Bob Nash Inashi & Irimi

Inashi is the act of placing oneself in such a position that enables one to dodge an oncoming attack. It is a movement that takes you out of your opponent’s seichusen by either trapping, deflecting and or evading his line of attack. Irimi is the act of entering into the opponent’s space either before, during, or after he attacks. You enter into his ‘shikaku’ (his blind spot) for the purpose of disabling him with some combination of strike, throw, or lock.

In order to perform irimi you first need to understand maai (distance between you and your opponent).

Maai is distance. But there are three main maai to consider.
- There is your maai – the maai you require to strike your opponent.
- There is the opponent’s maai – maai your opponent requires to strike you.
- There is the dynamic maai – the ever changing distance between you and your opponent as both of you move, shift, attack, dodge.

The only way to learn your personal maai is by doing various uchikomi drills. Experiment from different distances to discover your range for a particular technique. The only way to learn someone else’s maai is to have someone repeatedly attack you. The only way to learn the dynamic maai is to practice uchikomi while the opponent either moves forward or back.

Assuming you understand maai then it is easier to proceed to irimi. The movements of irimi can be practiced in the following drills (this is not an exhaustive list by any stretch of the imagination).

Junzuki Tobikomizuki Nagashizuki

Pinan yondan movement where you step forward three times in mahanmi as you simultaneously execute an otoshi-uke and harai-uke. Junzuki helps because junzuki is a study in how to deliver power into the opponent AS you move forward.

For junzuki to be effective, the punch must not land AFTER the forward step is complete. The punch must land AS the forward step is completing. If the punch is complete AFTER the forward foot plant then much of the energy is absorbed into the floor.

Ideally in junzuki you want to carry as much of your body weight into the strike. If you step first then punch, your step absorbs most of the forward body movement and thus robs the punch of potential energy.

One of the goals of junzuki training is learning how to move in such a way that you have to overcome as little inertia as possible. Visualize doing junzuki downhill. It is much easier to go forward because there is less inertia to overcome. Visualize doing junzuki uphill. It is very hard because there is more inertia to overcome.

Junzuki

The ‘art’ of doing junzuki is figuring out how to move on a flat surface area with the similar ease as a downhill junzuki. Because the junzuki stance has the shin pretty much perpendicular to the ground (the knee is not over the toe...that is cheating.....) it takes some training to understand how to move quickly without extraneous motion.

The trick is figuring out how to use the upper body (extended arm) along with the back leg and center of gravity placement.

The less inertia to overcome, the sooner you can attain maximum velocity. Any extraneous movement adds to the delay in speed and weakens the force of the impact. Acceleration must be immediate. Do not hold the arm movement until the very end of the transition.
Tobikomizuki

Tobikomizuki is the study in how to put all of your weight onto your fist at the impact point as you slide forward (as opposed to stepping forward in junzuki). At the moment of impact the whole body must be behind the punch.

Nagashizuki

Nagashizuki is the study of sliding forward in a diagonal, off the line of attack while at the same time getting into your opponent’s space and hitting him with force. Again, similar to tobikomizuki, the whole body weight must be behind the punch at the moment of impact. If the front foot settles before the impact then the body weight is absorbed into the ground. The body must be in proper alignment so the body remains fully behind the impact.

Most people do nagashizuki with a 2 beat cadence. Nagashizuki must be done on one beat. Many people lead with their front foot and then punch. There is a time lag between the foot reach and the forward movement of the torso. When you ‘reach’ with the front foot you tend to leave your torso behind. The torso has to progress forward out of the line of attack at the exact instant the front foot moves forward. In other words, the entire body is connected and moves as one unit. Everything must be done as one.

Most people ‘reach forward with their leg, step down, then torque their body sideways. They land with their foot pointing straight forward then they rotate their foot on the ball of their foot as they punch.

Instead of doing it this way one must land the foot on a slight diagonal. As the foot begins to settle, in that split second, the ankle will tighten and the body will naturally shift into a diagonal and the whole body weight will be behind the impact. Another important point to consider is that the extended hand and the length of the thigh must be in the same plane otherwise you cannot drive your mass into the opponent. Another way of saying this is that the front knee must be going into the direction of the opponent without locking the knee.

By practicing junzuki, tobikomizuki, nagashizuki and Pinan yondan, the movement of irimi will become natural. Once the movement is mastered, the next part is learning how to go into the opponent’s shikaku safely without getting hit. In order to do this you must be aware of your seichusen (your centre line or line of attack). You must guard your seichusen and move alongside their seichusen.

This can be done by either:
- moving in such a way that you avoid their seichusen.
- by blocking (trapping) their front hand and taking their outside line.
- by blocking (trapping) their front hand, taking the inside line while being aware of the potential danger of the inside hand or foot.

Only a stupid (or toothless) person will go forward into the opponent if he is not confident in his ability to block an oncoming technique. If a person is confident in his ability to block or trap then he will have no problem going forward.
The best drill I have found to master blocking is as follows: Pair up with a partner. Have your partner attack you for 1 minute. The only thing you are allowed to do is block. The blocks must be done in small movements. Block as you shift the body. Shift back. Shift left. Shift right. Shift forwards. But never shift back by more than two steps. Once you start going backwards it is too hard to arrest the backwards movement due to momentum build up and you will not be in a position to counter attack. Try to shift forwards, left, or right. Once the student becomes confident in his ability to block, then he will have fewer reservations about going forward (diagonally) into the opponent. The blocking training if done properly has now taught him inashi movements. No over blocking, just simple parries, deflections, redirections, trapping, interceptions, body shifting. No hard blocks. Armed with the knowledge (body knowledge) of maai, inashi, and irimi, one will be able to enter into the opponent’s space to execute the damage necessary to overcome the opponent.

Bob Nash 15/1/2002

On Kihon Kumite

When initially moving forward in Kihon Kumite the posture is tate seishan. It is common to kiai at this point but one must be careful that the kiai does not lead to a tightening of the body. Once the body is tight all further movement is frozen. If you are frozen then you are immobile. Being immobile means being unable to defend or attack; it means to create an opening (suki) for the opponent. It is important never to ‘lock’ the body. The body should always be immediately relaxed after any application of kime to prevent the creation of suki. Most people assume that as you land you apply kime to the technique by instantaneously tightening and locking the muscles. This only leads to suki and itsuki.

Being locked into the stance after stepping forward creates a condition called ‘itsuki’. Itsuki means to be in a position where the kinetic energy (energy inherent to movement) is frozen and no further movement is possible. It is being ‘flat footed’. Refrain from being rigid. Try to feel instead as if ‘flowing’ into the stance.

Another point to be mindful of when stepping forward is to remain cognizant of the seichusen (line of attack/center line/ line of defense). When stepping forward one should be guarding the seichusen. The hands are brought forward so that one hand guards the jodan area and the other hand guards the chudan area. This happens during the transition and not after the front foot has been planted. There’s always the possibility of being attacked during transition. This applies not only to kihon kumite but also to kata. During any transition there must always be awareness of seichusen. That goes for the attacker as well as the defender.

Once the position is taken, one must find the proper ma (distance) relative to the opponent. The way to adjust the maai (distance between the two partners) in kihon kumite is through ‘Nijiraiashi’. To press forward the front toe is wiggled and one creeps forwards while twisting the back ankle to maintain the posture.
Nijiri ashi is a movement seen frequently in kenjutsu. The reason for this footwork is to minimize suki. In kenjutsu any opening can lead to swift death. Any time the feet are lifted, a potential opening is created. By moving in nijiri ashi one attempts to minimize any potential opening. Also, traditionally Nijiri ashi would have been done under cover of the Hakama so even this slight movement of the feet would have been partially hidden.

It is important to allow the kinetic energy to continue so that the first and second attacks from ukemi are always practiced as one complete movement. Many people learn kihon kumite in two parts because of the two attacks from ukemi are often taught with a slight hiatus in delivery and somehow this is then practiced until embedded into their kihon kumite. The point about the 'tightening of the body' is usually the cause of this, and prevents the natural flow into the san mi ittai counter attack.

Essentially 'san mi ittai' involves these three concepts performed in one timing. Ten-i (change of direction), ten-tai (change of body) and ten-gi (change of technique) are these three elements of sabaki and are accomplished in unison.

Posture and stance are not the same thing. Quite often there's a problem in a person's interpretation of the stance and trying to perform smooth movement when being focussed on the 'end product' of, for instance, tate seishan. Tightening of the body is often mistakenly understood as power and kime. But basically it is the movement, not the stance that matters. Stance is merely a manner of standing, usually according to a set of instructions. A stance is often seen as an end in itself and can thus be responsible for a lot of stilted movements. Stance is standing is static.

Posture, on the other hand, goes further than this in that it includes the 'mind body & spirit' as a whole, placed in a particular manner for a purpose and 'continues' throughout the movement. Wado is not about standing in a stance but about elegant movement and retaining one's posture while moving.

Kihon kumite is essentially the fundamentals of fighting. This includes the posture, technique, mindfulness, and the stratagems of fighting. For instance the first defensive posture in kihon kumite ipponme using jodan harai uke by torimi is a stratagem whereby he is actively offering a second target to Ukemi so that he can 'set up' the counter attack. Torimi holds sente all the time throughout the practice. Torimi's initial posture with one hand guarding jodan and one guarding chudan exemplifies this.