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A brief history-

Kumihimo means, “gathered thread” in Japanese. The term is broad and can be very misleading when looking at the history of it because not much is known of it due to the information not being shared. Techniques were often handed down from master to apprentice only to be lost to time. It even includes the predecessor to the general term Kumihimo known as finger loop braiding which is now included under the broad definition.

Some of the earliest simple braids have been dated to the Jomon period (ca. 14,000-ca. 300 BC). It was not until the Asuka and Nara periods where more advanced techniques were being introduced that Kumihimo was seen as a skilled craftwork and is still considered as one of the traditional Japanese arts. As time went on, braid patterns became more developed and were used for head pieces for nobility, religious ceremonies, in tea ceremonies with tea carts and containers often adorned with a braid, and for armor, helmets and weapons during the Samurai period. Even though it is a broad term that covers many things; one thing remains consistent and that is that it represents an entire culture of braiding which has continued throughout time.

Preparing the cord-

Yatsu Se Gumi: 8 Strand Flat Braid

40” of cord will make roughly a 20” braid.

No knot start formula: Finished braid length times 3 for total cord to cut. If you want a tassel add the length of the tassel. Double the amount for the no knot technique. This is to determine how much to cut for each warp (cord). This particular braid has 4 warps.

Example without tassel: 5” finished braid x 3=15”. 15” x 2 = 30” per warp to be cut.

Example with tassel: 5” finished braid x 3=15”. 15” + 5” tassel= 20”. 20” x 2 for no knot start= 40” per warp.

You can, also, start without a clean end by knotting the total number of warps at one end. Each warp will be cut double the finished braid length.

Example: A 40" finished braid will start with 8 warps of 80" fiber tied together at one end. The end is placed through the hole of the disk and each warp placed in the corresponding slots on the disk.

Beginning the Yatsu Se Gumi braid-

Cut 4 warps (8 cords total) to length and fold in half place a piece of yarn, hemp, etc. in center using a Lark's Head Knot.

Put the knotted center down the center hole.

Place cord ends in beginning slots corresponding to the first diagram (Step #1) on the pattern sheet.

Roll each loose end of a cord onto a bobbin to prevent them from tangling.

Using the pattern sheet, go through the steps until the desired braid length is reached. If you want a tassel at the end stop the braiding so that the length of the loose fiber matches the desired tassel length.

Correcting Mistakes-

Braid slowly so no mistakes. If it does happen look at the center hole on the tool and look for the last cord located on the top of the braid. That was the last move done. Using the pattern sheet reverse the steps until the mistake is removed.

Example: The last cord is in slot 32. Referring to the pattern sheet that move is in Step #5 and goes back to slot 23. Go back to Step #4 and reverse those moves and so on until the mistake is fixed. Then, start at that point and continue to braid.

Finishing the braid-

Hold the braid tightly between the thumb and forefinger to prevent the braid from coming undone or use a clip-small chip clips work great- and place it right under the bottom of the disk where the braid has ended. Carefully remove the cord from the disk.

Tie the cords with an overhand knot but do not tie it tightly as it will be removed later.

Binding the ends and creating tassels-

Wrap the end with a separate piece of fiber used for the braid by laying the end against the braid (a touch of glue will help secure it) and wrapping a length of fiber tightly around several times to hold it. Leave approximately the same length of fiber at the end of this piece as the length of each tassel fiber. Add a needle to the end and pull it down through the wrapped section until it matches the length of the tassel. If necessary any excess can be trimmed off.

Knotting the end on the braid can be used to create a fancier tassel.

The braid can also be bound by sewing through the braid several times until the fibers are all secure. Leave a tail at the end of the fiber used for sewing and then secure it by pulling the needle further up the fiber and then wind the thread 6 to 8 times around the stitching neatly to hide it and then pull the needle down through the wrapped area and give it a firm tug to make sure it all secure and there is no slipping on the braid. Trim the ends if necessary.

Gluing the ends-

Tie a knot on the braid and tighten it firmly. Add a drop of glue to seal the knot. When the glue has set (not completely dried) trim the cord close to the knot and allow it to finish drying. NOTE: Glue can discolor some fibers so use it sparingly.

Wire wrapping the ends-

Begin with a length of wire and lay the end against the finished braid. Wrap the wire around making sure it is tight against the braid so it will hold. Trim and tuck the end in to prevent it from catching.

This technique can also be used to connect more than one braid together.

Start wrapping the wire a few inches in from the end and using a pair of pliers twist the ends in to create a spiral or other design of wire wrapping for a fancier finish.

A simple finish-

Using 2 cords each time, knot them together close to the braid and repeat with all of the warps.

How to Create a Disk from Cardboard:

1. Draw a circle that is 4 ¼" in diameter onto a piece of cardboard and cut it out.
2. Draw a center hole that is 7/8" in diameter and cut out the center.
3. Mark 32- 3/8" long lines around the disk that are spaced 3/8" apart.
4. Between the numbers thirty two and number one place an "N" for North with a • (dot) above the letter, between the numbers 8 and 9 place an "E" for East with a • (dot) above the letter, between numbers 16 and 17 the letter S for South with a • (dot) above the letter and between the numbers 24 and 25 the letter W for West with a • (dot) above the letter.
5. Carefully, cut each mark that was created in the second step to create the slots of your disk.
6. Return to section entitled, "Beginning the Yatsu Se Gumi Braid" on page 3 and set up your disk and continue from there to create the braid.

Resources:

Disks, Bobbins and Cording-

***Fire Mountain Gems:**

https://www.firemountaingems.com/shop/kumihimo_technique

***Beadaholique:** <https://beadaholique.com/> (Use “Kumihimo Disk” and “Kumihimo Cord” in the search to narrow it down)

***Kumihimo Thread including Imposter Thread, Marudais, Disks, etc:**

<http://braidershand.com/>

***Kumihimo Bobbins aka curlers used in this class:**

https://www.amazon.com/Pieces-Silicone-Curlers-Rollers-Storage/dp/B07QWRTS/GF/ref=pd_cp_194_2?pd_rd_w=7x3Mj&pf_rd_p=ef4dc990-a9ca-4945-ae0b-f8d54

