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## *Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes* by Michael J. Hacker

This month's article focuses on body parts. (No, not my fabulous Viking legs.) This month, I'll cover the *jōhanshin*, or upper body (lit: "up-half-body").

There are several different ways to talk about the body (and parts of the body) in Japanese, many of which show up often in our Aikidō vocabulary. In this series of articles, I plan to attack the body from head to toe, in hopes that I can clear up some common mistranslations and misconceptions.

The word for body (*mi* or *shin*) finds its way into several terms familiar to the aikidōka. The *mi* pronunciation is seen in such words as:

- atemi - to contact / strike the body
- ukemi - receiving (with the) body
- hanmi - oblique posture (lit: "half-body")
- sashimi - raw fish (lit: "sliced-body")

The *shin* pronunciation is used in the Japanese name for Ki Society Aikidō: Shinshin Tōitsu - (lit "mind-body-unify").

The body also has various levels:

- jōdan - upper level
- chūdan - middle level
- gedan - lower level

and surfaces:

- shōmen - front surface
- yokomen - side surface

Starting at the top of the body, I'll go over some of the most commonly-heard terms in aikidō. This is not, by any means, meant to be an exhaustive anatomical reference, but something to get you started.

While *atama* (the head) is not often heard in aikidō terminology, *kubi* (the neck) is. In fact, the neck shows up in various places, as I'll show later. Additionally, some styles practice *kubishime*, or chokes (lit: "neck-strangle.")

Next up are the *ude* (arms). I've heard the technique name *udekimenage* (lit: "arm-lock-throw") used to describe several different techniques. Tomiki-offshoots have a technique called *udegaeshi* (lit: "arm-return").

The *kata* (shoulders -- not to be confused with the 306 other versions of *kata*) are often grabbed, as in *kata-dori*. Note that there are two different kanji for *tori/dori*, each meaning something rather different: "to take" and "to arrest; to seize." The difference is, in my mind, significant. However, I see even the Japanese using them interchangeably (incorrectly?). When you train, are you "taking" the shoulder, or "arresting" your partner by via their shoulder? Interesting stuff to ponder.

Next down the arm is the *hiji* (elbow), which is heard in combinations like *hijikime* (lit: "elbow lock"). On another note, there are two different kanji for "kime." One means "to decide," the other "to go to the end (of something); to investigate thoroughly." Which one is correct? Again... interesting stuff to ponder.

In Tomiki-based schools, a section of the basic 17-movement kata is called *hijiwaza*, or "elbow techniques." Such a naming convention really helps one to know what is actually being worked on. Even though something may *look* like a wrist technique, if it falls in the *hijiwaza* section, you know it's really supposed to be an elbow technique (although all techniques really work on the center, right?).

The final stop on our journey down the arm is the *te* (hand). Although grabbing the hand itself is fairly useless (read: multiple articulating joints), it works its way into the picture in a number of other places.

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*Kotegaeshi* (lit: "forearm-return"), for example, is a very common technique, but is all-too-often mistranslated as "wrist twist." I'm here to tell you that *kote* has little linguistically (or anatomically) to do with the wrist. There are two often-used versions of *kote* in common use: one *kote* means "forearm" (lit: "small-hand"). The other *kote* (lit: "cage/basket-hand") is a gauntlet used in *Kendō* to cover and protect the forearm area. Is there a relationship between the two? Hmm...

The actual wrist proper is referred to as *tekubi* (lit: "hand-neck"). In Tomiki-related schools, you'll find another section of the basic kata called *tekubiwaza* (lit: "hand-neck-techniques").

Next month, I'll go over the *kahanshin*, or lower body (lit: "down-half-body"). As always, I welcome any feedback, questions, and ideas from the mob.

*Michael Hacker began his study of Aikidō in Japan in 1990, and has been very fortunate to get his hands on many skillful teachers in his short time on the tatami. His primary Budō influences are Donald Moriyama, Amano Shigeko, Saito Morihiro, C.E. Clark, and Stan Connor. He has also had limited exposure to Kōdōkan Jūdō, Mugai-ryū Iai-Hyōdō, Shōrin-ryū Kishaba-juku Karate, Hapkido, Tae Kwon Do, Tai Chi, and various Chinese martial arts. Among his other loves are song-writing, his Chet Atkins nylon-string, techno-geek stuff, his world famous Bad Budō video collection, studying languages, and Swan (if he knows what's good for him). Michael is a student at the Jiyushinkan in Tempe, Arizona.*