

To: Those who are interested in having further information on the Aiki Jo Kata
From: Shizuo Imaizumi

Date: January 20, 2021, the Inauguration Day of the 46th US President

Re: Some Similarities between Styles of Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata (No. 1)

Introduction

On January 11, 2021, I received several questions about Aiki Jo Kata from Andrew Bordwin, who is an advanced enthusiast for jo training, including the classical Shinto Muso Ryu. Although I answered him via email, I omit part of our Q & A. Instead, I would like to take this opportunity to write a new article regarding the above theme: Some Similarities between Styles of Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata (No. 1), (“Jo 22 Kata” hereafter).

[Note: This article isn’t the one about how you learn both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata from the scratch, but the one on what you should consider when you analyze both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata. For technical information on how to do Jo Kata, see “SBK criteria” issued and printed in 2005.]

A Background of Two Famous Instructors Who Created Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata

Jo 31 Kata (or forms) were created and taught by Morihiro Saito Sensei (1928-2002), who had been Chief Instructor of Iwama Dojo in Aikikai organization until he passed away. In those days when I was one of young instructors of Aikikai, Saito Sensei insisted that his Jo 31 Kata were the exact same style of O’Sensei Morihei Uyeshiba (1883-1969) who had taught Jo Kata at Iwama Dojo, Ibaraki Prefecture. Saito Sensei also told us that although O’Sensei himself never used the number-counting method in any subjects of his instruction, Saito Sensei decided to count each movement of Jo 31 Kata so that students might be able to learn Jo 31 Kata without any confusion. So, in Jo 31 Kata, Saito Sensei counted each movement until reaching 31 number-counting. I trusted his above words because he had been devoted himself to O’Sensei by living near O’Sensei’s estate (about 3 minutes’ walking distance), and so he had much more opportunities of learning Jo Kata than Tohei Sensei learned Jo Kata from O’Sensei.

[Note: Saito Sensei had commuted between Iwama and Tokyo every Sunday to teach his Sunday class at Aikikai Honbu Dojo until he retired from his job at Japan National Railways (the current JR East). Therefore, he was eligible for carrying a free-riding ID card for showing at an entrance and an exit of each JNR station, and it was very convenient for him to travel freely anytime and anywhere in Japan.]

Meanwhile, **Jo 22 Kata** were arranged and taught by Koichi Tohei Sensei (1920-2011), who had been Chief Instructor of Aikikai Home Dojo. Tohei Sensei insisted that although he learned some Jo Kata from O’Sensei, he couldn’t remember every handling way of jo which O’Sensei had demonstrated. Therefore, Tohei Sensei decided to arrange Jo 22 Kata while following his old memory as closer as O’Sensei’s Jo Kata. In Jo 22 Kata, Tohei Sensei only counted attacking actions without counting some movements like Saito Sensei did. That is why the number-counting methods in both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata are different from each other (see in detail later).

[Note: Although Tohei Sensei was Chief Instructor of Aikikai Honbu Dojo, he had his family home and his own dojo at his father’s land in Haga-gun, Tochigi Prefecture. That is why the current Ki no Kenkyukai Honbu Dojo was built there in late 1980’s. So, Tohei Sensei had commuted from his above home to Tokyo to teach at Aikikai Honbu Dojo for 3 or 4 days a week when he didn’t visit Hawaii periodically. According to his words, when Tohei Sensei was young, he used to go to Iwama Dojo by bicycle from his home to train under O’Sensei.]

A Question on Number-Counting of Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata

A question has been raised by Andrew Bordwin: If both styles of Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata originated from Jo Kata by O'Sensei, then the number-counting of both Jo Kata should match with each other. Why don't they match? Although I already gave him my answer via email, O'Sensei never used the number-counting method in his instruction. Therefore, that depended on an instructor who wanted to teach Jo Kata using number-counting way, for example. The important thing in practicing Jo Kata is to absorb the elements of jo waza (or techniques). Assume that I must create Jo Kata. In this case, I should create Jo Kata like a scriptwriter creates a plot suited to his abilities. In Noh play, for example, "jo-ha-kyu" are emphasized as a stylized performance. So, I should think about a plot of my Jo Kata in accordance with a tempo of "jo-ha-kyu" as one of examples to create a new plot. Thus a new idea of my plot of Jo Kata occurs to me like this.

"First of all, at the stage of "jo" (or the opening of performance), Jo Kata should be done like this (for technical information, see in detail later). Next, at the middle stage of "ha" (or the changing a tempo of performance), Jo Kata should be done like this (for technical information, see in detail later). And finally, at the stage of "kyu" (the climax of performance), Jo Kata should be done like this (for technical information, see in detail later)."

Then the plot of Jo Kata, that is, the framework of Jo Kata may be completed. Now all I have to do is find the actual movements from both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata whether both of them are executed in accordance with the following framework of Jo Kata. If you still stick to the differential of the number-counting between Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata, you may fail to grasp the plot of this Jo Kata that is about to unfold.

The Framework of Jo Kata

1) Jo (the opening of performance):

A performer ("he" hereafter) of Jo Kata stands with ritsujo posture (hidari-hanmi) facing on shomen (or the front) in a dojo. He thrusts out his jo twice, and he strikes an opponent's men (or head) twice. [Now I should go back to the position where I began my performance.] Turning his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki) and facing onto the opposite of shomen, he strikes an opponent's men twice. [Now I should turn back to the direction facing onto shomen again.]

2) Ha (the changing a tempo of performance):

Turning his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki) and facing onto shomen, he starts to change a tempo of performance. [I no longer change a direction until finishing all the remaining movements.] He executes uchi-waza and tsuki-waza several times, and then he takes a pause with hidari-wakigamae. After that, he executes a few attacks and, this time, he takes a pause with hidari-orishiki (or the left knee down) posture holding his jo with hidari-wakigamae.

3) Kyu (the climax of performance):

Standing up from hidari-orishiki posture, he enters the climax of performance, and finally, he executes several attacks until he defeats his opponent.

Although I formed a hypothesis from taking a bird's-eye view of Jo Kata without number-counting, I must still prove the validity of each point of my above "jo-ha-kyu" theory.

Making a Comparison between Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata

In order to find the framework of Jo Kata, I must first make a comparison between Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata.

In Jo 31 Kata, 24-attacking jo sabaki (handling) movements appear in counting, and 7-not-attacking jo sabaki movements appear in counting. Thus the 31 number-counting agrees with 24 plus 7. The contents of Jo 31 Kata are as follows:

Jo sabaki	actual number-counting
Mune-tsuki	1 3 13 22 24 25 28 30
Ushiro-tsuki	16 21 26
Shomen-uchi	20
Hidari-men-uchi	5 7 15
Migi-men-uchi	6 8 11 31
Hidari-kote-uchi (sukui-age)	10
Ashi-tsuki	19
Ashi-harai	17 27
Ushiro-harai	9
Not-attacking movements	
Hiki-age	2 4 14
Hiki & mochi-kae	12 18 23 29
Total	counts 1 - 31 (all above-mentioned numbers)

In Jo 22 Kata, 22-attacking jo sabaki movements appear in counting. Although not-attacking jo sabaki movements appear in Jo 22 Kata, those jo sabaki movements don't appear in actual number-counting. Thus the 22 number-counting agrees with 22-attacking jo sabaki movements in counting. The contents of Jo 22 Kata are as follows:

Jo sabaki	actual number-counting
Mune-tsuki	1 2 6 10 12 16 20 22 (1)
Ushiro-tsuki	5 13 17
Kao-tsuki	15
Hidari-men-uchi	3 7
Migi-men-uchi	4 8
Sukui-age	14 21
Maki-kaeshi	11 (&)
Ashi-tsuki	19
Ashi-harai	18
Ushiro-uchi	9
Total	counts 1 - 22 (all above-mentioned numbers except & 1 in parenthesis)

Compared with the number 31 and 22, it seems to be a great difference between Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata. Figuratively speaking, when you have \$310 in cash in your pocket, I have \$220 in cash in my pocket. So, you may say in a loud voice: "I buy your drink, sensei." On the contrary, compared between attacking number-counting figures only, Jo 31 Kata may become Jo 24 Kata in counting. So, you have now \$240 in cash and I have \$220. Here is only \$20 in difference, that is, 2 number-counting in difference between two Jo Kata. I know you are generous, and so you whisper to me: "Sensei, let me buy your drink, but don't tell my wife."

1) Jo (the opening of performance)

In Jo 31 Kata, first of all, facing on shomen (or the front) and standing with ritsujo posture with hidari-hanmi, a performer (“he” hereafter) executes mune-tsuki with kaeshi-tsuki no kamae, withdraws and takes hidari-ryote-age posture. Those movements correspond to counts 1 and 2. He again executes the same movements that correspond to counts 3 and 4. After two tsuki-waza, he executes hidari-men-uchi and migi-men-uchi consecutively that correspond to counts 5 and 6. Next, turning his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki) and facing onto the opposite of shomen, he again executes hidari-men-uchi and migi-men-uchi consecutively that correspond to counts 7 and 8. Count 8 is the end of the stage of “jo” in Jo 31 Kata. So, after turning his body clockwise and facing onto shomen again, the stage of “ha” in Jo 31 Kata begins (see in detail later).

Meanwhile, **in Jo 22 Kata**, facing on shomen and standing with ritsujo posture like Jo 31 Kata, he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae, withdraws quickly, and takes hidari-ryote-age posture. Those movements correspond to count 1. Then he repeats the same tsuki-waza, and retreats with hidari-ryote-age corresponding to count 2. After two tsuki-waza, he executes hidari-men-uchi and migi-men-uchi consecutively that correspond to count 3 and 4. Next, he executes ushiro-tsuki corresponding to count 5. Furthermore, he turns his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki), faces onto the opposite of shomen, and then he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae, and quickly retreats with hidari-ryote-age posture. Those movements correspond to count 6. Finally, he executes hidari-men-uchi and migi-men-uchi consecutively that correspond to counts 7 and 8. Count 8 is the end of the stage of “jo” in Jo 22 Kata. After turning his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki) and facing onto shomen again, the stage of “ha” in Jo 22 Kata starts (see in detail later).

You easily find the framework of the stage of “jo” in both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata. Assume that Jo 31 Kata are the exact same as the original Jo Kata by O’Sensei, Jo 22 Kata also follow the plot of the original Jo Kata because after 2 tsuki-waza and two men-uchi-waza are executed, he turns his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki), and finally, he executes 2 men-uchi waza although the additional tsuki-waza was inserted before executing men-uchi-waza.

2) Ha (the changing of a tempo of performance)

Both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata enter the stage of “ha” to performs much longer consecutive movements facing onto shomen. For convenience’ s sake of my analysis of Jo Kata, I divide the stage of “ha” into part 1 and part 2.

In part 1 of the stage of “ha” **In Jo 31 Kata**, turning his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki) with executing ushiro-harai, he takes a pause with migi-wakigamae facing onto shomen. Those movements correspond to count 9. From there, he executes hidari-kote-uchi with sukui-age (or scoop upward), and then he executes migi-men-uchi with a style of maki-kaeshi. Those movements correspond to counts 10 and 11. After that, he retreats with mochi-kae (or changing a grip holding), executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae, and then he withdraws with hidari-ryote-age posture. Those movements correspond to counts 12, 13, and 14. Furthermore, he executes hidari-men-uchi that corresponds to count 15. Finally, he executes ushiro-tsuki with taking his left foot backward, and then he takes a pause with hidari-wakigamae. Those movements correspond to count 16. By the way, count 16 reaches a halfway among 31 number-counting, and that is the end of part 1 of the stage of “ha” in Jo 31 Kata. Although you can review part 2 of the stage of “ha” in Jo 31 Kata, you should first review part 1 of the stage of “ha” in Jo 22 Kata.

Meanwhile, in part 1 of the stage of “ha” **in Jo 22 Kata**, turning his body clockwise (or ushiro-muki) with executing ushiro-uchi, he takes migi-wakigamae (jun) posture facing onto shomen. Those movements correspond to count 9. From there, he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae that corresponds to count 10. After that, he executes maki-kaeshi (like migi-men-uchi) standing with hidari-chudan that corresponds to count 11. Furthermore, after changing a grip holding, he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae, and withdraws with hidari-ryote-age posture. Those movements correspond to count 12. Finally, he takes his left foot backward, blocks an opponent’s uchi-waza with uke (jun) posture like hidari-men-uchi posture, executes ushiro-tsuki with taking his left foot backward, and then he takes a pause with hidari-wakigamae. Those movements correspond to count 13. By the way, count 13 reaches a halfway among 22 number-counting, and that is the end of part 1 of the stage of “ha” in Jo 22 Kata. You should review part 2 of the stage of “ha” in Jo 22 Kata right after reviewing part 2 of the stage of “ha’ in Jo 31 Kata.

In both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata, he turns his body clockwise (or ushiro-muski) with ushiro-waza (ushiro-harai or ushiro-uchi), faces onto shomen for entering part 1 of the stage of “ha” in both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata. As I described above, he (in Jo 31 Kata) attempts to execute 5 attacks, and then he takes a pause with hidari-wakigamae. Meanwhile, he (in Jo 22 Kata) attempts to execute 4 attacks, and then he takes a pause with hidari-wakigamae. Each attacking process of both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata is similar in order. In other words, count 11 in Jo 31 Kata (migi-men-uchi with a style of maki-kaeshi) is the same style of form as the one of count 11 in Jo 22 Kata (maki-kaeshi like migi-men-uchi). Furthermore, the movements of counts 15 and 16 in Jo 31 Kata (hidari-men-uchi and ushiro-tsuki, and stands with hidari-wakigamae) are also the same style, to some degree, as the ones of count 13 in Jo 22 Kata (hiki-uke like hidari-men-uchi posture and ushiro-tsuki, and stands with hidari-wakigamae).

Imagine a free program in figure skating, for example. Although a skater may create his own program, he must follow some rules that are required to do executing a triple jump, a triple axel or a triple toe to some degree when he executes his own free program. In Jo Kata, you may include some kind of technique or movement you like, but you must follow the selected reasonable framework of jo-performing forms (or Jo Kata).

In part 2 of the stage of “ha” **in Jo 31 Kata**, he executes 2 ashi-waza (ashi-harai and ashi-tsuki). Those movements correspond to counts 17, 18, and 19. After that, he takes right foot sideward with hidari-ryote-age posture, and then he executes shome-uchi while taking his left foot backward. Those movements correspond to count 20. Finally, he executes ushiro-tsuki, kneels on his left knee with raising his right knee (this posture is called hidari-orishiki), and then he takes a pause with hidari-wakigamae. Those movements correspond to count 21. Count 21 is the end of the stage of “ha” in Jo 31 Kata.

Meanwhile, **in Jo 22 Kata**, he executes sukui-age at the height of an opponent’s face that corresponds to count 14. After that, he executes kao-tsuki that corresponds to count 15. Furthermore, after changing a grip holding, he executes mune-tsuki, and then he withdraws with hidari-ryote-age posture. Those movements correspond to count 16. Finally, he takes his left foot backward, blocks an opponent’s uchi-waza with uke (jun) posture like hidari-men-uchi, executes ushiro-tsuki, and then he takes a pause with hidari-orishiki posture holding his jo with hidarti-wakigamae. Those movements correspond to count 17. Count 17 is the end of the stage of “ha’ in Jo 22 Kata.

In both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata, although the first 2 actions are totally different from Jo 31 Kata (ashi-waza) and Jo 22 Kata (men-waza), the last part of both of them is almost the same.

3) Kyu (the climax of the performance)

In Jo 31 Kata, standing up from hidari-orishiki posture with hidari-wakigamae, he executes mune-tsuki with kaeshi-tsuki no kamae that corresponds to count 22. Next, changing a grip holding (mochi-kae), he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae twice. Those movements correspond to counts 23, 24, and 25. Then he executes ushiro-tsuki and ashi-harai with both actions taking steps backward. Those movements correspond to counts 26 and 27. After that, he executes mune-tsuki with kaeshi-tsuki no kamae that corresponds to count 28. Furthermore, changing a grip holding, he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae. Those movements correspond to counts 29 and 30. Finally, he executes migi-men-uchi with a style of maki-kaeshi that corresponds to count 31. Count 31 is the end of the stage of “kyu” in Jo 31 Kata.

In Jo 22 Kata, standing up from hidari-orishiki posture with hidari-wakigamae, he executes ashi-harai and ashi-tsuki. Those movements correspond to counts 18 and 19. After changing a grip holding, he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae. Those movements correspond to count 20. After that, he takes his left foot backward with sukui-age (or scoop up), block an opponent’s attack with uke (gyaku), and then he stands with migi-chudan (gyaku). Those movements correspond to count 21. Finally, after changing a grip holding, he executes mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae. Those movements correspond to count 22. Although count 22 is the end of number counting, an optional movements of zanshin may be added to count 22 in Jo 22 Kata, that is, counting “& 1.” So, he executes maki-kaeshi like migi-men-uchi that corresponds to count &, and, after changing a grip holding, he continues to execute mune-tsuki with choku-tsuki no kamae that corresponds to count 1. That is the end of the stage of “kyu” in Jo 22 Kata.

How do you find some similarities in this final stage of “kyu” between Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata? Counts 26 and 27 in Jo 31 Kata and counts 21 in Jo 22 Kata are the same movements, that is, after executing tsuki-waza respectively, the rhythmic movements of moving backward and forward during a short moment with each Jo Kata. Count 31 in Jo 31 Kata and count & (after 22) in Jo 22 Kata are the same movements with a style of maki-kaeshi like migi-men-uchi.

Conclusion

I hope you enjoyed reading my analysis of both Jo 31 Kata and Jo 22 Kata. The bottom line is that you must not lose the opportunities of learning Jo Kata with waisting time in argument about which one of them is correct. On behalf of you, I have analyzed Jo Kata. So now, all you have to do is practice two Jo Kata personally. But what I want you to do is that you should keep in mind that both famous instructors of Aikikai organization had learned Jo Kata from O’Sensei directly over 70 years ago, and continued to train and teach Jo Kata respectively.

Finally, as I add a comparable chart: <Attached Table of Jo Kata> to this article (see the next page 7), this simple chart helps you understand the framework of Jo Kata that I formed a hypothesis for this article. Saito Sensei applied to count in an interval of equal tone from 1 to 31. Meanwhile, Tohei Sensei counted in rhythmic tempo like this: 1- (pause), 2- (pause), 3-4-5-6- (pause), 7-8-9-10-11-12-13- (pause), 14-15-16-17- (pause), 18-19-20-21-22-& -1 (end). So, I hope that you follow those suggestions in counting respectively.

Today the 46th President began his new administration in pursuit of the unity of the US that was divided personally, politically, racially, and regionally. So, I hope that you begin to practice Jo Kata again in pursuit of the harmony of your mind and body amid coronavirus pandemic.

<Attached Table of Jo Kata>

JO 31 KATA AND JO 22 KATA TO COMPARE THE FRAMEWORK

Jo 31 Kata	Jo 22 Kata
Counts	Counts
1) “Jo” (the opening of performance)	
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5
6	6
7	7
8 pauses with hidari-chudan (then ushiro-muki)	8 pauses with hidari-chudan (then ushiro-muki)
2) “Ha” (the changing of a tempo of performance)	
9	9
10	10
11	11
12	12
13	13 pauses with hidari-wakigamae
14	14
15	15
16 pauses with hidari-wakigamae	16
17	17 pauses with hidari-wakigamae (hidari-orishiki posture)
18	
19	
20	
21 pauses with hidari-wakigamae (hidari-orishiki posture)	
3) “Kyu” (the climax of performance)	
22	18
23	19
24	20
25	21
26	22 stands with migi-chudan
27	(& stands with hidari-chudan
28	(1) pauses with hidari-chudan
29	
30 stands with migi-chudan	
31 pauses with hidari-chudan	

