2026 Asian Zone
International Referee Seminar

Report

Date: 7-8 November 2026
Venue: Gyeonggi Yeonsuwon, Si-heung Korea

Instructors
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Executive Summary

First of all, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Australian Kendo Renmei and the Kendo Board of Australia for allowing me to attend the Asian Zone International Shinpan Seminar.

I also hope that the things I saw, heard, and learned during this seminar can be shared with AKR members in future Australian Kendo tournaments or whenever there is an opportunity to hold a Shinpan seminar. Through such sharing, I hope that it may contribute to the improvement of the standard of Kendo in Australia. With the same intention, I have summarised the important points of this seminar in this report in the hope that it may be useful to all Shinpan in Australia.

This seminar focused not only on the selection of Shinpan for the 2027 World Kendo Championships but also on improving the refereeing skills of Shinpan throughout the Asia Zone. In my opinion, it was one of the highest-level seminars I have attended.

In particular, the use of video review for the judgement of Yuko-Datotsu drew greater attention to the accuracy of referees' decisions. It was also beneficial to hear the instructors' explanations when the referees' judgement differed from the conclusions reached through video review. Through this process, I personally felt the need for a deeper understanding of Yuko-Datotsu and more careful observation when making judgements. The instructors repeatedly emphasised that improvement in Yuko-Datotsu judgement and Shinpan skills can only be achieved when each Shinpan continues both Kendo training and Shinpan practice.

I have attached a summary of the major points highlighted by the seminar instructors. I strongly encourage everyone to read the attached materials at least once. Of course, we should always make every effort to thoroughly study and understand: **The Regulations of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan / The Subsidiary Rules of Kendo Shiai and Shinpan**

The following documents were particularly referenced during the seminar:

1. ***Procedures for the Trial Implementation of the YUKO-DATOTSU Verification System***
2. ***Handbook for Kendo Shiai and Shinpan Management (Revised September 1, 2024)***
3. ***Guidelines for Nito Matches and Refereeing (Provisional)***
4. ***Points to Note as Shinpan-in***

I. Introduction

1. **Purpose of the Seminar**
   As mentioned above, this seminar aimed not only to select Shinpan for the World Kendo Championships to be held in May 2027, but also to improve the overall quality and ability of Shinpan throughout the Asia Zone. As a worldwide trend, the technical level of Kendo practitioners has improved significantly.

2. **Expectations of the Seminar**
   In a world Kendo community where standards are becoming increasingly equalised at a high level, the ability to referee correctly is more important than ever. Through this seminar, it is hoped that the level of Shinpan can continue to improve so that referees are fully prepared to keep pace with the development and progress of the Kendo players.

II. Seminar Proceedings

1. **Participants in the Seminar**
   As with previous seminars, many people from various countries participated in this seminar. There were approximately twenty-three 8-Dan participants, including many 8-Dan practitioners from Korea as well as participants from Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. Due to the large number of participants, the seminar was divided into two groups. Group A consisted mainly of 8-Dan participants and had approximately forty members, while Group B had around fifty participants.

2. **Practical Shinpan Training**
   No special time was allocated for classroom lectures or theoretical instruction. Instead, participants referred to the printed materials that were distributed and conducted practical Shinpan training in groups of three. Each participant rotated through the roles of one **Shushin** and two **Fukushin**, gaining practical experience in refereeing.

3. **Reflection on Yuko-Datotsu Judgement Through Video Review**
   This seminar, we were given the opportunity to reflect on the judgement of Yuko-Datotsu through the use of video review. I strongly recommend reading the attached document, "*Procedures for the Trial Implementation of the YUKO-DATOTSU Verification System.*"

   In cases where a competitor who had been struck challenged the validity of the Yuko-Datotsu decision, video review was used to examine the judgement. There were occasions when the referees' judgement differed from the objection raised by the competitor. Through the video review process and the explanations provided by the instructors, I believe it helped us to understand Yuko-Datotsu more accurately and to make more detailed and precise judgements. It also made me reflect once again on the

responsibility of Shinpan and the importance of having confidence in one's own judgement regarding Yuko-Datotsu.

I briefly discussed this topic with several participants. While most agreed that video review is useful in achieving more accurate decisions, there were also concerns regarding the additional time required, interruptions to the flow of the match, and difficulties in interpretation depending on camera angles and the movement of the competitors. I believe more consideration is needed regarding the development of specialists who can properly conduct and interpret video reviews.

The seminar itself was primarily practical in nature. Throughout the training sessions, the instructors provided explanations whenever necessary according to the circumstances that arose. Above all, I was impressed by the enthusiasm of the participants and by the noticeable improvement in practical Shinpan skills. In my opinion, it was a high-level Shinpan seminar.

III. Main Points from the Practical Shinpan Training

1. The Importance of Improving Shinpan Ability

1) One of the current worldwide trends is that when the standard of Shinpan improves and becomes more professional, the standard of Kendo competition also improves. According to the instructors, this has already been proven in recent years in the United States and Europe.
2) The technical level of Kendo practitioners in many countries has improved significantly, and there are now many competitors who can compete on equal terms with Japanese players. In addition, the speed of competition has increased greatly, making the improvement of Shinpan ability more urgent than ever.

2. Shinpan Movement and Observation of the Match

1) Positioning and Movement of the Shushin and Fukushin

i. Inside the Shiai-jo, the two Fukushin should move in relation to the Shushin, maintaining an isosceles triangle formation.
ii. Each Shinpan should move while keeping both competitors and the other two referees within their field of vision. At the same time, they should carefully observe not only the competitors' movements but also any habitual undesirable actions.
iii. Proper distance between the referees should be maintained. Referees should also avoid positioning themselves behind a competitor where their view may be obstructed.
iv. Whenever possible, Shinpan should avoid stepping outside the boundary lines of the Shiai-jo. Except in unavoidable circumstances, it is preferable to

remain inside the court, even if this means observing from a slightly closer position.

v. The Shushin should always position himself between the two competitors, while the Fukushin move accordingly.

vi. If the three Shinpan fail to maintain the triangular formation and become positioned too heavily on one side of the court, the Shushin should stop the match and then restart it after repositioning has been corrected.

2) Calm and Composed Match Management

i. A Shinpan should always conduct the match calmly and with composure. For example, when the competitors perform **Sonkyo** at the starting line, the Shushin should avoid announcing the start of the match too quickly.

ii. Shinpan should not rush to decide. They should remain calm, carefully observe the competitors' actions in their entirety, including their posture and Zanshin, and then express their judgement with confidence and conviction.

iii. The Shinpan should also carefully check the competitors' equipment and attire, such as:

- A bent Shinai
- A damaged Shinai
- Men-himo and other equipment issues

When referees manage the match in a calm and composed manner, they help competitors concentrate on the match itself. This in turn has an influence on the competitors' performance.

3) Proper Use of Flags and Announcements

i. Announcements should be made loudly, clearly, and confidently so that even the spectators can hear them. At the same time, the Shinpan flags must be raised quickly and accurately.

ii. The three referees should maintain the shape of an isosceles triangle after making their signals, smoothly returning to the positions they held at the start of the match.

iii. A Shinpan should never simply follow the decisions of the other referees or hesitate while watching their reactions. Rather, each referee should make his own decision and raise his flag with confidence, conviction, and a sense of responsibility.

3. Yuko-datotsu

In Kendo Shiai, and indeed in Kendo training itself, there is nothing more important than achieving a complete Yuko-datotsu Ippon through **Ki-Ken-Tai-Icchi**. This almost goes without saying. This is considered the objective of Kendo training and, in many ways, the very purpose of Kendo itself.

The judgement of Yuko-datotsu in competition has always been one of the most important issues in Kendo, yet it is also one of the most difficult things to judge correctly.

During this seminar, the instructors made considerable efforts to improve our understanding and judgement of Yuko-Datotsu, including the use of video review. Through this process, they sought to improve both our understanding of Yuko-Datotsu and the standard of judgement itself. For this, I sincerely feel grateful.

1) **Points that Shinpan Should Consider When Judging Yuko-datotsu.** The instructors particularly emphasised the following points:
   i. Whether the strike was delivered at an **appropriate distance** and at a **good opportunity.**
   ii. Whether the strike was made with the correct striking portion **(*Datotsu-bu*)** of the Shinai.
   iii. Whether the strike accurately contacted the opponent's valid target area **(*Datotsu-bui*).**
   iv. Whether the strike demonstrated **proper strength** and **sharpness** through correct **Tenouchi**.
   v. Whether the strike was **intentional**, or whether it occurred accidentally because the player was surprised, startled, or reacting instinctively.
   vi. The **competitor's posture** and **body movement** before and after the strike.
   vii. Whether there was proper **Zanshin**. This should be judged by observing both the **physical and mental attitude** of the competitor after the strike.
   viii. Whenever possible, Shinpan should avoid making decisions too quickly. It is preferable to observe and confirm the competitor's Zanshin before making a final judgement.

2) Situations in Which Yuko-Datotsu is most difficult to Judge.
One of the most difficult situations for judging Yuko-Datotsu occurs when both competitors attack at the same time during an exchange. Such situations are truly difficult to judge. Nevertheless, we must do our very best to make the correct decision. To do this, we must continue to work hard and improve our ability as Shinpan.

3) Cancellation of a Yuko-Datotsu decision
   i. Even when all three Shinpan have awarded Ippon, it is still possible for that decision to be cancelled if it is subsequently determined that the competitor who scored the point did not demonstrate proper Zanshin. In such a situation, even after Ippon has been announced, the Shinpan may confer and decide to cancel the point. A Fukushin may also call "Yame" and request a Go-gi if necessary.
   ii. Likewise, after Ippon has been awarded, if the competitor engages in unnecessary or undesirable behaviour, such as striking the floor with the Shinai or making excessive physical gestures, Shushin or Fukushin may request a Go-gi. Following discussion among the three Shinpan, the Yuko-datotsu decision may be cancelled.
   iii. In such cases, the original award of Ippon is first confirmed, and then the cancellation of that Ippon is announced.

4) Yuko-datotsu at the World Kendo Championships

At the forthcoming World Kendo Championships, the accurate judgement of **Yuko-Datotsu** will be more important than ever. Referees should possess a comprehensive understanding of the elements that constitute Yuko-Datotsu, namely strength, sharpness, tenouchi, body movement, distance, and opportunity, together with the essential requirements of a valid strike: the correct target area, the appropriate striking portion of the shinai, proper posture, spirit (kiai), and zanshin, both physical and spiritual. Precise evaluation of these elements is indispensable for maintaining fairness and consistency at the highest level of international competition.

4. Tsubazeriai

I strongly encourage everyone to carefully read the following documents:

- *Handbook for Kendo Shiai and Shinpan Management (Revised September 1, 2024)*
- *Guidelines for Nito Matches and Refereeing (Provisional)*

1) Proper Understanding of Tsubazeriai

i. First and foremost, Shinpan must have a correct understanding of Tsubazeriai.
ii. Shinpan should first judge whether Tsubazeriai has been properly established and is being conducted correctly, with the competitors maintaining proper posture and with the Tsuba of both Shinai crossed against each other.
iii. Simply touching the opponent's Shinai with the Tsuba area or the fists does not constitute proper Tsubazeriai and may be considered a Hansoku situation.
iv. If one competitor lowers the fists or Shinai excessively, or raises them excessively, resulting in an improper Tsubazeriai position, the Shinpan must carefully identify which competitor is responsible for causing the situation.

2) Techniques and Attacks from Tsubazeriai

i. Within approximately three seconds of entering Tsubazeriai, competitors should attempt a technical attack.
ii. If such an attack is executed successfully and satisfies the requirements of Yuko-Datotsu, Ippon should be awarded.
iii. Shinpan should possess the knowledge and ability to recognise and judge **Hiki-waza** as well as various other techniques that may arise from Tsubazeriai situations.

3) Competitors' Engagement During Tsubazeriai

i. When competitors continue moving in Tsubazeriai or at close distance, and their positions change constantly and rapidly, Shinpan should avoid following the competitors excessively.
ii. Instead, they should continue observing the competitors' movements carefully and then quickly adjust their own positions when the competitors separate.

iii. Although the term Wakare exists, it should be avoided use as much as possible when proper Tsubazeriai is being conducted correctly.

4) Hansoku During Tsubazeriai

i. Shinpan must carefully observe the improper forms of Tsubazeriai mentioned above.

ii. In addition, after proper Tsubazeriai has continued for a period of time, there may be situations where competitors begin to separate. During the process of separating from Tsubazeriai, actions such as attacking before the competitors have completely disengaged, or excessively leaning the head backward while moving apart, may be judged as Hansoku after a Go-gi and consensus among the Shinpan.

5. Various Types of Hansoku

The following matters are already addressed in our Shinpan Regulations and Rule Book. However, these were particularly emphasised during the seminar, and I would like to record them here.

1) Striking from Behind

i. Striking an opponent from behind is considered a Hansoku.

2) Actions Intended to Avoid Being Struck

i. Intentionally trying to avoid being struck in an improper manner may be considered a form of unfair conduct. For example, when a competitor falls and performs actions that are unpleasant to watch to avoid being struck, or when a competitor excessively leans the head backward during Tsubazeriai or while retreating, Hansoku may be given after Go-gi and consensus among the Shinpan.

ii. Likewise, a competitor who raises the Shinai diagonally in an unusual manner to avoid being struck while continuously chasing the opponent or running away may also receive Hansoku following Go-gi and consensus among the Shinpan.

3) Unnecessary Conduct

i. Even after Yuko-datotsu has been awarded, if a competitor strikes the floor with the Shinai and continues doing so two or three times, Hansoku may be given following Go-gi among the Shinpan.

4) Dangerous Conduct

i. If a competitor strikes the opponent's face with the fist at very close range, or presses, twists, or pushes against the opponent's neck or shoulders with the Shinai in a dangerous manner in an attempt to threaten or destabilise the opponent, Hansoku may be given following Go-gi and consensus among the Shinpan.

ii. With regard to all of these situations, the Shinpan should discuss the matter together and determine whether Hansoku should be awarded.

IV. Conclusion

Over the past twenty years, I believe I have attended approximately twenty International Referee Seminars.

Throughout these many years of participating in international Shinpan seminars, one thing that I have consistently noticed is that they are always changing and developing. In other words, I have felt each time I attended a seminar that the standard of Referee seminars has continued to improve in a positive direction, and at the same time, the overall standard of Kendo throughout the world has also continued to rise.

I participated as a Shinpan at the very first Asia-Oceania Kendo Championship and had the opportunity to officiate and observe matches involving many of the top Japanese and Korean competitors. I have also personally witnessed the significant improvement in the competitive level of players from many Asian countries.

In particular, through this seminar, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the FIK Shinpan instructors for their high-quality instruction. The seminar was conducted at an exceptionally high level, and for the first time, video review was used as a tool to achieve a more accurate understanding and judgement of Yuko-Datotsu.

I was also impressed by the considerable improvement in the standard of Shinpan demonstrated by many of the participants from throughout the Asia Zone. I believe this reflects the increasing standard of Kendo competition in their respective countries.

As mentioned earlier, the instructors provided evidence that when the standard of Shinpan improves, the performance level of competitors also rises, and the overall quality of competition improves. According to the instructors, this has already been demonstrated in both the United States and Europe.

Going forward, I believe that Australia must continue to invest greater effort and attention into improving the quality of Shinpan, match management, and refereeing skills. Through such efforts, I believe Australian Kendo will continue to develop and grow. I also hope that regular and structured Shinpan seminars can be conducted on an ongoing basis.

Another hope of mine is that, through these efforts, more International Shinpan will emerge from the Australian Kendo community in the future. It is also my sincere wish that Australian Kendo will continue to progress and eventually establish itself among the leading nations in the world.

With these thoughts and hopes, I conclude this report.

21/11/2026
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