

Sword and Spirit

The Journal of Itten Dojo

May 2022



— Why Budo? —

Regardless of the times in which you live, or the circumstances of your life, success largely depends on things you can control:

- **Building a foundation of strong relationships in a community of mutual support and achievement.**
- **Forging a disciplined and positive mindset.**
- **Enhancing your physical health and capabilities.**

These are exactly the benefits membership in an authentic dojo provides.

Copyright 2022 Itten Dojo, Inc.
701 W Simpson Street, Suite C
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-3716
www.ittendojo.org

Renzoku-waza Drill

As we continue the process of revamping our practice of aikijutsu, a major focus is structuring *kihon* (fundamentals) and introductory material to provide new students with skills and techniques that can be applied in practical, personal defense very early in their training. Rather than starting new students directly with aikijutsu *waza* (techniques) that begin the process of teaching “internal” body skills but require years of training for practical use, we’ll start with a less complex, jujutsu orientation. We’ll be working with Nicklaus Suino Sensei (Japanese Martial Arts Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan) to incorporate the *Kihon Kata I* from Nihon Jujutsu to lay a foundation supporting training in his “real-time” self-defense applications.

(Teaser: At the opposite end of the spectrum, we’ll be working with Salahuddin Muhammad Sensei—Takeshin Dojo, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania—on aikijujutsu advanced concepts and applications.)

Prior to students starting on Kihon Kata I, we want to get them moving and building the understanding that in conflict, one always needs a Plan B. For this purpose, we’re going to adapt an exercise we originally learned from a visiting instructor in the late 1990s. Classified as a *renzoku-waza* (continuous techniques) drill, the sequence teaches logical transitions from one joint-lock to another. In its most basic form, the drill is pretty tame and completely appropriate for beginners. That’s the version presented in this issue. But don’t be misled; even in the tame version, students quickly realize that there are sharp teeth in each of the techniques—the drill is not entirely comfortable for *uke* (the person receiving the techniques), and everyone learns quite early the virtue of softness and sensitivity on the part of *nage* (the person applying the techniques).

Students can practice the *renzoku-waza* drill initially from *seiza* (a proper, seated position), so that they need only contend with upper-body skills. Normally, we’ll have students practice standing from the start, to learn proper stepping, turning, pinning, and *ukemi* (the skills of getting down in one piece). At higher levels of training, *atemi* (strikes), counters, recoveries, and throws will be incorporated.



Initiation

Nage receives from *shizentai* (standing naturally).



As uke attacks with *migi kata-dori* (grabbing with his right hand at nage's left shoulder), nage steps back with her right leg, cups her left hand over uke's grab, and strikes with *migi o-yubi-tsuki* (a thrust with her right-hand thumb) upward, into uke's solar-plexus.



Nikajo

Nage then passes her right hand back to secure uke's hand and moves her left hand to uke's right elbow. Nage pivots about 30-degrees to the right while twisting uke's hand to a little-finger-up position. Simultaneously, nage wraps her left arm to the inside of uke's right elbow.



Dropping, nage cuts with a helical thrust of her left arm to drive uke to the mat. All three actions must be accomplished in a nearly simultaneous sequence.



Ikkajo

Nage cuts around, just above uke's elbow with *asagao* (the "morning glory" configuration of the hand) to find the nerve point.



Then, with a snap of her hips and a little shift forward, nage sinks to *chugoshi* (one knee down). In application, as uke hits the ground, nage would attempt to strike uke's floating ribs with her rear knee. Nage presses firmly against uke's triceps just above the elbow. This in itself should be enough to hold uke in position.



Nage places her right hand atop uke's right hand, with her fingers parallel to uke's fingers. With pressure, this provides the most effective means of applying the lever-principle to the wrist joint.

If uke is sufficiently flexible, uke's arm should be raised to vertical. If uke is not flexible, be extremely careful so as not to hyper-extend the ball and socket joint in the shoulder.

Ikkajo serves as a backup if nikajo fails.

Sankajo

With her left hand, nage cuts up hard into uke's right elbow, to bend uke's arm and raise uke's shoulder to a level sufficient for nage to apply sankajo.



Keeping uke's arm thoroughly bent, nage reaches over with her left hand to pass uke's hand from right hand to left. The power in sankajo derives from a proper push-pull-twist of nage's hand.



Nage stands and turns to *hidari sankakudai* (left foot forward, triangle stance), being careful to keep uke's elbow pointed at the ceiling and uke up on his toes.



Yonkajo

Yonkajo depends on a hitting nerve-point that may be difficult to locate in an emergency. However, the technique is an excellent way to take uke straight to the ground from sankajo. Nage must not alter the hand applying sankajo, and should maintain the sankajo into the throw, but shifts the grip of her right hand to uke's lower forearm.



Nage takes a big step forward with her right foot to *zenkutsu-dachi* (forward stance)...



...and cuts in the manner of an Eishin-ryu *kiri-oroshi* (a vertical cut, out and then back) to throw. Properly applied, the "cut" should lock and hyper-extend uke's elbow along the line elbows were not designed to bend. Uke should be dropped in a pile.



Uke should not be allowed to roll out of the technique, either during the "cut" or after he hits the ground.



Gokajo

Gokajo is one of the most diverse techniques when it comes to applications. It can be used as a disarm, a break, a “come-along,” or immobilization. In the renzoku-waza drill it is used as a come-along.

For the transition from yonkajo to gokajo, nage grasps uke’s sleeve at the upper arm with her right hand...



...and uses the elbow as a pivot point to crank uke’s arm into *kamuri* (a “goose neck”). Nage places her fingers over uke’s knuckles for maximum leverage and pressure.



Nage pushes her belly forward and arches her back slightly back to help drive uke to his feet.



Kote-gaeshi

Nage overlays uke’s hand with her right hand (she is gripping, not merely aligning) and...



...with a snap of her hips to clear the line drives uke to the mat. Uke should fall straight down, into the space vacated by nage. In application, nage twists hard to break the wrist and drive uke's head into the ground.



Concluding Pin

Nage shifts her left hand to maintain the kote-gaeshi and her right hand to cut into uke's elbow.



Pushing uke's elbow in an arc around his head, nage forces uke to roll onto his front. Nage places her right foot underneath uke's right shoulder and her knee against uke's forearm. If uke is sufficiently flexible, bring the arm vertical. If uke is not flexible in the shoulder, don't push it! With pressure on uke's wrist, this position is both a pin and a potential shoulder dislocation.



• • • • •

Even working relatively slowly and carefully, if multiple repetitions of the renzoku-waza drill are practiced, with the partners switching roles each set, the training becomes highly aerobic and physically taxing. Once students are reasonably proficient with the initial, right hand version of the drill, they'll learn to execute the drill from the opposite-side lead.

Although this introductory-level of the renzoku-waza drill is tamed, in more advanced forms the drill is brutal. Every transition is accompanied by atemi, every technique has a counter, there is a way to regain control of uke after every one of his counters, and there are throws that can be executed at the point of every control.

Some of the throws can be applied intentionally in a way that uke cannot execute proper ukemi with an easy breakfall, and will land directly on the neck or shoulder, with potentially crippling or lethal consequences.

Regardless of the level, *practice carefully!* 🌀

