take five steps while drawing the sword and strike for shidachi's right knee on the fifth.	Starting with the right leg, take five steps while drawing the sword and block shidachi's strike to your right knee on the fifth *
	Without waiting for uchidachi to move, immediately move the blade around to your left and overhead. Without pause cut downward vertically onto uchidachi's men. *
You will have no time to pull back, sweep the lowered sword tip past shidachi to the right and then sweep it up to the left side of your head and grip it with both hands, edge toward the front. At the same time drive your right foot diagonally forward to your right to move out from under shidachi's strike. *	
Move back to awase.	Match swords.
Move to center if necessary and then back 5 steps to the	Same

original position.	
Yoko chiburi and noto	Yoko chiburi and noto

Notes.

Blocking

At the block, shidachi may use just enough energy to stop uchidachi's attack to the knee, and allow the rest of the energy to move his own blade back to the left. Shidachi adds speed to this movement of the sword to bring it around the left side and overhead to cut down without pausing. This movement should be done as fast as possible and is go no sen, avoid the attack (block) and then counter-attack.

Avoiding the counterattack

It is dangerous in this case for uchidachi to try to block the vertical cut as in the first two versions of this kata. Since shidachi does not bounce uchidachi's blade away from the blocking position, uchidachi will likely be able to continue the movement of the blade across shidachi's body (tip lowered so as not to be knocked out of alignment by shidachi's leg) while sliding off to the right front and sweeping the blade up to the left shoulder to cover the left side of the head. In other words, uchidachi strikes to the knee, then continues to push the tip through to the right in front of shidachi before sweeping it up to beside the head on the left. This is a good "save your ass" practice for uchidachi.

Uchidachi resists the urge to stab shidachi in the knee as this would result in him being struck on the head.

Further Variation

One further common variation that is done here is for Uchidachi to take the attacking role as in version number three above. As Uchidachi cuts down, shidachi slides sideways as above, but strikes down into the left shoulder of uchidachi rather than simply brushing the blade past on the left hand side. This is a natural extension of the technique.

2. Tsuke Komi (bringing close and attacking)

The first technique dealt with correct distance and correct timing. This one works on the inside distance where using the full length of the sword is difficult.

Version 1. (Standard Version)

Quick Key

Uchidachi and shidachi run toward each other and as they get in range uchidachi strikes to the knee from the scabbard. Shidachi blocks from the scabbard. Shidachi reaches forward with his

left hand and grabs uchidachi's right fist, thumb facing uchidachi's blade. Shidachi then steps forward with his left foot, puts it behind uchidachi's right heel, and brings the fist in front of shidachi's hip. At the same time shidachi lifts the tip of his blade and puts the mune on his chest so that he threatens uchidachi's suigetsu with the tip. Both partners return to the awase position, then walk backward to the starting position, do yoko chiburi and noto.

This is the usual version of the technique.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 2. Tsuke Komi version 1	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in the belt. Drop into iai goshi and move forward 5 paces toward your partner while drawing the sword.	Same
On the fifth step draw the blade fully and attack the right knee.	Draw the sword on the fifth step, drop the tip and swing the blade down and to the right side to block the attack.
Begin to push forward	Reach forward with the left hand and grasp uchidachi's fist. The left thumb is on the back of uchi's hand and the fingers are curled around the base of his thumb.
	Now lift the tip of your sword to aim at uchidachi's suigetsu and move your right hand to your right hip as you step in with the left foot to behind uchi's right heel. Uchi's hand is taken to the center of your body and the tip of your sword now faces his suigetsu. The back of your sword is on your own chest. *
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

Uchidachi may hesitate at the initial block, or he may try to push in. Shidachi may stretch his third step to get a bit inside the range. In any case, shidachi should not lean forward and break his posture to grip the fist.

Shidachi uses his free hand to control uchidachi's sword and steps in to take his balance and thrust to suigetsu from a short distance. This is one way to step inside the normal sword range, and inside uchi's sword while shortening one's own sword to strike at the inside range. This thrust is the same as that done in Tsure Dachi of Oku Iai, shidachi's left hand has uchidachi's fist rather than a saya.

The suigetsu position

After grasping the fist and moving into a position to threaten uchidachi's suigetsu the following points should be remembered. Keep power in the right foot, it should be a maximum of 90 degrees from parallel to the left foot and preferably less. The left foot should touch uchi's right heel. The left knee should be touching the outside of uchi's right knee. The left elbow should be over top of uchi's right elbow and any slack in uchi's right shoulder should be taken up to the point that uchidachi is just at the point of losing his balance. The left hand is in front of your tanden and you should use your thumb to twist uchi's edge away from yourself.

By closing your armpit and turning your hips toward uchi you should be able to throw him down backward while stabbing his suigetsu.

Raise the tip of the sword and aim it at uchi after you control his right fist with your left hand and before you start to move in with your left foot. Do not leave his sword uncontrolled and do not let your tip wander off of his bodyline. If you can't get the sword over uchidachi's arm, stab him from underneath.

A further way to examine this kata is for shidachi to allow his sword and right shin to form an X as uchidachi's sword is blocked. From this far inside it is almost impossible to get the sword above uchidachi's blade, so thrust from underneath.

These moves are learned in a step by step fashion but they must be smoothed out because the sword must be moving to attack as soon as the fist is grasped, otherwise uchidachi can break the sequence.

Version 2

In this case, uchidachi attempts to disrupt shidachi's grip and counter-thrust by pulling back strongly after the fist is grabbed, squaring up and lifting the blade to cut up and over into shidachi's forearm.

Quick Key

Uchidachi and shidachi run toward each other and as they get in range uchidachi strikes to the knee from the scabbard. Shidachi blocks from the scabbard. Shidachi reaches forward with his left hand and grabs uchidachi's right fist, thumb facing uchidachi's blade. Uchidachi pulls back and moves his sword up toward the centerline. Shidachi then moves uchidachi's fist further to shidachi's left as he twists the blade upward and out to the left. Without moving the feet, shidachi cuts up through the armpit and back down into the collarbone of uchidachi. Both partners return to the awase position, then walk backward to the starting position, do yoko chiburi and noto.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 2. Tsuke Komi version 2	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in the belt. Drop into iai goshi and move forward 5 paces toward your partner while drawing the sword.	Same

On the fifth step draw the blade fully and attack the right knee.	Draw the sword on the fifth step, drop the tip and swing the blade down and to the right side to block the attack.
	Reach forward with the left hand and grasp uchidachi's fist. The left thumb is on the back of uchi's hand and the fingers are curled around the base of his thumb.
Shift back to disrupt the grip and raise the sword to cut down on shidachi's left arm while backing away from a possible thrust.	
	Carry uchi's hand further up and over as you turn his wrist upward to flick his sword out to his right. Cut up under uchi's left arm and down on his collarbone.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

This is a very dangerous technique as uchidachi can lose his grip on the bokuto which will fly across the dojo. Shidachi should try to grip the hilt along with the fist.

Shidachi does not usually have to shift in or out, just grasp, lift and cut with the right foot forward. This variation is one (minor) reason why we grasp in version one before we step in. The main reason of course is that we cannot leave uchidachi's sword uncontrolled while we are inside its range.

Shidachi must be moving the sword into the attack position when the wrist is turned to the outside because uchidachi will return the blade to the centerline as soon as he can and if he can. The counterattack comes as soon as the blade settles on the attack line so this is too late to try and move the wrist.

Shidachi must move the wrist with his hip, it won't be moved by wrist or arm power alone as the elbow is in a bad position to apply power. Uchidachi is in a good position to pull back or drive his right fist into shidachi's hip to disrupt his posture. Shidachi must use body position rather than muscle power to do this technique. To unbalance uchidachi, drive the wrist to uchidachi's right rear as this attacks his weakest support line (between his feet).

A variation of this technique is done by shidachi dropping his sword and using both hands to move uchidachi's wrist out to the left and toward uchidachi's right rear to throw uchidachi onto his back. Uchidachi's sword can then be removed from his grip and used by shidachi.

3. Uke Nagashi (receive and deflect)

This kata starts with the swords already out and ready to use. When this happens in this set, the partners usually approach starting from the hidari hasso position. In this case, it is critical that shidachi understands when he is moving into the issoku itto distance. Starting in hidari hasso, take three steps forward, left foot first. On a regular fourth step the partners should be able to cut each other's heads. This is the correct starting distance. One person can reach the other with a longer stride from the third step position so this is the issoku itto distance. It is necessary therefore that the kata is being performed on the fourth step forward of both partners.

Quick Key

Both partners approach in hasso. On the fourth step shidachi steps forward and strikes yokomen while uchidachi matches stepping back. Shidachi steps in with the left foot to strike yokomen and uchidachi steps back to match. Shidachi steps in with the right foot keeping the blade at chudan to threaten a tsuki. Uchidachi steps back and lifts the blade to match but must cut down on the thrusting blade. Shidachi steps to his left front while avoiding the strike using uke nagashi and cuts down on uchidachi's head to finish the kata. Awase and return to the center, 5 steps back to the original positions.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 3. Uke Nagashi	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Step backward with the right foot into hasso kamae.
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Same
Step back with the left foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.	Step forward with the right foot and cut yokomen. *
Step back with the right foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.	Step forward with the left foot and cut yokomen.
Step back with the left foot and raise the sword. *	Keep the blade in chudan and step forward threatening a tsuki.
As shidachi moves into attack range, strike down on the bokuto.	Avoid the strike by uke nagashi, step to the left front with the left foot and strike down on uchidachi's men.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.

Prepare for the next kata.	same.
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Notes:

Most beginners focus on the movements of this kata and not on the lesson. The important thing is to understand you cannot thrust through the awase maai without uchi reacting. The thrust is a feint. Having said that, if there is no reaction to the feint, the kata fails and the thrust must be real, in other words the thrust must reach the target.

Hasso

When moving into hasso maintain the correct maai even at this distance, shidachi moves back in response to uchidachi moving forward.

Hasso is taken with the hands remaining in a correct grip on the sword. The left hand is in front of the suigetsu (solar plexus) and the tsuba is between the chin and the lips, about a fist width out from the face. This position puts the blade at about a 45 degree angle back from vertical. The tsuka kashira (pommel) and the ha (edge) should both be facing your partner. The hips are obviously not square to your partner, but fall off to the right enough to make the correct stance. The same for the rear foot.

Yokomen matching

Uchidachi maintains proper maai through the kata. He does not want to go into Ai uchi (mutual strike) so uchi backs up looking for an opening.

When the swords meet in the yokomen cuts they must be on the way to striking the top side of the partner's head. Do not aim for the swords. If both swords were lowered they would be inside the issoku itto distance but they would not touch the partner. Instead they would cross deeply.

Uchidachi moves back to feet together (just crossing) on the last sword rise when shidachi crosses the awase distance and uchidachi must step forward with the right foot to cut the sword down in counter attack.

Uke nagashi

While the thrust may be to the suigetsu, don't keep the tip too low or the uke nagashi movement will be difficult. Reach forward and up toward the attacking sword to start this movement. Catch the falling sword on the omote side of the blade (the left side as you hold it in chudan) then turn the right palm upward in the direction of the fingertips to switch the contact to the ura (right) side so that you can pass it off on the right side and finish the kata.

This movement is done by rotating the sword so that the edge is upward while lifting the hands overhead. The tip should remain roughly aimed at uchidachi until the hands are completely over your head, then the tip drifts slightly to your right to shed the strike. Receive the strike with your right foot about six inches to the left of the normal spot when you step forward, this way as the

strike is coming down, your body will be out of line of the attack. The contact, if any, is made with the right foot forward, then the strike is dumped off to your back as you step forward to the left front with your left foot. During this movement the hands remain overhead. Now rotate the blade into a strike to uchidachi's head as your hips square up to the attack line.

Shidachi is stepping forward and his body will be square to the front to thrust when the strike down comes. Simply place the right foot in front of the left foot to receive the strike down, rather than straight forward. This will turn the body mostly off the attack line already so the uke nagashi is not a block, but a safety movement instead.

Remember how the sword rotates at this point, we will see it again. If shidachi does not turn the sword edge upward he stands a good chance of losing the sword as it is levered out through fingers and thumb by the strike down.

Don't forget that uchidachi may choose to slip to the side to avoid the thrust and strike down on the head instead of the bokuto. Shidachi must move the hands completely overhead to protect against this chance.

A variation on Uke Nagashi can be done using the footwork of oku iai tachiwaza uke nagashi. Uchidachi starts forward on his left foot with the sword in his belt (or jodan) as per the above, on the fourth step he draws and cuts downward. Shidachi has the bokuto in his belt. He waits until uchidachi's second step and then walks forward left - right - left. On the left step he crosses over toward the right while drawing the blade into uke nagashi, a final step with the right foot is made to square up to uchidachi and then the right foot is brought forward while striking down on uchidachi's head. This variation is mentioned because it is the sixth of the "tachi uchi no kata"

4. Uke Komi

This kata is similar to Uke Nagashi and can be thought of as a variation in tactics. We break this kata into movements with respect to maai. In the first case, we keep the same maai as for number 3, Uke Nagashi.

Version 1 (Standard Version)

Quick Key

Both partners approach in hasso. On the fourth step shidachi steps forward and strikes yokomen while uchidachi matches stepping back. Shidachi steps in with the left foot to strike yokomen

and uchidachi steps back to match. Without moving his feet, shidachi lifts his blade and drops it to waki gamae. Uchidachi steps back and lifts the blade to match but shidachi is now out of range. Uchidachi then steps forward to cut shidachi on the head. Shidachi steps to his right front to avoid the strike and cuts upward from waki gamae into uchidachi's left armpit to finish the kata. Awase and return to the center, 5 steps back to the original positions.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 4. Uke Komi version 1	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Step backward with the right foot into hasso kamae.
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Same
Step back with the left foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.	Step forward with the right foot and cut yokomen.
Step back with the right foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.	Step forward with the left foot and cut yokomen.
Step back with the left foot and raise the sword to jodan in preparation to strike again.	Lift the sword up with uchidachi but do not step in. Drop the sword to migi waki gamae. *
As shidachi is now out of range, bring the left foot up to the right to regain the attacking distance, then step forward with the right foot and cut down on his head.	On this second step, avoid the strike by stepping to the right front with the right (rear) leg, cut up into uchidachi's armpit (kiri age), and then finish by taking the left leg into the correct position. *
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

Refer to number 3, Uke Nagashi for notes on the beginning of this kata.

Waki Gamae

In this kamae, the left hand, as in most cases, should be in front of shidachi's centerline. The tip of the blade should be behind the right leg from uchidachi's point of view, with the edge facing away and downward from shidachi and the tip at knee height.

Kiri Age

In this cutting position the arms are both above the head with the elbows back out of line of the descending attack. The sword should be lined up with the shoulders, hips and legs and everything else should be off the attack line. Start the movement with the sword moving in front of the right hip, plant the right foot, cut and finish by bringing the left foot to its final position. This is not necessarily a cut to the armpit, it can be a cut upward into kote (wrist) that is also combined with a thrust to the throat. This is quite dangerous so we use the armpit as a target, and

the armpit is not a bad target in itself, especially if our partner is somehow wearing armour that is open in this area.

This is not a big jump in to catch uchidachi as he lifts his blade overhead, such a jump would expose us to a fatal counterstrike. Instead, shidachi must wait for uchidachi to come into range and commit to his strike, the waki gamae is an invitation to attack a high target (the head). It is important that uchidachi cut the target from the correct distance.

As mentioned, the cut is done from the arms first with the body moving into position just before contact. If we try to move and then cut it will be too slow. The sword will not be at the target as we come into range. This is especially important for the second distance (variation).

Version 2

There is nothing different in this version of the kata except for the timing of the kiri age. This different timing results because shidachi has closed the maai on uchidachi during the yokomen strikes.

Quick Key

Both partners approach in hasso. On the fourth step shidachi steps forward and strikes yokomen while uchidachi matches stepping back. Shidachi steps in with the left foot to strike yokomen and uchidachi steps back to match. Uchidachi steps back and lifts the blade overhead once more. Shidachi lifts his blade and drops it to the right side quickly, then flowing in with uchidachi's sword moving up, shidachi steps to his right front cuts upward into uchidachi's left armpit to finish the kata. Awase and return to the center, 5 steps back to the original positions.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 4. Uke Komi version 2	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Step backward with the right foot into hasso kamae.
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Same
Step back with the left foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.	Step forward with the right foot and cut yokomen.
Step back with the right foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.	Step forward with the left foot and cut yokomen.
Step back with the left foot	Lift the sword up with uchidachi then drop it to the right side,

and raise the sword to jodan in preparation to strike again.	bringing it around and upward into uchidachi's left armpit as you step to the right front. Avoid a possible counterstrike by stepping to the right front with the right (rear) leg, cut up into uchidachi's armpit (kiri age), and then finish by taking the left leg into the correct position. *
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

Yokomen Uchi

On the second yokomen, uchidachi allows shidachi to move slightly inside the correct maai so that shidachi would be in danger if he simply moved his blade into waki gamae. Uchidachi could strike with a single step from this distance.

Kiri Age

The same notes from version 1 apply here. This movement is shorter than coming from waki gamae, the hands do not move much lower than shoulder height in order to strike uchidachi as he is finishing his furi kaburi movement to bring his blade overhead. An even more powerful cut would be to strike into the armpit just as uchidachi begins his cut downward.

If shidachi moves upward on this final movement before uchidachi lifts his sword, uchidachi will simply thrust. Uchidachi must be lured into raising his sword first, but shidachi must help by lifting his sword as well. This is the psychology of being inside the awase (issoku itto) position.

Don't forget that shidachi can also slide into the number 3 kata, uke nagashi, by leaving his tip down, uchidachi may not fall for that either, so shidachi has to twitch his blade to get uchidachi to lift his blade... Don't make it a fight like this. Uchidachi is there to teach shidachi so he lifts his blade.

Uchidachi can strike back down very quickly from this distance so shidachi must get his blade into the cut (defensive) position over his head quickly, while he is moving offline.

Note well that this defensive position is the same as when shidachi starts the uke nagashi movement to his left in the previous kata. Uke Nagashi starts from the tsuka kashira being lifted up first, the tip stays aimed at uchidachi until the head is protected, then it moves back into the position we know as uke nagashi. In other words, if uchidachi tracks shidachi and strikes down on his head while shidachi has his blade overhead, shidachi can shift his right foot further to the left, drop the tip back and defend using uke nagashi as in the previous kata. This flowing from one kata to another is a more advanced practice and should be done with care.

5. Tsuki Kage

In this kata we examine the consequences of a different initial distance on the approach and engagement. We are beginning closer together on this kata than we did in 3 and 4.

Quick Key

Uchidachi steps forward to hidari hasso, shidachi lowers to migi gedan. Both walk in and at the engagement uchidachi strikes the head while shidachi shifts in slightly and matches in tsuba zariai. Both spring back to karuma (a deep waki gamae). Uchidachi strikes for shidachi's knee, shidachi withdraws his foot, raises his sword overhead and steps in to cut men with his other (right) foot to end the kata.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 5. Tsuki Kage	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Without moving the feet, drop the tip to gedan. *
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Starting with the right foot, walk three steps forward and pause.
Step forward with the right foot and cut to men.	Shift forward slightly with the right foot and raise the blade to match the downward cut. *
Shift forward into tsuba zariai	Same
Spring back with the right leg into karuma *	Same
Strike to shidachi's left knee	Pull the left foot back to the right while lifting the blade overhead, step in with the right foot and cut to uchidachi's head *
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes

Gedan

Lower the tip to about knee height, aim the tip at the opponent's left knee. The left hand remains in the centerline.

Starting distance

By stepping forward when shidachi does not step back, uchdachi has begin his kata a bit closer than expected. At the third step (and without adjusting the length of the pace) the partners are

closer than uchidachi would like, meaning he is a bit "jammed" and would have to cut short. This means he is a bit unstable on the attack.

Note that as uchidachi comes into this distance which is inside the awase position, shidachi can simply lift his blade to thrust. Uchidachi, realizing this, must strike down for ai uchi as soon as shidachi twitches his blade.

Striking together

Shidachi is in gedan, which means the blade is slightly to the right, aimed at uchidachi's left knee. Shidachi simply has to raise the blade as it is, and put the right fist above the left eye to block/jam the strike. It is important not to make extra movements. The shift forward also helps to jam the strike and ensure that uchidachi can't get much power into it.

There should be no delay in shifting forward on this movement. The first into position gets the advantage by being underneath but in this case both arrive at the same time so there is no advantage and they move together in tai atari (body striking).

Tsuba zariai

There is danger in moving backward from an inside position, so both partners will move forward trying to force the other back. Drop the swords to a stable position close to your hips, and make contact hilt to hilt with your sword tips aimed out to the right. This is the safest way to work, if the tsuba were placed together and the blades held vertical someone would get their hand smashed or their eye poked.

Karuma

Since neither partner has an advantage, they spring apart at the same time. This is a very important concept, just as we must catch our partner's timing in order to break it, we must also learn how to spring apart at the same time or one partner will take advantage of this. Both partners are looking for this advantage of course. Note that the angled tsuba zariai position of the swords would mean that the partner who is not springing back would be able to immediately cut the one who is.

The karuma position is similar to waki gamae with the hips lower, knees bent more, and the blade held slightly more horizontally.

The left knee is in range of a cut as uchidachi steps forward, as is the left hip. The knee can be pulled out of range by moving the leg alone, but it is important to square up the hip too as we don't know where uchidachi will strike, or whether he will switch targets as the knee moves out of range but the hip remains. Squaring up moves the hip back out of range of a strike as well as the knee.

6. Suigetsu To (solar plexus sword)

This appears to be a very simple kata and it is certainly in many different schools, but like most seemingly simple kata, it has its own difficulties. This is a very clean, fundamental kata for examining the transition from outside to inside the attacking distance.

Quick Key

Uchidachi steps forward into hidari hasso while shidachi remains in chudan. Both approach to three steps. Uchidachi strikes for shidachi's kote while shidachi shifts to his left rear and then attacks uchidachi's head to finish the kata.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 6. Suigetsu To	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Remain in chudan.
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Starting with the right foot, walk three steps forward and pause threatening the suigetsu.
Step forward with the right foot and cut to kote.	Shift back to the left rear while dropping the tip slightly, keeping it aimed at uchidachi
	Raise the blade overhead and shift directly back toward uchidachi, cutting down on his head.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

While doing Tsuki Kage you might have noticed that when shidachi is in gedan it is easy to get inside the issoku itto distance without realizing it. This kata shows the same distances initially, but what happens when you are in chudan rather than in gedan.

Simply put, uchidachi is not going to try to cut your head while you are in chudan as you are in range to thrust immediately. This is not a kata where shidachi pushes the sword toward uchidachi to force a reaction. Uchidachi must strike the kote as soon as the third step is taken and the attacking range is achieved.

Shidachi should carefully examine the minimum movement required to avoid and attack. If uchidachi is striking accurately, all that is needed is to move the hands a couple of inches to the left with no other movement of the sword. Of course we want to move further than that just in case. Shidachi must drop the tip to gedan (ie, keep the tip aimed at uchidachi when he lowers it) or uchidachi will be able to continue his attack.

Go back and examine kata number 5 (Tsuki Kage) to understand the differences in feeling and possibility when approaching in gedan or chudan.

With gedan:

1. Kote is not a target
2. Uchidachi feels comfortable moving closer and striking for men
3. Uchidachi is close for the strike, which can be done very quickly. Shidachi must react as quickly to jam the attack with the sword moving the shortest distance.

7. Doku Myo Ken

After learning a bit more about distances and kamae, we return to number 5, Tsuki Kage for this kata, making a small adjustment in the tsuba zariai. We also begin the initial attack in a slightly different way.

Quick Key

Uchidachi steps forward to hidari hasso, shidachi lowers to migi gedan. Both walk in and at the engagement distance uchidachi strikes the head while shidachi lifts his blade to jodan, shifts in slightly and cuts to jam, then matches in tsuba zariai. Shidachi drops underneath uchidachi's hands and drives them upward, then steps in with the left foot and strikes uchidachi in the face with the tsuka kashira (pommel). Uchidachi steps back with his right foot in response to this strike.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 7. Doku Myo Ken	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Without moving the feet, drop the tip to gedan.
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Starting with the right foot, walk three steps forward and pause.
Step forward with the right foot and cut to men.	Shift forward slightly with the right foot while raising the blade to jodan and cut down to match the downward cut. *
Shift forward to match in tsuba zariai	Using the momentum of the shift forward to tsuba zariai, drop the hands underneath uchidachi's hands and drive them upward then step in and strike to uchidachi's face (ganmen ate). *
Step back as shidachi steps forward. *	
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

Keeping in mind the lesson of number 6, suigetsuto, uchidachi will not approach close enough for shidachi to attack with tsuki. (Uchidachi really doesn't do this for number 5 either, but shidachi lives in hope that he will.) At this point uchidachi pauses and does not fall for the bait offered, so shidachi does a full swing upward then down to attack uchidachi's men since uchidachi is in hasso and men is open.

Uchidachi responds by cutting as well and the partners end up jammed, but shidachi has the advantage.

1. Shidachi has initiated the attack and uchidachi is responding
2. Shidachi remains in a strong right foot forward position on the attack while uchidachi is changing his feet, so shidachi has the more powerful hip position.

Shidachi can thus slide in to tsuba zariai ahead of uchidachi who is still getting his hips settled. It is almost always best to shuffle forward if your right foot is ahead, rather than step through with the left to strike.

After striking together, drive in strongly keeping the right foot forward and use the momentum of the body shift during tsuba zariai to drop your tsuka underneath uchidachi's hands, then use the hips to drive his hands upward, step in and perform ganmen ate.

Shidachi would very much like to capture uchidachi's right foot by stepping on it with his left as he steps in. This will keep uchidachi from escaping the blow and likely cause him to fall over his own heels. Uchidachi avoids this by stepping back which also keeps the tsuka from striking his face.

Shidachi should cover the tsuka kashira with his left little finger during the strike, to make sure he knows where everything is, so that he avoids actually striking uchidachi.

Compare this technique with number 5. The difference in the two techniques is triggered by the distance of the initial attack, not by anything else as both kata start in identical ways. Due to his initiation of the strike, shidachi gets the advantage at tsuba zariai.

8. Zetsu Myo Ken

There are two versions of this technique, the first a bit more controlled than the second.

Version 1

This first version is done down the attack line or to the left of that line.

Quick Key

Both partners step forward to hidari hasso. Both take three steps forward. Uchidachi begins striking yokomen with a step forward and shidachi responds in kind with a step back. Uchidachi steps forward again and strikes and shidachi responds similarly stepping back. Uchidachi steps forward a third time and strikes straight down on shidachi's head. Shidachi responds by raising his sword overhead to a horizontal position and blocking the strike. Shidachi then turns the sword to a vertical position and slices down uchidachi's face and chest while forcing his sword aside, stopping with the tip facing uchidachi's suigetsu to finish the kata.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 8. Zetsu Myo Ken version 1	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Same
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Same
Step forward with the right foot and cut yokomen. *	Step back with the left foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.
Step forward with the left foot and cut yokomen.	Step back with the right foot and cut yokomen trying to maintain maai.
Step forward with the right foot and cut shomen.	Step back with the left foot, release the left hand and place it on the mune at the monouchi while lifting the blade horizontally overhead to stop the attack using the ha near the tsuba. *
Move your hands to the left to control the slice and thrust.	Turn the hips to the right and drive the tip down the face of uchidachi as you step forward with the left foot to drive in.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes

Both partners step forward to go into hasso. This is a "mistake" on the part of shidachi as far as uchidachi is concerned, so uchidachi becomes aggressive and on the third step initiates an attack cutting for shidachi's head.

Shidachi steps back to avoid being run over and tries to match the strikes. Uchidachi presses his advantage and gets a bit closer with each swing as shidachi tries not to give up too much ground.

Finally shidachi must block, he can't back up any further and uchidachi is inside the attack distance.

Attacking as uchidachi.

Uchidachi should always attack correctly, by raising the sword overhead before stepping in to strike. If uchidachi steps in while raising the sword he usually opens himself to an immediate strike. A situation very similar to this one appears in the next set of partner practice and one sees how quickly a counterattack can be made from this block if uchidachi attempts one more strike after his attack is stopped.

Bo Sei Sats

The sword is divided into three equal sections, bo, defence, the third near the tsuba, sei, control, the middle third and Sats, attacking area, the rest of the blade to the tip. These areas are also called tsuba moto, chu-o and monouchi.

Uke Nagashi and Dome

When receiving an attack on the bo area, the edge is used and the attack is stopped completely. When receiving an attack in the angled uke nagashi position the opponent's blade strikes the shinogi at the sei area.

Final attack

After stopping the cut, shidachi angles his blade so that he catches uchidachi's sword on his tsuba as he then cuts down on the side of the sword, through uchidachi's face and finishes at and with a thrust to the suigetsu. Uchidachi controls this attack by angling his own tsuka over to his left and leaning back slightly. With the monouchi on his right biceps uchidachi can prevent shidachi from accidentally damaging his throat or face. If the attack were to be made full force, this defence would be somewhat uncertain.

Although the throat makes much more sense as a target for the final thrust, the suigetsu is plainly a safer target for the kata.

Variation

We will speak of three responses to the initial attack line in the next kata, but this kata has the same three possibilities, left, right and down the line. This final attack in version 1 is usually performed square on, but if uchidachi is very powerful, shidachi may step to the left front to avoid his power and do the same movement, thus giving two of the three possibilities (left of line, right of line and center of line). It comes to the same thing if you move down or to the left of the line, deflect the sword to get the angle or step to the side and get the same angle of attack.

Version 2 (Standard Version)

This is the same up to the block and beyond that the mechanics are similar but done with different effect as the sword moves to the right of the attack line.

Quick Key

Both partners step forward to hidari hasso. Both take three steps forward. Uchidachi begins striking yokomen with a step forward and shidachi responds in kind with a step back. Uchidachi steps forward again and strikes and shidachi responds similarly stepping back. Uchidachi steps forward a third time and strikes straight down on shidachi's head. Shidachi responds by raising his sword overhead to a horizontal position and blocking the strike. Shidachi then turns the sword to a vertical position and cuts powerfully to his right front, using the left hand to assist, throwing uchidachi's sword over uchidachi's left shoulder. Continuing the movement shidachi then steps in with the left foot and thrusting to suigetsu or waki bara (short ribs).

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 8. Zetsu Myo Ken version 2	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in chudan. Step forward with the left foot into hasso kamae.	Same
Starting with the left foot walk three steps forward and pause.	Same
Step forward with the right foot and cut yokomen.	Step back with the left foot and cut yokomen to maintain maai.
Step forward with the left foot and cut yokomen.	Step back with the right foot and cut yokomen trying to maintain maai.
Step forward with the right foot and cut shomen.	Step back with the left foot, release the left hand and place it on the mune at the monouchi while lifting the blade horizontally overhead to stop the attack using the ha near the tsuba.
	Turn the hips to the right and throw uchidachi's tip over uchidachi's left shoulder. Bring the blade to your right hip, step forward with the left foot to drive in with a thrust to the abdomen.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

Tome, the block

Some instructors teach that the left fingertips should be up and behind the mune with the palms facing forward. This keeps the hand well away from the edge but is not a very strong position. In the SDK we turn the hand over so that it is palm up, and then support the sword on the base of the palm. In this position the throw or press down is done without turning the hand on the mune. Either way is acceptable providing the strike is received on the bo section of the edge, if it is received further toward the tip, the left hand becomes more important.

Throwing uchidachi's sword

After the attack is stopped, shidachi must throw uchidachi's sword out of the way. Shidachi uses both hands to throw the blade. Shidachi's blade must slide down uchidachi's blade in order to make it move back over the shoulder and to turn uchidachi to the side. This is the same movement as in version 1 but is done further to the right. Aim to slice down just outside uchidachi's left shoulder and use the hips rather than the arms.

The stop and throw are done as two separate movements, the throw coming just before or just as uchidachi withdraws his blade to cut down again.

Final thrust

The final thrust using the left hand on the mune is the same as soete zuki in Zen Ken Ren iai.

This technique can be difficult to do if uchidachi tries to stop it, usually by driving his sword at an angle to shidachi's left. In this case, shidachi can turn the movement into uke nagashi and move in on uchidachi's left side to strike. This is not practiced formally but keep in mind that responses must be fluid and in answer to what the opponent is doing.

9. Shin Myo Ken

This kata examines the use of the draw in response to an overhead attack. The three versions described here work to the left, center and right.

Version 1

This first version moves to the left of the attack line.

Quick Key

Uchidachi draws and assumes jodan kamae, walks to shidachi and strikes downward. Shidachi draws and strikes at an upward angle from the side so that his blade strikes uchidachi's blade on the ura side (the left side from shidachi's point of view). As the blade is struck to the side uchidachi turns the blade and pulls the mune along uchidachi's mune past his right shoulder in an uke nagashi type movement, then shidachi steps in with the left foot and strikes men to finish the kata.

Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in the obi.	Same
Step forward with the right foot and draw the blade to chudan.	Do nothing.
Step forward with the left foot and raise the blade to jodan	Sink the hips and grasp the tsuka.
First step with left foot	Do nothing.
Step right left right	Step right, left, right.
On the final step cut down to men	Draw and cut the attacking sword to the side.
	Turn the right hand inward and palm up, grasp the tsuka with the left hand and drag uchidachi's blade back and down. Step left as you swing through an uke nagashi motion and cut down on uchidachi's men.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

This kata is an attack on the attacking weapon, a nuki tsuke to the sword before it gets too far downward in the attack. This could also be an attack to the wrists, as in the technique tsuke komi from the Omori ryu.

On the last (right) step, shidachi moves the right foot so that it lands in front of the left. This turns the body off the attack line and puts the right hand to shidachi's left of the dropping sword so that when the sword is turned over it is in the proper uke nagashi position.

If shidachi is too late with the draw and twist, he is still offline of the attack and can do the same movement as a counterattack after the attack misses.

Variations

1. If uchidachi cuts through as he would in a "real" strike, his sword will be deflected to shidachi's right. As it is done in the kata, uchidachi does shibori (squeezes the hilt) at the point of contact to stick the swords together so that shidachi can learn the correct sword movement.

With the proper movement of the sword it doesn't matter if shidachi is early in his movement and misses the sword, by turning the swordblade as he grips with the left hand and moves the tip backward, he is immediately in the uke nagashi position and will receive the attack on the other side of his sword, meeting with the ha instead of sweeping by with the mune.

2. Note that if uchidachi simply steps straight down the attack line and does a stop block (using the tsuba moto) one handed into the attack, the same exact motion can be done to move the attacking sword to the side as shidachi steps to the left to cut as usual. In this footwork, the roll over of the sword and "pull past" with the mune makes much more sense than the stopping and "sticking" of the blades described above. Note the importance of the tsuba during this movement of the sword to the side.

Version 2 (Standard Version)

This second version moves directly down the center, into the line of the attack.

Quick Key

Uchidachi draws and assumes jodan kamae, walks to shidachi and strikes downward. Shidachi draws and blocks the attack with the edge near the tsuba. Shidachi then grasps the hilt with the left hand and throws the attacking blade aside in a manner similar to the second version of number 8, Zetsu Myo Ken.

Shidachi drops the tip around behind in an uke nagashi motion, steps in with the left foot and strikes men to finish the kata.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 9. Shin Myu Ken version 2	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in the obi.	Same
Step forward with the right foot and draw the blade to chudan.	Do nothing.

Step forward with the left foot and raise the blade to jodan	Sink the hips and grasp the tsuka.
First step with left foot	Do nothing.
Step right left right	Step right, left, right.
On the final step cut down to men	Draw and cut into the attacking sword using the edge near the tsuba and stop its motion.
	Immediately grasp the hilt with the left hand and cut across to your right front, sliding on the attacking sword blade to throw it back over the left shoulder of uchidachi. Continue the motion through an uke nagashi motion, step forward with the left foot and cut down on uchidachi's men.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

This version is the same up to the draw, at which time shidachi draws upward to block the attack. The block is done with the bo (tsuba moto) area. The left hand grasps the sword hilt and shidachi "cuts" just outside uchidachi's left shoulder to throw the sword back. The uke nagashi movement is exactly as is done in version 1 of the kata.

In this case the difference between version 1 and 2 is that in 2 there is no avoidance of the attack line, the attack is opposed directly and the attack stopped. Shidachi's right foot is directly opposite uchidachi's left foot.

The draw into a block must be done with a correct posture so that the power of the attack is taken into the rear (left) foot and not into the shoulder. Shidachi must draw into the strike, arriving at the block position just as uchidachi's sword gets there. If shidachi gets to the block position too soon uchidachi can crash through the block. It is obvious what the problem is if there is a late block. Shidachi must use the legs to stop the attacking sword, not the arm so the left leg must be driving into the attacking sword.

If we look at variation 2 of version 1 just above, we can see an interesting choice based on where we contact uchidachi's sword. If the contact is near the tip, this version makes the most sense, to cut down from his tip to his tsuba as we sweep his sword back over his shoulder. If the contact is made nearer to uchidachi's tsuba, variation 2 of version 1, to pull his sword past our right shoulder makes more sense.

Version 3

As with many of these variations, this last one is the one I learned first. The movement of shidachi is to the right of the attack line.

Quick Key

Uchidachi draws and assumes jodan kamae, walks to shidachi and strikes downward. Shidachi draws and avoids the attack by stepping to the right of the attack line. Shidachi is in uke nagashi on the left side, swings the blade overhead and strikes men to finish the kata.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 9. Shin Myo Ken version 3	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Start standing nine paces apart with the sword in the obi.	Same
Step forward with the right foot and draw the blade to chudan.	Do nothing.
Step forward with the left foot and raise the blade to jodan	Sink the hips and grasp the tsuka.
First step with left foot	Do nothing.
Step right left right	Step right, left, right.
On the final step cut down to men	Draw upward into uke nagashi on the left side as you slide to the right front with your right foot step.
	Continue the movement of the sword overhead as you grasp the hilt with the left hand and strike down to uchidachi's men.
Move back to awase.	Move to awase.
Move to the center if necessary, then five steps back to the original position.	Same.
Prepare for the next kata.	same.

Notes:

This is the same movement as the previous versions until the draw. The right foot is moved to the right front rather than straight forward and the sword is drawn upward into uke nagashi. This technique is identical to the "bangai den" extra standing kata called Yurumi Uchi. The timing of the motion is draw and uke nagashi as right foot steps to the correct distance, cut, left foot settles to the final position.

There is no need to make contact with uchidachi's sword but shidachi must be in a strong uke nagashi position as the attack moves through shidachi's former position.

With this kata we see three different choices as to where to move, to either side or straight down the middle.

Uchidachi is in jodan gamae which allows shidachi the three choices of defence and counterattack. If uchidachi were in hasso that would mean there was a guard to that side and shidachi would have to choose another path.

Shidachi should not reveal which way he is reacting to the attack, and he can then choose his response with regard to what uchidachi is doing.

10. Uchi Komi (striking together)

The common reaction of students upon first seeing this kata is confusion, then amusement. This does not last.

Quick Key

Both partners approach in chudan and strike the swords together on the fourth step. Just before they both strike each other's head they move apart to awase.

Tachi Uchi no Kurai 10. Uchi Komi	
Uchidachi	Shidachi
Take up a standing chudan position nine steps from shidachi.	Same
Take four steps starting with the left foot and cut down to men on the fourth step.	Same
Move the blade down slowly, looking for an opening.	Same

Move back to awase.	Move back to awase
Five steps back to the original positions or perform etiquette to finish the practice.	Same

Notes:

If both partners are the same size, this kata is symmetrical. The swords should cross at the tips and stick, the blades then come down at the same time, and both partners move back to awase (issoku itto) at the same time.

This seems a simple and perhaps silly kata but it has many levels of practice. It is such an "easy" kata to end the set with, but all the skills that partner practice teach can be refined here and applied back to the previous kata.

1. Timing and distance: Ma and maai. Do exactly as above and no more. Examine your ability to match an opponent. You must be able to match as a first step to breaking the opponent's distance and timing.

2. Correct timing of furi kaburi. If you lift your blade too late you will be inside the attacking range and exposing yourself to an attack. Too early and you are simply changing the approach kamae.

3. Power: When you make contact, apply shibori (squeeze the hilt) and try to take the center line from your partner and keep it. Key to this practice is that at the release, both partners must release at exactly the same time or one will become open to attack.

4. Instant shibori: Both partners must intend to swing through. Both will do shibori at contact of the swords. If they are equal in power, the swords will stop and stick together. This is the regular practice as described above.

If one partner only does shibori on contact with the opponent's sword and the other reserves their shibori for contact with their partner's head, the one who is not doing shibori will bounce away while the other will remain on the centerline. The partners don't have to swing through dangerously at this point, a tiny movement of one's sword away from the centerline will result in a "loss". There are few other kata where this concept of diverting the attacking blade can be safely practiced.

5. At this point the partners can start playing with distance and timing in a more advanced way, for instance if shidachi delays his attack and slides back in suriage men instead. This practice is not the kata of course, but it is implied.

Final comments

We have now described ten kata which grow to seventeen with the versions. I have been taught all of these over the years and have not included any variations that I have created. In fact I have

rarely found it necessary to use anything but these kata to teach. One could create more variations of course, and an instructor should do this if they find it necessary, to teach some aspect of the kihon to the students. Don't be afraid to examine these kata, they are not carved in stone.

On the other hand, don't be tempted down the rabbit hole of improvisation, you are teaching students a partner practice, if you are tempted into chasing wisps through the forest your students will never keep up during the class, and without steady and sure kata, will never remember your lessons.

Kata are a memory aid used to teach the principles and kihon of the school but they are nothing special in themselves. It is often hard to overcome the detail of the kata, the memorization of the steps, but students of the arts must move on to a simple body awareness of attack line and avoidance of attack.

It is desirable to learn to:

1. Move when you should to the correct distance
2. Take the centerline
3. Let your body avoid the attack if necessary

In this way you will have the time to counterattack and win a fight. Trying to remember the next move or which kata would be a good one to respond with, will take too long in a crisis. The kata are there to give you a vocabulary and grammar but it's an improvisational performance when it comes time to match swords. It will never be a prepared speech.

We learn by following sensei, using our mirror neurons to learn in our bodies what we see with our eyes. In the partner practice the lessons are taught when shidachi follows uchidachi, when shidachi catches and matches uchidachi's timing. Eventually, shidachi must learn to break away from uchidachi's lead, to break his timing or his distance.

In fact, the ideal situation is for shidachi not to be infected with uchidachi's timing at all. This may take some time but patience will be rewarded. Remember that we must become sick to develop an immunity, we must allow ourselves to be infected with uchidachi's timing to become immune to it.