

The 10 kumijo as developed and taught by Saito Morihiro Sensei.

Developed by the late Saito Morihiro Sensei (9th dan) these are Jo partner exercises (kumijo) which explore particular issues of timing distance and angle with an emphasis on combat applicability.

They can be understood in two ways.

First as being divided into two clear sections: 1-5 and 6 -10.

The first section is 'harder' in terms of contact and and more direct in terms of movement. Engagement is more direct. All finishes are with the weapon in terms of an impact to end the engagement.

The second section is 'softer' in terms of contact and movement. Circularity dominates. All finishes end with a projection or control.

Thus in these two sections we see a progression from harder to softer and from 'finishing' the engagement to 'controlling' it without impact. A progression from bukiwaza to taijutsu illustrating perfectly the principle of Riai (harmony of principles underlying weapon and empty handed technique).

Secondly. Thematic sequencing.

Kumijo nr 1: The opening sequence stands alone as a basic opening to the series and is related clearly to previous partner work in the 31 kata kumijo sequence seen there in sections 1-3 and 4-6.

Kumijo nr 2 and nr 3. Two themes here stand out. Tsuki (thrust) is the main technique and both involved fast close quarter engagement. Combat in tight spaces.

Kumijo nr 4 and nr 5. The space of the encounter opens up using the length of the Jo to maximum advantage. Nr 4 explores the horizontal (moving back and forward) and nr 5 the vertical (dropping and rising).

Kumijo nr 6 and nr 7. Entering against the attack and 'folding` around. The weapon dictated distances are collapsed as we move from weapon engagement to body engagement. With 6 and 7 haya gaeshi is added to the thrust as the main technique being explored.

Kumijo nr 8 and nr 9. Haya gaeshi is now the dominant technique to deal with. In nr 8 directly and in nr 9 with greater difficulty following a thrust.

Kumijo nr 10. After exploring thrusting and rapid strikes (haya gaeshi), small small and large distances, various issues of on the line and off the line engagement, the last kumijo explores the most difficult (and beautiful) move of the jo: hasso gaeshi. Against both a thrust and a strike.

Thus we can appreciate an elegant progression from hard to soft, from more direct to more circular, from relatively simpler forms to much more technically demanding ones.

The progression of practice, as in all the techniques, is as follows:

1. Slow basic with clear spaces between moves where one's structural alignment, position and connection can be checked. (kihon)
2. Harder and stronger basic where the positions and angles are tested under more pressure.
3. Slow flowing form where the moves are connected (ki no nagare)
4. Gradual increase in speed and pressure at the flowing level.

Throughout, the key issue is 'connection'. With the ground (grounding), with one's self (structural issues of alignment and centring) and with the other (distance, angles and a feeling awareness of the other, particularly his center and center-line). When connection at any of these three basic levels is weakened or lost in the practice, that must be noted and corrected. 'Connection' IS the practice (awase).

The goal (as in all of aikido practice) is to develop a body-mind capable of engagement under pressure where non resistance, joining and a lively responsiveness are the operational principles versus resistance, defence and reactivity.

As we move through the levels of the kumijo, the complexity of the spatial engagements demand particular sensitivity while at the same time the threat level from being struck with the opponents weapon increases. On the one hand we need to open up our awareness to the demands of the situation while at the same time the threat of being struck creates pressure for us to 'close down' and withdraw (fear). The practice takes place in this field of tension between the demand to open up and the tendency to pull back.

The kumijo thus allow for a gradated increase in 'pressure' which allows us to explore the key themes of resistance and non resistance, reactivity and responsiveness, confrontation and harmony.

See: Kumijo Nr 1. Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros and Peter van der Burgh.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2C2VhISi-QQ>

TakemusuAikidoNL

Lewis Bernaldo de Quiros.
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Granada, Spain.