

Introduction

If on the publication of my first book, "Shibari, the Art of Japanese Bondage" (Glitter/Secret Press, 2004), a friend had told me that I'd be writing a second, more detailed work on this arcane but fascinating subject in less than four years time I'd certainly have shaken my head in wonder. And yet, such is the case. To my great surprise, that first volume proved popular and, more significantly, prompted so many intelligent questions and kind comments from its readers that a more encyclopedic book seemed the logical thing to do.

Unlike that first effort which was a simple essay and photographic appreciation of its subject, this book seeks to entertain and also be useful by answering those questions, solving those riddles and addressing those mysteries that have perplexed the non Japanese speaking Western enthusiast of kinbaku (also known as shibari) over the years. In this the author hopes to de-mystify and clarify but not diminish this most intriguing of Japanese erotic arts.

Four years have been spent rigorously researching and writing this book. Museums have been visited, numerous historical and modern works have been translated and respected authorities contacted in an effort to verify every statement made herein. It's been an exciting experience and even after forty years of studying Japan and thirty years of passionate interest in kinbaku, I'm delighted to find that there's always something new to learn. Of course, mistakes do occur and I take full responsibility for any errors and/or omissions.

Who is this volume for? Well, it's certainly not for everyone. If the thought of any sadomasochistic practice as part of a loving relationship is repellent to you then you've picked up the wrong book. Likewise, if causing pain is your thing then you'll also likely be disappointed since shibari/kinbaku can and should be one of the most loving and sensual of SM experiences.

However, anyone who has been struck by the beauty of a shibari image, thrilled to the concept of binding a lover or of being bound oneself (vincilagnia) or been curious as to how such a unique, exotic, dramatic and beautiful form of bondage art could develop as part of the history and culture of Japan will, I hope, find some value here. And the book's amusing subtitle is meant only *somewhat* in jest. Japanese is one of the hardest of languages for the Westerner to learn and this can become an almost insurmountable barrier to understanding if the subject under scrutiny is unusual and complex, as is certainly the case here.

This work is divided into seven chapters: The World of Kinbaku, Twenty-five key figures in shibari/kinbaku history, a Gallery of photographs, a Glossary of shibari terms, a "How to Tie" section, an Afterward and, finally, an extensive Bibliography.

It should be noted that all names used are presented in the traditional Japanese manner, that is the last (or family) name is given first, i.e. Smith, John. In addition, the names of famous shibari/kinbaku artists, their art works and techniques and other Japanese historical figures and personalities mentioned in this book use the spellings most commonly seen in the West. This is because the vagaries of romaji (the 19th century writing system that transfers the traditional pictographs of Japanese kanji into the Latin alphabet) have caused many variations in the spelling of these names over the years and I have seen even so famous a name as Itoh Seiyu spelled: Ito Seiu, Itoh Sieu and Itoh Suo. My only recourse to this problem is to use the spellings that I have encountered the most in my researches, even though they come from both older and newer romaji systems.

In this book I discuss many of the famous Japanese "rope masters" of history and today. The term "rope master" can be translated as "kinbakushi" or "nawashi" or "bakushi" or "seme-shi" and several other variants. Simply out

of personal preference and convenience, I have chosen to use the term "bakushi" when referring to master rope artists.

Throughout the course of this book, usually at the end of each section, the reader will see questions printed in bold type followed by an answer. These are actual questions chosen from the hundreds I've been asked since the publication of my first book and they run the gamut from the very sophisticated, "How did a Japanese martial art become an erotic art?" to the amusing, "Wasn't shibari invented in 1972 by two California dudes working in the porn biz?"

Finally, in addition to discussing the numerous historical and technical aspects of Japanese style erotic bondage, this book hopes to address two basic questions: "Is shibari/kinbaku an art?" and "What is the beauty of kinbaku?"

Questions:

"What is the difference between the words shibari and kinbaku?"

The terms shibari and kinbaku are virtually synonymous and both have been used in Japan for many years. However, shibari (the older term) generally means "to bind" or "to tie" whereas kinbaku (the more modern word) means to "bind tightly" or to "bind in a sexual context." The word "kinbaku" also carries the added meaning of being the art of traditional Japanese erotic bondage. That is, shibari done in the traditional or historical manner for an aesthetic and/or erotic effect. (Author's note: In this book these words will be used interchangeably.)

"Wasn't shibari invented in 1972 by two California dudes working in the porn biz?"

No.

The World of Kiribaku

Spirituality, History and Commerce

What is shibari/kinbaku? Briefly put, it is the technique of safe, sensual, dramatic and erotic bondage that's been raised to an art form in Japan. As a shibari/kinbaku teacher and practitioner for over thirty years, I've been amazed at the recent surge in popularity in the West for this most Japanese of subjects. Certainly, the current popularity for all things Japanese in the United States and on the Internet are two of the main causes for this as shibari images now routinely pass through the ether and all across the globe. This is both a positive thing, in that most cultural exchanges are positive, and also something of a dilemma since, as might be expected with a subject grounded in a language so foreign to most English speakers as Japanese, many confusions and misunderstandings occur and the context for these images is often missing.

When a Westerner first encounters a shibarilkinbaku image they usually note with surprise its erotic power and the complexity of the rope design. They might be stimulated, intrigued or even disturbed but they're usually not bored. This is certainly understandable due to the dramatic nature of these pictures and especially true of an art that most Westerners view through the prism of European or American attitudes about sadomasochism (SM); a practice which, in the more conservative West, is sometimes seen as odd or unusual despite survey reports that upwards of 15% of the population profess some personal interest. When considering kinbaku art this uninformed, filtered reaction is especially unfortunate because it is so limiting. How limiting? Well, it might surprise the reader to learn that the historical origins and artistic uses of kinbaku run the gamut from centuries old martial arts to modern day manga (Japanese comics), from 18th-century judicial punishments to 19th-century theatrical presentations and from sophisticated love making techniques dating back 1500 years, to famous works of Ukiyo-e (woodblock print) art, modern advertising and pornography; a very wide range of activities, indeed.

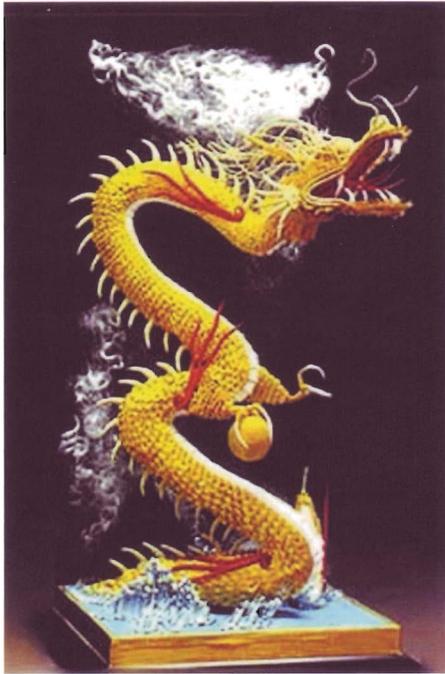
How did this occur and why did it happen in Japan? These questions might seem difficult to answer but the truth has always been out there in that country's fading manuscripts, oral histories, yellowing photographs and modern works that record the fascinating history, both worldly and spiritual, of its people. One simply has to learn to look in the right places.

Tying the knot, the practical and sacred bonds of Japan

A Japanese friend of mine recently said that, "Tying for the Japanese people comes almost as naturally as breathing." By this he meant that the Japanese have a special affinity for an activity that is grounded so deeply in their culture and everyday lives. For instance, most Westerners appreciate how beautiful and intricate the wrappings of Japanese gift packages are and how lovely the kimono is, with its obi tied gracefully across the wearer's middle and how dramatic samurai armor appears, every protective element of which is tied onto the warrior's body. Remarkable to Western eyes, these sights are fairly common for the Japanese; as is another interesting and artful tradition, the practice of ceremonial tying called Mizuhiki.

Mizuhiki is actually the name for strong thin twine that is used to decorate envelopes made of washi, traditional Japanese paper. In Japanese society these envelopes are presented to friends, acquaintances and business associates to convey good wishes and/or to express thanks, gratitude and condolence. The knots used to tie the envelopes carry such evocative names as the chrysanthemum flower tie or the plum tie and look every bit as beautiful as the names imply.

The history of Mizuhiki dates back to the Heian Era of Japan (794-1185) when ladies of the court learned intricate



Mizuhiki dragon

knot tying to decorate gifts and letters. Specific knots communicated the identity of the sender and even expressed the sender's feelings much in the same way that the "language of flowers" did in Europe's Middle Ages, the tradition that gave us such symbolism as the red rose conveying the idea of "passionate" love. During the Edo Era (1611-1868) this twine was used to tie up the hair of samurai into their fashionable and distinctive "top knot," an identifying symbol of status for that fiercely proud warrior class. Today Mizuhiki art is often seen at wedding ceremonies where the table decorations and other ornaments, kimonos, the wedding dress and even the bride's hair clip are either adorned by or created with it. Most spectacularly, Mizuhiki is used by fine artists to create delicate, celebratory sculptures of paper in the of "auspicious" animals such as the crane, turtle or the mythical dragon.

However, such well known examples as these are just the tip of the iceberg for a culture where tying and the use of rope for significant, even religious, activities have been an integral part of life for centuries. This is the first important reason why shibari/kinbaku must be looked at quite differently than Western bondage. It is part of an artistic aesthetic that has many deep historical, religious and cultural resonances rather than just a technique for restraint and while it isn't

the intent of this book to be a sociological or anthropological study, a few more examples of these close connections between tying and the Japanese culture might be useful.

Where does the oldest pottery in the world come from? It comes from Japan and is a product of the Jomon culture, Japan's oldest known historical era dating back, at least, 13,000 years. Of interest to us is the fact that Jomon means "twisted cord" and this is the distinguishing decorative characteristic of its ancient pottery. The Jomon people were hunter-gatherers but they used twisted cords to decorate their day to day pottery and, more significantly, their religious vessels.

Around 300 BC rice cultivation began in Japan, probably imported through China or Korea. As is well known, rice is Japan's most important crop and has been cultivated by the Japanese for over 2000 years. Its fundamental importance to the country and its culture is reflected in the facts that rice was once used as a currency and that the Japanese word for cooked rice (gohan) has also the general meaning of "a meal." In short, rice is essential to life and sacred to the Japanese.

To give thanks for the successful harvest of so important a crop as rice would be a natural expression of the people growing it. This is a fundamental aspect of Japan's oldest religion Shinto and artful tying has a place here, too.

Shinto, literally "The Way of the Gods," is Japan's indigenous folk religion and can be traced back to at least the end of the Jomon period (300 BC). It is a pantheistic, ancestor and nature worshipping belief system. "Shin" (also known as Kami) is the generic term for the gods, goddesses, divine spirits, and various demonic and semi-benevolent nature spirits that are worshiped,



Jomon pottery with twisted cord design, circa 5000 BC



Shimenawa denoting a sacred space

prayed to, celebrated and/or feared in Shinto. The second character "To" means road, path, or way. Over 109 million Japanese currently practice some form of Shintoism.

Kami inhabit the water, rocks, trees, grass and other natural objects and places. These various objects and locales are not symbols of the gods and spirits – rather they are the abodes in which they reside and are venerated as such by the Shinto worshiper. Of importance to us is that the abode of the Kami is considered sacred and is usually encircled with a shimenawa (a rope festooned with sacred white papers) that creates a sacred space that is itself venerated. It should also be noted that while these days most people use cotton, nylon or hemp cord, originally rope in ancient Japan was made from rice straw, thus making the reason for giving thanks even more obvious and the worship even more pointed. Shimenawa are most commonly found on the torii (the ceremonial gateways) of Shinto shrines and also on other sacred objects such as trees, rocks and other revered structures.

Other important connections between the Shinto religion, its shrines and sacred rope or tying include the chinowa, a rope ring used for cleansing ceremonies in spring, autumn and at the New Year, kadomatsu, a specially tied stand of bamboo or pine placed near the entrance of the home to welcome the New Year and hinawa, a thin cord lit at a shrine and then brought back to the home so that all who live there might continue to enjoy a good harvest and prosperity the whole year round.

Japan's famous Sumo wrestling began as a Shinto ritual to pray for a bountiful harvest. Introduced into ceremonies of the Imperial Court sometime in the Nara Era (eighth century), Sumo wrestling, the national sport of Japan, is mentioned in one of the country's first written histories, the Kojiki, which dates from A.D. 712. Most modern-day Sumo traditions were developed under the patronage of the court and in the Edo Era (1603-1868) professional Sumo groups were organized to entertain the rapidly expanding merchant class. Simply put, it is one of Japan's most idiosyncratic and important sports.

Of interest to us is that the Sumo wrestler's ceremonial belt or loincloth (the mawashi) is decorated with rope to look identical to the shimenawa that creates the sacred spaces of Shinto. Wearing this belt the Sumo wrestler performs shiko (stomping on the floor of the wrestling space with first the right and then the left leg) to purge any bad spirits hidden underground and to encourage positive Kami to appear.



Shimenawa marking the gate (torii) of a Shinto shrine

Japan's second great religion, Buddhism, arrived in Japan in AD 539 from Korea and today is practiced by over 96 million people. Called Bukkyo in Japanese, Buddhism is a philosophical system of rigorous mental and physical practice that attempts to end all suffering by adherence to strict ethical and spiritual guidelines. It offers a moral code based on compassion and non-violence and, through meditation, a way to achieve spiritual insight. It was founded in northeastern India 2500 years ago and is based on the teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who is known as the Buddha.

Many Japanese practice Shintoism and Buddhism concurrently. This duality is characteristic of the Japanese people's tolerant attitudes toward religion where having a mix of various religions in one's daily life is common. Consequently, Shintoism and Buddhism have flourished together (sharing deities and sacred grounds) for most of Japan's recorded history.



While Shintoism has many sacred uses of rope, Buddhism, originally from India, has fewer. However, those it does have are significant. For instance, there is the "endless knot" of Buddhism. This intriguing design is one of the eight auspicious symbols of Buddhism and symbolizes the intertwining of wisdom and compassion, the perfection of knowledge.

Endless knot

There are many divinities worshipped in Japanese Buddhism, almost all originating in India and often represented in its spiritual artworks. One is Fudo Myōjin, the central deity of the Mikkyō (Kings of Light) of the esoteric Shingon sect of Japanese Buddhism. Esoteric Buddhism emphasized the use of magic to control supernatural forces in order to reach spiritual enlightenment. In art, Fudo Myōjin is usually depicted with a devil-subduing sword in his right hand (representing wisdom cutting through ignorance) and a rope in his left hand (to catch and bind up demons and/or the opponents of Buddhism). He often has a third eye in his forehead (all-seeing) and is usually pictured seated or standing on a rock (because Fudo is "immovable" in his faith).

Then there is Jizō, one of the most loved of all Japanese Buddhist divinities. Usually depicted as a monk, he is traditionally seen as the guardian of children and the protective deity of travelers and firefighters. Roadside statues of Jizō are a common sight all over Japan. The Narihira Santosen Temple in Tokyo contains the famous "Bound Jizō" dating from the Edo era. When petitions are requested before this Jizō, tradition dictates that the petitioner tie a rope (sold by the temple for 100 Yen) around the statue. When the wish is granted, the petitioner unties the rope. So popular is this practice that the statue is worn almost smooth because of over 200 years of binding.

Along with the transmission of Buddhism, the famous Sanskrit sexual text the Kama sutra was also introduced from India into Japan in the sixth century AD.

The version of the Kama sutra traditionally practiced in Japan is usually referred to as the "Forty-eight sexual positions" (Shijūhachijū). The origin of this famous manual of love making can easily be traced back to Hindu India where the Kama sutra was compiled around 300 AD. The Forty-eight sexual positions in the Shijūhachijū seem to have derived from the Chinese interpretations of the Kama sutra and not directly from the original Indian text. In the process of transferring from one country to another some positions in the Kama sutra may have been dropped and replaced by those more specifically Japanese.

Of special interest to the student of shibari/kinbaku is that four techniques from the Shijūhachijū specifically utilize rope (or the cords from the kimono) in their realization. These are the Rihishirazu, Kubihiki Renbo, Yabusame and Daruma Kaeshi positions. These couplings appear unique to the Japanese version of the Kama sutra and freely incorporate elements of bondage in sexual play between consenting adults. The Daruma Kaeshi especially, where one partner's ankles and thighs are tied together, bears a striking resemblance to a common kinbaku technique for binding the legs.



Fudo Myōjin

Other examples from history and daily life that show the close connection between artful tying and the Japanese are numerous and various. For instance, the elegant way trees are bound in order to protect them in winter (yukitsuri) or even the way barrels of sake are wrapped for shipping. A visit to my favorite Japanese restaurant recently revealed three casks used as decoration. Each cask was beautifully wrapped and tied in such complex and distinctive patterns that they would even stand comparison with Buddhism's "endless knot." There are many more examples. However, I think the diversity of the above makes the point.

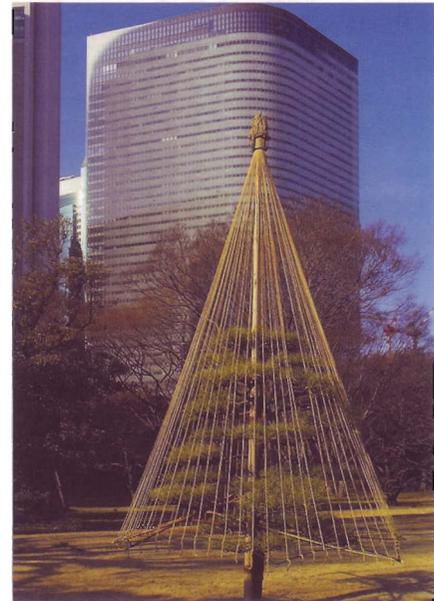
And if the Western reader is surprised by how sexual tying (bondage), spirituality and religion have been combined and accommodated by the Japanese, it should be remembered that the Japanese culture is very different in sexual orientation from any Western society based on Judeo-Christian beliefs. To quote the Kinsey Institute's "International Encyclopedia of Sexuality (2004)," Robert Francoeur Ph.D. and Raymond J. Noonan Ph.D., general editors: "The Shinto religion recognizes neither good nor evil, so the concept of sin and personal guilt so commonly associated with sex in Western cultures does not exist in the Japanese tradition Nor does Shinto or the many forms of Japanese Buddhism have the notion of original sin. Neither religion has a single Deity who acts as Law-Giver and Eternal Judge of human wrongdoing. Japan lacks- and has lacked throughout its history-an organized, hierarchical, and centralized church for which sexuality is thought to be a sure path to damnation. In many ways, modern Japan retains-and *aestheticizes* (italics mine) - an open peasant frankness about things sexual.' This is not to say that Japan is a peasant society- **i**t is nothing of the sort. Instead, Japan is the only major industrialized nation that has *not* demonized sexuality under the rubrics of sin, danger, and pollution."

Now, does this mean that the Japanese bakushi (rope artist) or SM stage performer is thinking about or is even aware of these spiritual and cultural connections when they strive to entertain their audiences of jaded "salary men" or create their erotic imagery? Almost certainly not. However, the distant resonances are there and it is surprising how often many of the greatest shibari/kinbaku artists and performers over the years, people like the late, legendary Akechi Denki sensei and the still active Yukimura Haruki and Arisue Go refer to a "spiritual connection" when they talk about their partners and their art. Arisue Go was particularly eloquent on this subject in a 1997 essay in his book "Jissen Kinbaku: Shibari kata Kyoshitsu" where he called kinbaku a uniquely Japanese form of "aesthetic eroticism."

And for those of us not using shibari in a commercial way but who only strive to give pleasure and express gratitude and affection to a beloved partner through the techniques of kinbaku, is the adjective "spiritual" really that inappropriate? Frankly, as a definition for the private areas where such love, art and mutual trust are contained and expressed, the phrase "sacred space" seems more than fitting.

History and the origins of kinbaku

When a Westerner looks at authentic shibari/kinbaku for the first time, their first question is often, "How did such a complicated style of tying come into being?" Put another way, how did so erotic a method of sexual bondage, where a hemp/jute rope molds and sculpts the human body so exquisitely so as to create art and, ideally, give such pleasure to the participants ever evolve? Is it a product of the unfathomable enchanted East with its supposedly



Yukitsuri - protecting trees for winter

mysterious and ancient sexual secrets or is it more mundane and understandable than this?

The simple answer is that the history of shibari/kinbaku is a reflection of the history and culture of Japan. Its centuries of isolation from the rest of the world, its often violent feudal past as well as its artistic sophistication all played a part. In the previous section we've explored some of the connections between Japanese society, religion and various unusual and meaningful styles of tying. We've looked at the different types of symbolism that rope can convey as well as some of the intricate patterns it can make. It's now time to explore the brutal realities of history in two further precursors to modern shibarilkinbaku, hOjojutsu and the "official punishments."

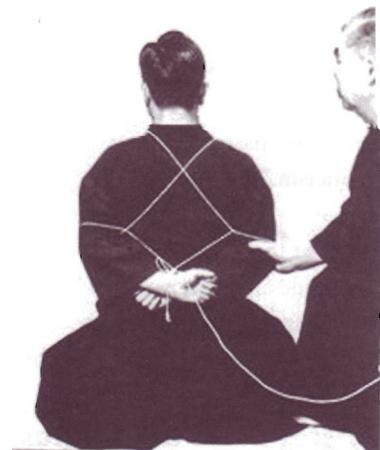
Hojojutsu, the capturing and tying martial art

The early history of Japan is, as with many countries, a history of warfare. Towards the end of the 12th century, after years of intermittent struggle between powerful families, conflicts between clans erupted into civil war. These hundred years of conflict, spanning the Onin war (1467-1477) and the "Sengoku jidai" or "warring states period" (1492-1560) are noted for their brutality as various factions vied with one another to control Japan. At such a time the martial arts flourish and it is here that we begin to see a distinctive Japanese approach to the capture and restraint of prisoners, the evolution of hojojutsu.

Hojojutsu (sometimes called Nawajutsu) is the traditional Japanese martial art of restraining an opponent using cord or rope. It is thought that hOjojutsu was once one of the 18 vital fighting skills taught to Japanese warriors. In combat it was not uncommon for a samurai to carry a rope for attack, defense, for use as a tool or as a restraint for prisoners of war. Originally encompassing many different materials, techniques and methods from the earliest martial arts schools (ryu), hOjojutsu is a quintessentially Japanese combat art and a unique product of Japanese history and culture.

Although Japan's often violent history has made the study of feudal armor and weapons such as the bow and the samurai sword (along with the techniques for their use) fairly straightforward, the exact origins of the formal, studied use of rope for restraint and as a fighting technique remains somewhat obscure. Dr. Itatsu Yasuhiko's fascinating chapter on hOjojutsu in his excellent 1992 book, *YoryokuDoshin Jutte Hojo* ("The Constable's Arts"), suggests that hojojutsu might have been included in the teachings of the Takenouchi-ryu of martial arts, founded in 1532. This school, one of the oldest in Japan and still in operation, once taught 630 different fighting techniques, about 150 of which are still practiced today. Regardless of its exact origins, what is clear is that hojojutsu was and is a very effective means of capture and binding and understanding its basic techniques is vital to an understanding of how modern shibarilkinbaku evolved.

All of the historical hojojutsu ties that we know of today display a shrewd understanding of human anatomy and succeed through several recurrent themes of applied restraint. These include leverage-removal (tying limbs in various positions that decrease the power they can generate), rope-placement (to discourage struggling or to make it ineffective and/or dangerous, i.e. by placing one or more loops of rope around the neck) and creating constriction around sensitive nerve points on the upper arms, wrists or other areas (where determined struggle puts pressure on blood vessels and nerves thus numbing these extremities).



Shimuza Takaji demonstrating a hojojutsu tie from the famed Ittatsu-ryu, circa 1960

In 1603, at the battle of Sekigahara, Tokugawa Ieyasu finally overcame all resistance and at last unified Japan. He forged a rigid social structure (with the samurai class on top), created an effective administrative bureaucracy and built a capitol city. The years 1603-1868 were those of the Tokugawa shogunate and are called the "Edo era" today. Edo, modern day Tokyo, was the shogun's capital and so became the cultural, governmental and economic center of Japan.

During 250 years of Tokugawa rule, Japan remained free from civil war and, most importantly, existed in almost complete isolation from the West. This did not end until United States Commodore Matthew Perry opened American trade with Japan in 1854, the Tokugawa shogunate dissolved under internal pressure and the Emperor Meiji assumed power in 1868, thus beginning a rush to modernization and militarism that would culminate in World War II.

Of the many keys to understanding the origins of shibari/kinbaku, the centuries of near isolation Japan experienced until 1854 is central. During this time, free from outside influence and the advancements of metal technology (that produced easily available handcuffs, chains, etc.), hojojutsu became a prominent law enforcement technique and rapidly developed in sophistication and symbolism. Low ranking samurai (doshin), no longer needed for warfare, assumed administrative posts as police and dealt with the day to day crime fighting problems of both major cities and outlying provinces; crimes as diverse as brawling, arson, treason and murder. These duties often involved the taking of criminals and so the combat techniques of warfare became the vital policing techniques of peacetime.

Generally speaking, Hojojutsu in the Edo era can be divided into two broad categories: Hayanawa and Honnawa.

The first, Hayanawa, is the capture of prisoners done with a strong, thin cord (usually 3-4 millimeters in width) called a hayanawa or "fast rope." This cord was carried by constables in a small bundle (on their wrists, belts or in their kimono sleeves) that fed cord from one end as needed. This torinawa ("capture-rope") was coiled so that the cord would payout smoothly as it was passed around the prisoner's body, neck and arms as he or she was tied. This was usually accomplished by one constable in the course of performing an arrest and while the prisoner was actively resisting, so it had to be accomplished quickly.

The second category, Honnawa (meaning "main" or "official" rope), were ties effected with one or more cords which like the torinawa could be of several different lengths but was a proper hemp/jute rope, possibly 6 or more millimeters in diameter and used to provide a more secure, long-term binding than was possible with the torinawa. This method of tying was used for transportation of prisoners to a place of incarceration and examination, restraint at legal proceedings and, in the case of particularly severe crimes, for the public display of the prisoner prior to execution.

Honnawa ties were usually applied by a group of constables, two to four in number, whose presence allowed the creation of more intricate, time consuming and ornate patterns than was the case with the torinawa. This was also the method used for tying prisoners who had to be transported across provincial borders or to distant territories since the officials of different jurisdictions jealously guarded their own methods of tying and several guards surrounding a prisoner allowed for a measure of secrecy. Again, according to Dr Itatsu in his book, "Yoryoku/Doshin Jutte Hojo," the accepted rules for this type of tying were:

1. It must be impossible to escape from, even if the prisoner dislocates his joints.
2. The prisoner must not be able to understand the process of the tie.
3. The tie must not deliberately cut off circulation to any part of the body or cause nerve damage.
4. The tie must be beautiful.

What is of particular interest and importance to modern shibarilkinbaku is that both forms of tying, hayanawa and especially honnawa, combined effective restraint with a distinct visual aesthetic. This aesthetic consideration is, in some ways, the most fascinating and remarkable aspect of hojojutsu.

The ability of the Japanese to ritualize and beautify daily objects and activities, from the tea ceremony to flower arranging to package wrapping, has long been noted. Incredibly, the same was true for hojojutsu as different ties were used for the different classes of society with the distinctive and often beautiful patterns showing clearly on the prisoner's backs. This aesthetic aspect to the tying patterns is, after tie construction, the second most important inheritance that hojojutsu has bequeathed to modern erotic shibarilkinbaku. This is true even though the most complex elements of the hojojutsu patterns were displayed on the "canvas" of the bound prisoner's back whereas shibari/kinbaku patterns are usually created on and for the front of the torso. It should also be noted that some of the names of specific hojojutsu bindings have been transferred, in whole or in part, across the centuries to kinbaku.

For instance, noble samurai were often bound with the nijyuhishi nawa or "double diamond" tie or the shin kikkou, a tie that creates an ornate, hexagonal, pattern. By contrast, peasants might be bound using the **juumonji** nawa, a rather simple cross tie. There were different and specific ties for priests (different styles each for Shinto, Buddhist, or mountain ascetic), women and children. Prisoners who tried to escape were bound with the sarashinawa that cut off circulation in the fingers, while prisoners to be exiled to penal islands were bound with the sukenawa so that they could better balance themselves on shipboard. Most terrible of all, condemned prisoners were tied using the kirinawa with its distinctive small diamond pattern and obvious neck restraint. The remarkable result of all this differentiation of ties is that a passing spectator could often tell just from the type of bondage being used the social class of the prisoner as well as their crime and perhaps even their punishment.



Feudal era scroll (Emori clan) showing various hojojutsu tying techniques, some based on class

The reason for this clear differentiation in bindings is due to the fact that in Japan being bound was one of the most shameful fates that could befall a person, signifying complete disgrace and ostracism from society. Since the Edo era had a very rigid social structure with the samurai class at the top and, in descending order, the farmers, artisans and at the bottom the merchants, keeping one's place in society, even as a prisoner, was paramount. This shame in being bound, of being an outlaw outcast, has carried a fearful fascination for the Japanese for centuries and is an important psychological aspect of their SM play. Recently, in correspondence, a quite famous kinbaku model confessed to me that she'd rather have her aged parents see her having sex than see her being tied. Such was the psychological frisson of being bound.

Sometimes this concern with "binding protocol" had, from the safety of historical perspective, a somewhat amusing side. In the capitol city Edo, where many high ranking nobles (daimyo) lived, the poor police constables had a problem. What if, during an arrest, a noble was taken that later was proven innocent? The officer could face censure, disgrace and even worse. The solution? A unique feature of Edo style hayanawa is that there are often no real knots in the bindings! Instead, the rope is intricately wrapped to bind the prisoner. This lack of knots gave the arresting officer a degree of deniability if, in court, he was ever accused of impropriety. After all, the prisoner wasn't really "tied," just wrapped!

This was only true in Edo, the capital of the shogun and of protocol. In the provinces true knots were always used. Interestingly enough, in modern kinbaku there is a style of tying that also just uses wraps with few or no knots.

During the years of war and conflict all warriors studied hojojutsu but after 1603, during the Edo era, only those involved in law enforcement specialized in this martial art. There were many different ryu's (schools) during that time that taught some form of hojojutsu to the police and to some of the increasingly underemployed samurai class. These schools had various styles, from those of the Sasai-ryu that taught only hayanawa (quick binding arrest techniques) and allowed for a more rushed and slapdash look, to the Ishii-ryu, unique among the different sects of hojojutsu in that it taught bindings used only for torture and interrogation.

It is interesting to note that different ryu often taught different styles of ties for similar purposes and, in other instances, different schools taught the same tie but called them by different names. This explains some of the confusions over the naming of certain shibari/kinbaku patterns inherited from hojojutsu. For instance, the famous Ittasu-ryu (founded in the 17th-century) taught a beautiful tie called the Shin-kikkou (true kikkou) which was six sided and named after the hexagonal pattern found on the back of the Japanese tortoise. However, the Taisho-ryu taught a diamond (hishi) shaped tie that they *also* called the kikkou. Both names are correct and both beautiful patterns have found their way into modern kinbaku art. (Author's note: in the photo gallery of this book several of the more distinctive hojojutsu ties from several different historical ryu are shown.)

Of course, not all of these varied binding techniques were used. Different Edo era constabularies or police forces employed different ties and even used different colored ropes to make their arrests. For instance, officers from the Kitamachi bugyou (the division responsible for law enforcement in the North of Edo) as well as the Hitsuketouzoku-aratame (the arson squad), vital in a city built of wood, used white ropes, wide and thin respectively, to make their arrests. Conversely, those officers patrolling the South of Edo (and also prison guards) used dark purple ropes. The Kanjyo Bugyou officers (loosely translated as the "tax police") and those working for the Jishya Bugyou (the constabulary that regulated religious groups) also had their own distinctive ropes and ties.

In general, the average Edomachi Bugyou (Edo police constable), and presumably his relative in the provinces, was said to use ties from as many as three different hojojutsu ryu in his duties and, understandably, to modify them for his own use in various situations. An intriguing piece of evidence I discovered in the preparation of this book gives credence to this claim.

The oldest photographic example of hojojutsu that I have in my collection dates from 1870. It was probably taken by Shimooka Renjo who is generally regarded as the "father of Japanese photography" and was certainly one of the first professional photographers in Japan. The picture in question is a recreated studio shot of a tied prisoner kneeling before a daimyo (feudal lord) or magistrate with a constable in attendance. The photo was almost certainly made for the "tourist trade" in the early days of the Meiji era when the first European and American visitors to Japan craved souvenirs depicting the quickly disappearing sites, ceremonies and occupations of the shogun's feudal times. To my surprise, this historical image, created at a time when these feudal policing procedures were still well known, shows a tie pattern that isn't duplicated in any of the numerous reference works containing the hundreds of recorded hojojutsu patterns that I've consulted. It is



Hojojutsu, circa 1870. Photo by Shimooka (?)

unique, practical and attractive and is just the sort of tie a hard working officer would use. (Author's note: this tie is also duplicated in the photo gallery.)

As the Meiji era progressed in its headlong rush to modernism, most vestiges of the Tokugawa years quickly disappeared and even the samurai class faded from the scene. Such was also the case with hojojutsu. Police officers continued to use the technique during the Meiji (1868-1912) and Taisho (1912-1926) eras but the teaching of it even to them was greatly reduced with the introduction of handcuffs, leg irons and other more "modern" instruments of police procedure. During World War II many documents and scrolls describing hojojutsu's techniques were destroyed in the numerous fires that engulfed Japan and most of the traditional martial arts were then suppressed by occupying United States forces. Today, hojojutsu is taught in only a few martial arts academies and, while we have images that show what many historical ties looked like, the secrets of such schools as the Kiraku-ryu and the Hida-ryu have been lost forever. This is a pity since hojojutsu is certainly a unique Japanese martial art and should be preserved.

Still, the Tokyo police continue to be taught a form of hojojutsu based on the Ittatsu-ryu techniques and some teachers of traditional martial arts in Japan as well as educational institutions work to preserve and maintain vestiges of the art form. Most of the information in this section comes from the Edo Keiji Hakubutsu Honkai (the Edo Crime and Punishment Museum of Meiji University in Tokyo) which holds records for over 500 different types of hojojutsu patterns and also maintains the Nawa Yumio archives and collections of historical policing equipment.

Nawa Yumio, a revered figure in Japan (someone we will encounter again in the history of shibari/kinbaku), was the soke (head of and heir to the style of) Masaki-ryu Bujutsu, a school of martial arts. He wrote several books on the subject of Edo era policing, was the historical consultant on several films and television shows and worked as a historical advisor on various matters dealing with law-enforcement.

There are also several texts on hojojutsu that still survive in print. Mizukoshi Hiro's recently reprinted book, *Torinawajutsu*, offers historical background followed by practical instruction in more than 25 traditional ties including some recreated from rare and very old texts. And then there is the long out-of-print book by the late and legendary martial artist Fujita Seiko. This monumental work, *Zukai Hojojutsu*, could be considered the bible of the art showing hundreds of ties from many different schools. Its authenticity is beyond question being drawn from the records of Fujita's own father, a Meiji era police inspector and expert on hojojutsu who retired in 1912. Unfortunately for Western practitioners, neither of these authors has any work in English.

The history of the martial art of hojojutsu is certainly a fascinating one and its role as one of the ancestors to modern erotic shibari/kinbaku is beyond question.

Questions:

"How has hojojutsu influenced modern erotic shibari/kinbaku?"

In two important ways. First, this most complex and sophisticated of tying techniques demonstrates all of the pitfalls and dangers that can be caused by rope binding, from nerve compression to strangulation. The early samurai practitioners of hojojutsu usually did not care if their prisoners, taken in combat, were injured but, as we shall see, these dangerous techniques have been studied, modified and reengineered to make modern erotic shibari, when properly executed, safe and enjoyable. Second, the concern with formal beauty in the creation of hojojutsu ties and patterns continues to be an important aesthetic inspiration.

"When the samurai class was dissolved at the end of the Tokugawa era, what happened to all the hOjojutsu teachers and practitioners?"

In the Meiji government's rush to modernize, the samurai class was dissolved. Those samurai able to find work in law enforcement did so and thereby displaced many non samurai police officials. The result was that many of the lower class officers proficient in hOjojutsu, as well as many martial arts instructors, found themselves out of work with their tying skills no longer needed. Most turned to other occupations but some were still able to put their expertise to work by making straw sandals, creating decorative knots for temples and by doing ship rigging.

Official and unofficial punishments, the imagery of power

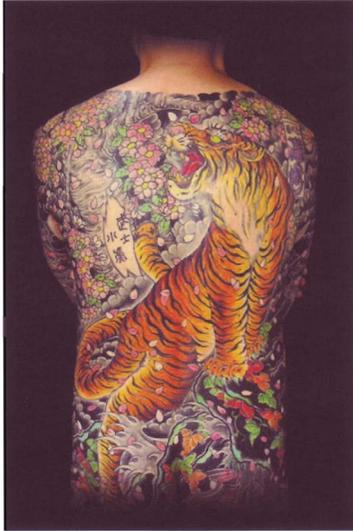
The second practical inspiration for modern day shibarilkinbaku (and indeed for much of modern Japanese SM, is to be found in some of the dramatic and unusual ways that "criminals" were dealt with throughout Japan's feudal history.

Like many other aspects of its culture, Japan's earliest legal precepts were imported from and heavily influenced by China. Recent excavations there have shown that such practices as public executions, tattooing of criminals and various other public chastisements and gruesome disfigurements were all part of the legal system of the Ch'in dynasty, the first to unify China in 221 BC. These punishments correspond quite closely to what Sasama Yoshihiko and Kashiwa Shobou in their book *Zusetsu: Nihon no Gomumon Keibatsu-shi* ("The History of Torture and Punishment in Japan") as well as various other scholars (Nawa, Ono, Inoue, Hara, Osatake, Shigematsu and Botsman - see bibliography), describe as typical penalties employed during Japan's earliest periods; from the Yamato dynasty (approximately 538-710 AD) and Nara era (710-794 AD) through to the particularly brutal Sengoku ("Warring States") period of 1492-1560. This is further supported by evidence that several well known Japanese weapons and law enforcement tools such as the samurai's sword and the Edo era police constable's jutte (iron truncheon) and sodegarami or "sleeve entangler" (a pole like weapon used to entangle a fleeing criminal's clothing), probably had their origins in ancient China.

Until the Edo era, such diverse and barbaric punishments as disfigurement, being flayed alive or stoned, tied in straw mats and drowned, thrown off cliffs, pulled apart by oxen, etc., were handed out by whatever lord, clan or power was in charge of whatever area, busy or backwater, in which "the offence" occurred. And regardless of the authority, the intent of these public punishments was to demonstrate the sovereignty of the power over the people and to hold up the convicted as a potent example to dissuade others from pursuing Similarly "illegal," "immoral" or "traitorous" behavior. In this we see an important social and psychological aspect of the Japanese character that will be a fundamental part of that country's SM practices up until the present day, the concept of shame.

Unlike Western Judeo-Christian cultures where a sense of personal guilt for transgressions against God and man has been emphaSized, in Japan it has long been the individual's honorable relationship to the group that is paramount. Or, to put it another way, the West is a guilt-based culture while that of Japan is based on shame, with the chief distinction being that the former is an internalized emotion while the latter depends on the presence of a group. This explains why the "theater of public disgrace" is so often a part of Japanese criminal punishment history. In the West the "perp walk," with the offender paraded in handcuffs before the media, is a regular, if very brief, part of the labeling of a criminal. In Japan such parading is and always was a major component of the punishment.

It was during the Edo era that the first codified set of legal statutes was introduced to regulate judicial punishments for the Tokugawa shogunate. In 1742, under the eighth Shogun, Yoshimune, the so-called "One Hundred



Modern Irezumi Art

Articles" (Kujikata Osadamegaki) became the primary source that Edo officials turned to when determining punishments; in effect Japan's first penal code. Many of the more inhuman penalties from the past were prohibited but the list of crimes and their sanctioned punishments was still a long one and included such sentences as: death by crucifixion, sword and, for the crime of arson, burning at the stake as well as "lesser punishments" such as slavery, banishment, forced labor, confiscation of property, public beatings and/or being displayed while bound and irezumi (tattooing), to indicate types of felonies committed and to identify repeat offenders.

The most common tattoo was two one inch bands of differing sizes on the upper left arm although the practice of tattooing the words "evil" or "dog" on the criminal's forehead was also known. Men, women and even children as young as nine years old were tattooed for crimes and this punishment was no slight affair as a criminal tattoo excluded a person from nearly all aspects of normal society. Before being tattooed a prisoner was often publicly bound and beaten using thin bamboo strips rolled into a bundle. Fifty strokes was the norm.

One of the more interesting consequences of this tattooing of criminals was that it spawned the practice of offenders trying to cover up the criminal "label" by incorporating it into a larger tattoo design; thus the legendary art of Japanese tattooing was furthered. As with shibari/kinbaku, this is another example of a uniquely Japanese art and aesthetic being inspired by a completely unlikely and surprising source.

The most horrendous punishments of crucifixion (also known as "stringing up") or beheading by sword were reserved for crimes of murder, blackmail, treason and several other serious capital offences. A samurai might be allowed to perform ritual suicide, or seppuku, to preserve his honor but a commoner convicted of a capital crime had no such recourse to so awful a punishment. According to Harvard scholar Daniel V. Botsman in his excellent book, *"Punishment and Power in the Making of Modern Japan,"* the first European traders and missionaries thought the practice of crucifixion was introduced into Japan with Christianity in the 16th century. However, this was not the case since "the practice of stringing people up on wooden frames before executing them can be traced back to at least the twelfth century in Japan."

Before the "stringing up" the condemned prisoner would be bound (sometimes with the kirinawa hOjojutsu pattern) and paraded around town on horseback followed by upwards of 30 armed men. The route would always take the parade through the commoner's sections of Edo so the maximum number of people could take note of crime's consequences before the execution grounds were reached. There the criminal (male or female) would be bound to a cross before being executed by spear. After death the body would be taken down, its head cut off and then this most grisly "trophy" would be placed on top of a specially constructed stand for public display.

Even the locations of Edo's two execution grounds played their part in this theater of punishment. One was located to the south of Edo on the famous Tokaido road and the other to the north near a confluence of other highways that entered the capitol. Thus, again to quote Botsman, "when furnished with signs of shogunal justice, the execution grounds were unforgettable markers of the approach to his capitol."

"bodies as signs" imagery of Tokugawa power was not limited to executions. More minor offences were also punished by public displays, either by being bound and/or flogged with a sign posted nearby announcing one's



Criminal procession - from *Tokugawa bakufu keiji zufu* by Fujita Shintaro, 1893

crimes, or by a disgraced parade through town. Nearly 1000 men were publicly flogged in Edo between the years 1862-1865 and during that same time fifty execution parades per year, nearly one per week, were recorded as having been held in the capitol. One was even photographed by the visiting European photographer Felice Beato. It seems the average citizen of Edo could hardly escape the sight of official punishments in everyday life. Is it any wonder then that the dramatic spectacles of bondage and punishment should become so important a part of Japanese drama and art, both "straight" and SM tinged?

The practice of public chastisement even affected non-criminal areas. For instance, the prostitutes of Edo's famous Yoshiwara (or "pleasure quarter") that transgressed against their masters by attempting to run away were often punished by being bound for the night outside of their establishments. This also occurred in the provinces and was reported as happening as late as 1869 by the famous British diplomat and Japanophile AB Mitford, one of the first Europeans to live and work in Japan at the dawn of the Meiji restoration. On a trip to Edo from Yokohama he reported in his journal that, "At one of these high-road pleasure-houses, ... I once saw a very melancholy sight: an unhappy girl had contrived to make her escape, ... she was caught and brought back, and to punish her, having been beaten and ill-used, she was bound hand and foot, and exposed in that condition in front of the house, as a warning to those of her mates who might attempt to follow her example."

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It is a sad truth that throughout human existence torture has been used for many ignoble reasons. Japan has certainly not been immune to this and there are numerous references to the practice throughout its historical records. Even during the relatively cultured Heian period (794-1185) beatings were allowed in order to punish wrongdoers or to extract confessions to crimes. In the Edo era it was officially and especially sanctioned in order to extract such confessions. This was vital to the workings of Tokugawa justice because official proceedings, from which sentences would be given out, were almost never conducted unless there was every reason to believe the suspect would confess publicly at them--usually because the confession had already been obtained, written out, and sealed before the official trial began. Failure to obtain such a public confession was thought to bring the government into disrepute. Naturally, the professed ideal was to obtain the confession without the use of torture by questioning alone, skill at which was a point of pride; but there's no real way of knowing how often this standard was even aimed at, much less met. If it wasn't, then torture was the only way to get the required confession and that was its major purpose.

Even today, in comparison to other countries in the developed world, Japan has a unique prosecutorial system. Ninety-nine percent of criminal defendants are convicted in Japan and almost all are convicted following their own confessions. Prosecutors tend to bring charges only when they have a signed confession from the accused and such confessions often occur after long questioning by police. Although defendants have a right to counsel, it is generally not possible for them to obtain counsel between their arrest and indictment. This makes it difficult to judge the true extent of criminal activity in Japan, since many possible criminals refuse to confess and are thus never indicted.

Naturally, torture is no longer allowed but it was a basis of Tokugawa law and, as was the case with hojojutsu, we

are fortunate that our knowledge of this remote and arcane area of Japan's judicial past is so well documented and detailed. This is thanks in part to two major historical texts: *Tokugawa bakufu keiji zufu* ("The Pictorial Book on Penal Affairs of the Tokugawa Government") edited and drawn by Fujita Shintaro in 1893 and *Goumon Jikki* ("Actual Record of Torture") by Sakuma Osahiro, also written in 1893.

The first is a pictorial book published to support the Meiji cause for the rapid modernization of Japan after the downfall of the Tokugawa shogunate. In it the artist Shintaro Fujita illustrated the harsh punishments meted out by the Tokugawa to their people in order to propagandize the supposedly more enlightened Meiji government then taking over. The second document, by Sakuma, was a personal narrative of experience.

Sakuma Osahiro was born in 1839 into a family that served in the Edo constabulary. From age 11 he started learning the constabulary arts and went on to work within that branch of law enforcement. After the Meiji Restoration he worked as a city court judge and died in 1923 at the age of 84. He wrote *Goumon Jikki* in 1893 because he was getting older and, since there were few people left alive with first hand knowledge of torture during the late Edo period, he wanted to leave an accurate historical record. Both sources tell the same detailed story and have been the foundation for much of the useful research done on this subject.

According to both documents, during the Edo Period there were four levels of legal torture: flogging; pressing with stones; the shrimp/prawn (or ebi) tie; and rope suspensions (or tsuri). Naturally, these last two are of most significance to the history of shibari/kinbaku. Although ranked and usually administered in this fashion, they were sometimes used in combination, going back and forth until a confession from the suspect was obtained. Each level could be pursued up to a named point -- a certain period of time or a certain number of strokes. If this failed to obtain results, either the same technique would be tried again after a given interval (often two days) or a different one would be tried. Most official tortures were conducted in private in small torture chambers designated for this purpose. Usually the room had a pillar in the center and was located in out buildings attached to official government offices, constabulary posts or jails. Any and all of these tortures were used on women as well as men.

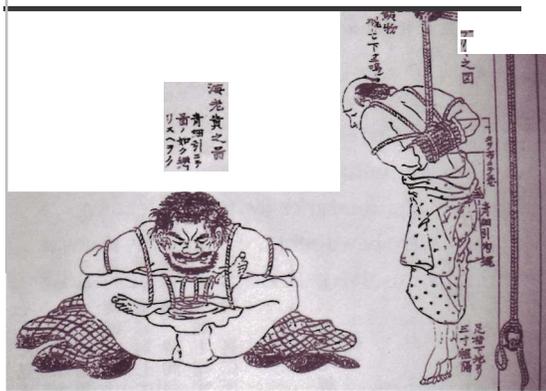
Flogging. This was done with the suspect kneeling and bound around his/her upper arms. Two stout ropes were also sometimes held taut by a pair of assistants on either side or in front and back of the suspect. A special scourge was used, called a shimoto or muchi (the latter is the generic word for any type of whip), and beatings were administered to the back. This was the mildest form of torture used to elicit a confession.

Pressing with stones. This torture, literally "embracing the stones," was carried out with the suspect kneeling. Often the prisoner was forced to kneel on a corrugated wooden or iron surface looking something like an exaggerated washboard with pointed ridges. His/her arms were tied behind the back, sometimes to the post of the room, and then large square slabs of stone, about one inch thick, were laid one after another on the tops of the suspect's thighs. This simple but excruciating torture was said to be nearly foolproof in obtaining a confession and most prisoners confessed during either the beating or stone tortures, so it was very rare for a prisoner to proceed to the ebi-zeme, but there are records of it occurring.

Ebi-zeme or the shrimp/prawn tie. If the prisoner didn't confess under the stone torture then the ebi-zeme was administered next. Amazingly,



Pressing with stones



Ebi-zeme and tsuri-zeme

we can actually trace the origin of this exotic form of rope torture back more than 400 years. It is believed that the ebi-zeme was developed around 1681-1683 by a town constabulary arson and theft investigator named Nakayama. The brutality of this torture is due to the seriousness of the crime being investigated -- arson. As has been well documented, fires in Edo era Japan killed hundreds of thousands.

In creating the ebi, first the suspect's hands were tied behind the back, the forearms placed on top of each other, the wrists bound together with a rope going around the upper arms.

Next he/she was forced to sit cross-legged. The ankles were

then bound together with the two ends of the rope then brought up and over the shoulders where they were looped through the rope binding the arms. Then the torturer would use his foot to press down on the suspect's back, forcing the chest down toward his/her crossed calves, at the same time pulling up on the ropes and thus raising the suspect's feet off the ground. When the suspect was doubled over as far as physically possible, and a little farther, the second rope was tied off on the first. Then they waited.

This tie had several punishing aspects: one physical, as the diaphragm was forced upwards toward the chest making breathing difficult and the other psychological, with the prisoner forced into a bowing, submissive posture.

There have been two explanations given for the name ebi ("shrimp" or "prawn"). One was that the suspect was bent over like a curled shrimp. The other was that after a short time in this position the person turned red like a cooked prawn. In fact, there was a sequence of colors when the torture lasted for several hours: first red, then purple, then violet, then pale blue. The latter stage was the signal for the torture to end if the pain had not already produced a confession. Continuing once the pale blue stage was reached resulted in death.

Suspension (tsuri-zeme) This was regarded as the last resort in attempting to extract a confession. It was carried out by tying the suspect's arms behind the back and then suspending him/her by the wrists. The author Inoue Kazuo in his book *Zankoku no Nihon-shi* ("Cruel Japanese History") states, "As recorded in the document *Koujigata osademegaki*, 'Tsurushi-zeme' (tsuri-zeme) was one of the official tortures of the Edo period. In illustrations in *Tokurin genbi-roku* and other sources, the prisoner's hands were pulled behind his/her back and bound with the 'Nawagake' (a thin straw covering placed over the wrists and used to prevent the suspension rope from cutting into the skin) and then they were suspended from the rope around their arms. Clothing was removed from the parts of the body touched by the rope. The pain of the torture came from the pressure imposed on the wrists and chest from the weight of the prisoner's own body. The prisoner was lowered to the ground from time to time and allowed to rest, with the suspension time gradually increased. The prisoner was often tormented in suspension, as guards poked him/her with sticks, pulled on the rope or swung or twirled the prisoner in suspension. For an especially reluctant suspect a large stone weight might be laid on the shoulders. As with the previous two tortures, suspension might be accompanied by flogging." It is also believed that there were various forms of suspensions. For instance, one variation was to suspend the suspect upside down by the ankles; but the wrists were more usual.

All four of these approved tortures were administered under the eyes of clerks who made an official record of the proceedings and all were confined within certain limits to make absolutely sure permanent damage or death did not result. Naturally, most interrogations never got as far as the ebi-zeme or tsuri-zeme since most prisoners were

likely to confess under the first stage of torture, or at least the second. But a few really stubborn individuals went through the whole sequence.

For instance, there's a famous story about a woman named Fukai Kane who was arrested in 1871 on suspicion of murdering her patron, a government official named Hirosawa. As was the custom then, she was tortured to obtain a confession. Amazingly, this went on for almost five years with no success! Her tolerance for torture leading some to suggest that she might actually be enjoying the process! Her jailers were bewildered. Eventually, she was released and the murder, for which Fukai was the sole suspect, went officially unsolved. Perhaps Ms. Fukai had *several* secrets?

This failure to obtain a confession in some cases is one of the reasons that, in the waning years of the shogunate, the *ebi-zeme* and *tsuri-zeme* were not applied as often as they had been in the past. Failure was embarrassing and some officials felt these tortures were more valuable as psychological weapons of possible things to come rather than as practical tools.

In addition to these "official" tortures proscribed for the capitol, Edo, other variations were used in the provinces. It is said that in outlying districts farmers accused of being tax cheats were sometimes suspended upside down from bridges by pulleys. Their heads were then lowered into the water for minutes at a time in an attempt to convince them to pay up. Another form of suspension torture called the *Surugadoi* or *Surugoumon* (Suruga "inquiry" or Suruga "torture") was developed by a local constable named Hikosaka Kyubei in the Suruga province (an area that is part of the Shizuoka prefecture in the center of Japan) in the early years of the Keicho period (1596-1610). In this torture the prisoner's arms and feet were brought up and tied closely together behind his/her back, a stone was usually tied to the waist and he/she was suspended face down with the hands and feet up. For added inducement to confess the prisoner was sometimes spun around like a top! Fortunately, this torture was rarely used.

Much more common were unofficial tortures done outside the strict letter of the law by regional lords (*daimyo*) or by powerful owners of brothels or properties employing many workers. These penalties could sometimes be downright bizarre such as the *Hebi-zeme* or "snake torture" where the victim was exposed to poisonous snakes. While this punishment is actually reported to have happened in the Maeda *daimyo* household in Saga Prefecture it has become famous due to its recreation in several historical films.

Not the stuff of fantasy were the cruel tortures inflicted on prostitutes. According to the sixth scroll of an Edo-era report called the *Yohgoto Kenbunroku*, prostitutes were subject to harsh punishment and even torture for infractions against their owners. These included deprivation of food, privy cleaning, humiliations, beatings and suspensions. One torture involving rope was to bind them in *asanawa* (hemp/jute rope) and then to throw water on them, causing torment when the cords dried and constricted. Another punishing binding was called the *buriburi* or *tsuritsuri* where the hands and feet are bound together and then the person is suspended by all four limbs like a game animal after a hunt.

The cruel ingenuity of these punishments seems awful and fantastic today but such was the history of feudal Japan. And this historical legacy even extended into the era of World War II. During that conflict Japan's dreaded military secret police, the *Kempeitai*, were accused of committing atrocities using some of these same techniques to illicit information from captured prisoners of war.

In 1879 the official use of torture to extract confessions was finally prohibited by the Meiji government and this paved the way for the promulgation in 1880 of Japan's first Western-style penal code. Centuries of brutality came

to an end but not without leaving its mark on the memories and consciousness of its people. And it is in this "sphere of the imagination" that we must next look for the origins of kinbaku; an amazing transformation from historical brutality to erotic art and performance and one of the most fascinating aspects of shibari/kinbaku history.

Questions:

"How has Japan's feudal punishments and tortures influenced modern erotic shibari/kinbaku?"

The influence on Japanese SM is obvious with the historical symbolism of public punishments and the psychological concept of shame being most apparent today. Practically, several specific ties from the feudal era, the ebi and the buriburi (now called the tanuki), carefully re-engineered for safety, are still practiced in modern erotic shibari/kinbaku. Most importantly, the tsuri-zeme (suspensions) have been completely transformed and turned into acrobatic displays and a mainstay of shibari/kinbaku play and stage performance. Far from "torture," this carefully executed descendent of feudal brutality is capable of safely "flying" the receptive participant into ecstasy.

Art from brutality, the birth of erotic seme-e

Given all of the cultural and historical links, it is not surprising that such unique forms of arrest and punishment as hojojutsu and the One Hundred Articles should become elements used in Japanese literature, the graphic arts and drama. Just as the "Old West" of America became the stuff of legend, spawning thousands of works of 19th, 20th and 21st-century "cowboy art," so too did Japan's feudal past inspire its artists. However, when did this begin? When did these often shocking realities begin to become aestheticized?

Certainly, the custom of punishing in public drew the man in the street's attention and often created quite a stir. As with public executions in early modern Europe, revulsion at the sight was often tinged with fascination. A letter from 1832 survives that suggests this quite clearly. Written by a prostitute living near one of the execution grounds to the friend of an important daimyo, Matura Seizan, who recorded its contents, it extends the following invitation, "Blossoms are in bloom, there has been a crucifixion, people have come out, and things are lively. You must pop over for awhile."

This morbid interest in Tokugawa crime and punishment certainly led both to being incorporated into various forms of popular culture. In 1823 the well known playwright Tsuruya Nanboku IV (1755-1829) used the execution ground at Suzugamori for scenes in a kabuki play involving the legendary outlaw Banzuin Chobei. An execution is never shown but the foreshadowing is clear and so effective was this device that the play quickly became known simply as "Suzugamori." Other famous criminals were similarly celebrated by even earlier balladeers, woodblock print makers, writers and others in much the same way that Jesse James was (and still is) lionized in the United States. However, this is simple history and legend as art. The process of the eroticization of this material is more difficult to chart.

Erotic sadism and masochism (SM) have always existed in mankind (various studies have estimated that somewhere between 10% and 15% of the world's population has some predilection) but the turning of this interest into a pleasurable or aesthetic activity requires, at least, four very specific things:

1. Leisure time.
2. A relatively safe environment for the work to be produced.
3. A motivating, imaginative context.
4. An interested public, no matter how small in number.

Due in large measure to the many years of relative peace that the Tokugawa shogunate provided its people, as well as a rise in the wealth and status of the merchant class and the nearly unlimited leisure time that the underemployed samurai enjoyed, many of the above conditions appear to have been in place in the mid to late 18th and early 19th centuries. From the stability of the late Edo era, safely distanced from the brutal realities of war and rebellion, the titillating concepts (for some) of shame and punishment combined with the always prevalent interest in shunga (Japanese erotic prints) and theater (kabuki and "new") to produce the first publicly distributed artistic images with a more or less overtly SM context.



Kabuki founder Okuni, in performance

Kabuki and "new" theater. The history of kabuki (one of the great traditional forms of Japanese theater) begins in 1603 during the Edo era when Okuni, a miko (a young woman in service to a Shinto shrine), began performing a new style of dance drama in Kyoto, a city that most scholars consider Japan's historical center for learning and the arts. In this new type of drama female performers played both men and women in short comic plays about ordinary life. The style was instantly popular with the public and Okuni was even asked to perform before the Imperial Court.

In the wake of this success rival troupes quickly formed and kabuki was born as an ensemble dance drama performed by women, a form very different from its modern incarnation. Much of its appeal then was due to the ribald, earthy and erotically suggestive performances put on by many troupes and this appeal was further augmented by the fact that the performers were often also available for prostitution! Even the word "kabuki" has its erotic associations. Originally indicating behavior that was scandalous or "offbeat," it came to be written with the formal Chinese characters for "song" (ka), "dance" (bu) and "prostitute" (ki), the latter changing only in the later Meiji period to the character for "skill."

Eventually, as a result of this threat to public morality, women were banned from performing by the Tokugawa shogunate and replaced by young males. Ironically, the young male actors who took over kabuki also engaged in prostitution and audience disturbances continued to break out. In 1652 the shogunate again clamped down and troupes composed only of older male actors were required to perform more formalized and strictly theatrical dramas. Male actors who specialized in playing women's roles, called onnagata, emerged and families of onnagata specialists developed.

This final style of kabuki grew out of opposition to Noh drama, an older surviving Japanese theatrical form (with origins in the 14th century), and along with bunraku (puppet theater) with whom it often shared stories and playwrights, became one of the most popular entertainments of the Edo era. Kabuki theater wanted to shock its audience with more lively and timely stories than Noh drama offered and its plays generally depicted thinly disguised historical events, ghost stories or famous legends emphasizing moral conflicts, tragedies between star-crossed lovers or, like the example mentioned earlier, exciting tales of famous outlaws, samurai, action, revenge and loyalty. The point is that this form of theater was wildly popular with an emerging middle class, that it had its titillating aspects (as with today's movie stars, famous kabuki actors were highly paid, much admired and dreamed about) and told exciting and melodramatic stories, sometimes taken from daily life. In short, the perfect setting for narratives of violence using arrest, capture and punishment for dramatic effect.

As with modern film, kabuki theater, almost from its beginnings, used violence and cruelty as key elements of dramatic construction. From such violent scenes kabuki's famous concept of an "aesthetic of cruelty" (zankoku no

bi) evolved. To quote the authoritative four volume "Kabuki Plays on Stage" series, edited by James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, *zankoku no bi* refers to the "quality of beauty arising in scenes of torture or death that are performed in a stylized, musical fashion." In such stylization appears the first theatrical impulse to aestheticize SM.

A perfect example of this occurs in the 1757 play *Kinkakuji* ("The Golden Pavilion") when Princess Yuki is bound to a cherry tree on the orders of the evil Lord Daizen, then draws images of mice with her toes in the fallen cherry blossoms at her feet. The mice magically appear and free her. Another example is the tale of Princess Chujo (AKA Chujo Hime) who was bound and left in falling snow by her tormentors; a famous story that's been turned into several kabuki dramas over the centuries.

Certainly, most of these plays could never be called *overtly* sadomasochistic. However, elements of bondage and torment did begin to appear and it is here that Japanese theater's influence on the creation of shibarikinbaku as an art and dramatic spectacle can first be recognized.

Similar to *zankoku no bi*, kabuki scenes of *semeba*, more commonly known today as *seme-e* (a mid 20th century word usually translated as scenes or situations of *realistic* torture, torment, persecution, or domination), also started to become a recurring aspect of kabuki theatricals and began to be noticed by audiences. These scenes usually involved the arrest, capture or punishment of a leading character, often the samurai hero or the virtuous maiden, two traditional stock-types of kabuki theater.



Kabuki print featuring actor Arashi Rikan IV as Princess Chujo bound in snow - circa late 19th century

This trend continued during the early Meiji period in so called "new theater" productions where even more contemporary subjects were treated in plays modeled on Western theater standards and featuring more naturalistic settings and acting. It is during this time frame, specifically in 1896, that a 14 year old boy named Itoh Hajime walked into the Haruki Theater in Tokyo and saw one of these melodramas. Thus would begin a lifelong fascination with *seme* (*the act of domination*) and *seme-e* (*art that depicts a scene of domination or punishment*) that would change the course of erotic art in Japan. Hajime grew up to be Hoh Seiyu (1882-1961), one of Japan's most famous (or notorious, depending on your point of view) artists and generally recognized as the father of modern shibari/kinbaku.

The 1996 book, *Nihon ero shashin-shi* ("The History of Japanese Erotic Photography") by Shimokawa Koushi gives a concise description of this fateful performance in its chapter, "The Appearance of SM Photos," and it's worth quoting in some detail:

"As is clear to anyone, SM play is a big part of modern sexual culture. You can't talk about modern sexual culture without talking about SM. But SM is not something that started in modern times. In an earlier period, specifically at the time of the Sino-Japanese war, there was something of an SM boom.

"In Meiji 29 (1896), in June, in the Haruki Theater in Tokyo a play about the Sino-Japanese War, *Nisshin Sensou: Youchi no Katakitan*, opened. The story is about three military nurses who fall into enemy hands. They are tortured, but being loyal and patriotic, they refuse to talk. After the war, these three nurses meet up again with the soldiers who tortured them, but in a display of Japanese humanity, they forgive their tormentors.

"This play was very popular since the system for nurses had just been set up and people were very interested in their experiences at war. This story about female nurses, and their patriotism, greatly appealed to the public of that time.

"There was something else about the play that had a big affect. There was scene after scene in which the nurses were tied and tortured with their hair becoming disheveled and their thighs and breasts subject to attack. At that time, there were no female actors yet and the parts of the three nurses were played by onnagata (male actors who specialized in female roles). That was said to be very erotic and became quite a source of talk.

"The great seme-e artist Itoh Seiyu saw this play when he was still a boy and stated, 'My chest clutched at the scenes where the nurse's hair became disheveled.' . . . After this, many other plays opened with similar themes and there was something of an SM boom. As Seiyu said, 'It is certain that the theater at that time fanned public interest in shibari.'"

We will return to Itoh Seiyu, one of the most important figures in the creation of modern shibari/kinbaku art and also to his love for bondage and disheveled hair several times in the course of this book, particularly in the biographies section, but here we can conclude by saying that kabuki and "new" theater productions that included seme-e material had a profound effect on him and on the general development of an SM consciousness in Japan. In later years Itoh would write several books about seme-e including *Seme no Hanashi* ("About Domination" or "Thoughts on Domination") in 1929 (reprinted in 1952) and *Kuronawa ki zen* ("The Complete Black Rope Diary") in 1951. In both of these works he devotes pages to listing the many kabuki and "new" theater productions, playwrights, actors and graphiC artists that specialized or excelled in seme-e material.

One interesting practical effect that such seme-e scenes had involved the aesthetics and techniques of tying as used in these plays, techniques that would later effect modern shibari/kinbaku. As previously noted, hOjojutsu patterns were always placed on the backs of prisoners and were generally tied using thin cord or hemp rope. Obviously, such techniques weren't suitable for the stage where actor's faces had to be seen at all times and where the ropes doing the binding of the heroes, heroines and villains had to be large and colorful enough to be noticed from the back of the theater. In addition, since male onnagata played all the female roles, tying with rope became both a challenge and an ideal way to accentuate the female form, certainly a potent source of eroticism. Each of these aspects of theatrical tying had its effect on modern shibari/kinbaku as early practitioners experimented with larger size ropes (before most returned to the approximately 6 mm diameter of true hOjojutsu cord) and the fashion of creating intricate patterns on the front of the body, to say nothing of emphasizing the beauty of the female form with artful turns of nawa (rope), became established.

As the Edo era faded and Japan entered and progressed into the 20th century, theatrical performances that included seme-e material evolved into performances that concentrated on seme-e and this in turn inspired the SM stage shows of the legendary Osada Eikichi (1925-2001) in the 1960s which were, in turn, the precursors of today's modern SM club shows. At the same time, dramatic films concentrating on SM themes became big business in Japan...but that's another story still to come. What cannot be denied is that the aestheticization and eroticization of bondage and "domination" began in the Edo and early Meiji theatrical and artistic worlds.

The graphic arts. Concurrent with the theater, the graphiC arts also contributed to keeping the imagery of Edo era tying and punishments in the public's consciousness and helped turn them into the stuff of drama and erotic fantasy. While not a major theme for Japanese artists, the subject did crop up quite often in various forms of Edo era printmaking and painting.



Bound onnagata in a kabuki print by Kunisada, circa 1850

Ukiyo-e, "pictures of the floating world," is the well known genre of Japanese woodblock prints and paintings produced between the 17th and early 20th centuries and featuring motifs of: landscape, the theater, tales from history, sumo wrestlers, folk tales and the supposedly exotic world of the courtesan. The art form rose to great popularity in the metropolitan culture of Edo during the second half of the 17th century.

Ukiyo-e prints were mass-produced and were meant mainly for townsmen and the burgeoning merchant classes who, though generally not wealthy enough to afford an original painting, did want to partake of luxury-type goods. The greatest artists of the age produced ukiyo-e, including: Hiroshige, Hokusai, Kunisada, Kuniyoshi, Utamaro and Yoshitoshi. Of the numerous subjects dealt with by these artists, so called "actor's prints" were one of the most popular.

As with today's movie and TV stars, Edo era Kabuki actors were famous, much admired and their likenesses were often reproduced in all sorts of way : as prints, posters, post cards and even as decorative designs for fans. It was a most profitable genre for the printers. Scenes from popular plays then on stage would often be reproduced and, occasionally, the imagery of hojojutsu, capture and punishment would appear, as in the accompanying print by Kunisada Utagawa (1786-1865).

Kunisada was one of the most prominent and prolific ukiyo-e artists specializing in actor and kabuki prints during the mid-19th century. The illustrated scene is clearly from a play and most probably shows the actor Bando Shuka, the foremost onnagata of his day, in a dramatic seme-e moment (note the hojojutsu rope). The reason we can't be positive about the actor's identity is that this print dates from the mid 19th century during the "Teppo reforms" when the Tokugawa government's off again, on again, censorship of kabuki prohibited artists from putting the actor's names and the names of the plays they appeared in on the prints they sold. This had not been the custom in the past and the names would be allowed again after this censorship eased in 1862. That said, Bando is the likely subject since the date is right (he died in 1855) and the likeness and dramatic setting is similar to several prints Kunisada did that are named.

Sometimes even the posters advertising a kabuki or "new" theater production carried explicit references to scenes of seme-e. Itoh Seiyu, in his 1929 book *Seme no Hanashi*, discusses a sign painter in Yokohama named Gyohan who did promotional posters for theaters. The artist took such delight in advertising the seme-e scenes that his paintings were judged crueler than necessary and the police made the theaters take them down!

Yoshitoshi Tsukioka (1839 -1892), also known as Yoshitoshi Taiso, was an even more influential artist for modern shibari/kinbaku. Generally regarded as the last great ukiyo-e master whose career spanned the late Tokogawa and early Meiji eras and so the great rush to modernization in Japan, Yoshitoshi brought a brilliant imagination and remarkable technical skills, including a Western sense of perspective, to his work



Ukiyo-e from the series "28 Famous murders with verse" by Yoshitoshi Taiso, 1867

creating images of great psychological depth and dramatic power. For this reason he is now almost universally recognized as the finest Japanese print artist of his era.

We will talk more about Yoshitoshi in the biography chapter so for now it's only necessary to note that he is the one indisputably great ukiyo-e artist who returned to scenes of a seme-e nature over and over again in his career both as a print maker and as a newspaper illustrator. His skill at creating images of violence and the supernatural have caused some critics to label his work as "bizarre" or "perverse" but this is only because the shock value of a few of these pictures overshadowed and drew attention away from the majority of Yoshitoshi's output. It also needs to be remembered that, in a way, he was somewhat similar to today's modern horror film directors who strive to create bloody effects simply in order to give their audiences a pleasurable but safe chill. In this he certainly succeeded but he wasn't alone.

During the early 19th century, stories of horror and cruelty, reflecting the brutal realities of both the day and times past, were expressed often through plays, books, and woodblock prints and artists such as Hokusai, Issen, Kunisada and Kuniyoshi (Yoshitoshi's teacher) designed many of these images. Violent or not, these types of pictures were what the customers and publishers wanted and Yoshitoshi was a product of his time. Certainly, while studying under Kuniyoshi, he developed the skills for creating horrifyingly graphic designs. One of his earliest series of prints, *"Twenty-eight famous murders with verse"* (1866-1867), based loosely on famous real-life murder cases depicted in kabuki plays and done in collaboration with the artist Yoshiiku, is particularly shocking but it made his reputation. A particularly grizzly plate from the series is presented here. It also demonstrates a remarkable eye for the technical aspects of hojojutsu and tsurizeme (suspensions).

In later years, Yoshitoshi would combine this eye for detail with a talent for depicting psychology and subtle eroticism and produce several of the most remarkable "bondage" images of the 19th century. These images would, in turn, have a lasting effect on later seme-e and shibari/kinbaku masters such as Itoh Seiyu.

A second type of ukiyo-e print called shunga carried even more explicit erotic content.

The term shunga means *"picture of spring"* with "spring" being a common Japanese euphemism for sexual activity. Edo era shunga sought to express the sexual mores of the merchant class in the widest variety of forms possible and therefore depicted heterosexual and homosexual love, the old and young and a wide range of fetishes. Such variety was due to the fact that the perception of sexuality in Tokugawa Japan differed markedly from that of the modern Western world. Sex in general was considered a normal and healthy activity and people were less likely to associate with one particular sexual preference. For this reason the many sexual pairings depicted in shunga were a matter of providing as much



"The Dream of a Fisherman's Wife" by Hokusai Katsushika, 1814

variety as possible. It was remarkably popular and was enjoyed by rich and poor men and women of all classes. And despite on occasion being out of favor with the shogunate censors it carried very little stigma. Almost all ukiyo-e artists made shunga at some point in their careers without it affecting their prestige as artists.

Several of the more famous shunga prints could be said to carry a hint of seme (domination) including the 1814 erotic masterpiece by Hokusai Katsushika (1760-1849), "The Dream of a Fisherman's Wife."

Few ukiyo-e painters remained aloof from the genre and some experienced artists even found it to their advantage to concentrate on its production. It is said that producing a piece of shunga for a high-ranking private client brought an artist enough money to live on for about six months. For the less affluent it was traditional to buy newly married couples less expensive shunga prints or books (called enpon) and women could obtain it themselves from lending libraries, which only speaks again to the genres ubiquity.

Naturally, most shunga depicted scenes of standard heterosexual coupling but sexual seme-e would appear on occasion. Kunisada Utagawa included a graphic shunga image of bondage and forced sex in what most art critics consider his most beautiful erotic book, the 3 volume *Shiki no Nagane* ("Scenes of the Four Seasons") published in 1827 and Koryusai Isoda (1735-1790) did an evocative print (probably a book illustration) of what is perhaps a brothel keeper punishing a bound courtesan, circa 1770.



Book illustration by Koryusai Isoda, circa 1770

Following the Meiji Restoration in 1868 ukiyo-e prints began to be supplanted by photography and went out of fashion in Japan during the bunmei-kaika, Japan's Westernization movement. Ironically, at about the same time ukiyo-e were introduced into Europe and became an important source of inspiration for European Cubist, Impressionist and Post-Impressionist artists such as Vincent Van Gogh, Claude Monet, Edgar Degas and Mary Cassatt, resulting in a style called Japonism.

As for shunga, it also succumbed to the introduction of photography, of the erotic variety. It too gradually declined beginning at the start of the Meiji era but its influence is still felt today in the sexually explicit hentai anime and manga cartoons and comics produced by Japan's huge adult media industry.

However, for artists such as Itoh Seiyu with a predilection for SM the influence of Yoshitoshi and the seme-e of the 19th century remained profound and never died. It would be a key component in what would be the emergence of an overt SM culture in Japan and of the development and exploitation of modern erotic shibari/kinbaku in art, publishing, photography and film during the next century.

Publishing and photography: Itoh and the evolution of SM

As the 20th century dawned, images of 19th-century seme-e remained simmering in the public's consciousness but Japan's drive to create a modern and powerful nation kept all such reactionary and obsolete trappings of a feudal past decidedly out of fashion. Late 19th and early 20th-century wars against the Chinese (1894-1895) and Russians (1904-1905) brought Japan unexpected (to the West) victories and propelled it into the forefront of modern nations where the rush to modernism and militarism preoccupied its rulers.

However, the past is not so easily forgotten and nostalgia for times lost affected some of Japan's better authors and artists, if not its militarist politicians. Such was the case with Itoh Seiyu, the boy so fascinated by seme-e, who grew up to train as an artist and then to specialize in depicting everyday scenes from the history and customs of old Edo. This might surprise those who know Itoh only as Japan's most famous SM artist but the truth is that he tried a number of jobs in his early career including creating painted backdrops for kabuki theater and working as an illustrator for the Yomiuri Shimbun, still one of Tokyo's major daily newspapers, to make his living. As for the "preoccupation" that would ultimately make him famous, it had to be kept decidedly underground. This is another aspect of the formation of the famous Japanese "SM scene" that needs a fuller explanation.

To the Westerner, today's Japan often seems a very liberal place, especially as far as sexuality is concerned. Certainly it is true that Japan's accepting attitudes towards many religions and healthy, nonjudgmental approach to most sexual matters over the years have created a greater tolerance in that country for these all too often contentious areas of human activity. However, this was not always the case. The Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu's persecution of Christians in the early 1600s as well as general shogunate repression of any political dissent or comment, even to the extent of prohibiting the mention of the Tokugawa name in books or of family images in ukiyo-e prints, certainly shows that there were many areas of censorship in feudal Japan. As with kabuki theater, various other arts and activities were also subject to intermittent government censorship that ebbed and flowed over the years. For instance, from 1790 on a formal system of censorship requiring government seals of approval was mandated for all ukiyo-e prints and most shunga was published privately. During the Meiji era censorship was still enforced and even an artist as famous as Yoshitoshi had several of his designs suppressed.

For the most part, this was still the climate when Itoh began his explorations into what today we would call SM art. Of course, in his day, at the beginning of the 20th century, there was neither much understanding nor use of that term. "Seme-e" covered all artistic presentations of any scene of "torment" and "hentai seiyoku" ("abnormal sexual appetite") was the usual phrase that covered all non traditional sexual activities. Such was the state of affairs until after WWII. This is why when Itoh began to publish his studies of seme-e, hojojutsu and the beginnings of kinbaku, he did it privately.

The emergence of Itoh Seiyu. In the late 1920s and early 1930s Itoh, then in his 40's, began to gain some recognition as an artist by having several books of his illustrations of old Edo brought out by the publisher Castle North Studies. Privately, he also began to publish his studies of seme and seme-e. Among the first of his self published books were 1928's *Seme no Kenkyu* ("Domination Research") and 1929's *Seme no Hanashi* ("Domination Conversation or Discussion"), works which could be billed as the first true bondage/SM photography, commentary and art collections ever published in Japan.

In them Itoh presented, for the first time in Japanese art, images that were fundamentally erotic in conception and *obviously* sadomasochistic in orientation. Of the numerous characteristics that define Itoh's style and would make this artist a near legendary figure, several stand out.

First, he was a superb draughtsman and colorist capable of depicting subtle variations in psychology and mood, as this lovely image of a bound woman in snow with her black hair in disarray amply



"Bound Woman in Snow" by Itoh Seiyu

demonstrates.

Second, his use of nude or nearly nude models in bondage was remarkable, provocative and certainly intended as sexual. It must be remembered that it had only been since 1871 that professional nude modeling was known in Japan, an event considered so unusual that we still know the name of the first model! Miyazaki Kiku was hired by a painter who came from France to pose nude for one month. This is the first recorded instance of a professional nude model in Japan. In 1896 Tokyo Geijutsu Geidai (The Tokyo School of Fine Arts) started a Western painting program and scouted for nude models. Many of the first were male laborers but Miyazaki Signed up for a monthly salary.

Third, his inspiration was clearly the Edo era punishments, both official and private. Itoh's technique was to photograph his models after binding and posing them in various ways and then to use the photos as inspiration for his paintings. Photo after photo from his work books depict all the punishments of the Tokugawa era (various suspensions, pressing with stones, the ebi, etc.), including private punishments such as the *mokuba* (wooden horse), used almost exclusively on woman. In this torture the prisoner was stripped from the waist down, her hands bound behind her back and she was placed straddled atop a fairly sharp angled board!

Fourth, as is clear from the above, Itoh was definitely a sadist. That said, his masochistic partners were w' ling participants and there is no way of knowing how far Itoh usually went in approximating real tortures. From his writings it's quite clear that he tried to take care not to injure his partners by creating safer techniques to approximate the dramatic scenes of seme that he wished to paint. This obvious and intelligent approach had a major influence on artists attempting similar material in the decades to come. However, on at least one occasion, during the creation of one of his most famous works, "Woman Suffering in Snow," inspired by his fascination with the Princess Chujo legend and other tales, he clearly went too far. Again, to quote from *Nihon era shashin-shi* ("The History of Japanese Erotic Photography") by Shimokawa Koushi:

"The shooting for Itoh Seiyu's seminal work, *Yukizeme* ("Woman Suffering in Snow"), was done in 1923, in February. Seiyu always liked snow and found a play in which a woman is subjected to suffering in snow, *Akegarasu Yume no Awayuki*, particularly erotic. At that time he had a disciple (deshi) named Sakamoto who rented an old farmhouse in the Tokyo suburb of Takaido for use as an atelier. Behind the house was a bamboo grove and across from it was vast plum fields called Yoshida-en. Seiyu knew about this and had always wanted to tie a woman there. The day finally arrived.

"Accompanying him were Seiyu's second wife and model, Kiseko; a photographer named Suzuki and a helper named Takahashi. Seiyu's first wife was completely uninterested in physical intimacy and SM and that union dissolved after ten years. But Kiseko had been an art model and was strongly submissive and she quietly submitted to whatever demands Seiyu made of her.

"In 'Itoh Seiyu: a biography,' Fumiko Saito continues the story based on writings actually left by Seiyu and Sakamoto:

'We tied up (the nearly nude) Kiseko and disheveled her hair, and led her deep into the garden and made her walk around for 30 minutes' Seiyu pushed her down into a snowdrift, and for about seven minutes she was half buried in snow as her suffering facial expression was captured by the lens.'

"That was the first shot. Then they moved on to the second. Seiyu broke the ice on the pond and made to force Kiseko in. Sakamoto tried desperately to make him stop, arguing that the mud in the pond was deep and that it

was known as the bottomless swamp. But Seiyu said, 'It'll probably be ok if we stay near the edge.' And he told her to get in. It took her ten minutes to actually get in, and as she stood in the blowing snow, she was shivering so hard that she couldn't get her teeth together, but even so, she silently obeyed his order.

'Kiseko's lower body was in the frigid water, and we left her there like that for a while. We waited until her expression changed. When it was clear she was really suffering, we took the picture, focusing on her expression under ice torture. She could no longer get out of the pond by herself, so Takahashi and Suzuki helped her out.'

"That still wasn't enough. Takahashi washed the mud and dirt from her body and Seiyu suspended her from bamboo trees. As part of Seiyu's seme research, he had learned from an old man a hojojutsu technique of using bamboo poles in binding and was quite accomplished in shibari, but this business of forcing her into snow, and a frozen lake, and then even pouring water on her, had the others very worried about Kiseko's physical safety. Itoh kept pushing her on, in the end getting five shots.



"Yukizeme" by Hoh Seiyu, circa 1923

"As can be seen by examining the details of this photo shoot, there was an SM boom in progress and even compared to today's hard SM photo shoots, this was quite a hard shoot. Kiseko recovered and talked about the experience and it became quite atopic of discussion. As the renter of the house, Sakamoto was attacked by doubts and became practically unable to paint."

Based on above description, it is very easy to dismiss Itoh as a dangerous crank for so wantonly flaunting common sense. The "scene" might have been relatively "consensual" but it certainly broke the borders of "safe and sane." After all, when Van Gogh cut off his ear at least he didn't maim anyone else!

And yet...talented artists are sometimes driven, cruel, egotistical and unreasonable. Think again of Van Gogh ... and William Blake and Picasso and many more. And regardless of his questionable common sense and overt sadism, it can't be denied that Itoh was an extremely gifted artist. Perhaps it's best that we think of him as an early type of obsessed "performance artist," one of those outrageous individuals who sometimes create remarkable things. One could also argue that Itoh's uniqueness as a painter came first from his great visual skill and taste but also from his stubborn determination to capture what he called, "beauty in suffering." That is, those emotions of real desire and real drama caught on the razor's edge between pain and pleasure during the experience of consensual sadomasochism.

In an article entitled, "Recollections on the Making of Maidens Suffering in Snow," Itoh recalled his great joy and satisfaction in realizing, after 19 years of dreaming, his "wildest artistic fantasy" and that, "On the night I finished shooting, I got drunk and made love to my wife like I had never done before!" In relief one presumes the beleaguered Mrs. Itoh had fully recovered.

A further consequence of this sensationalistic work was a growing reputation as a rebel in avant guard art circles. His book *Seme no Kenkyu* might be suppressed by the authorities and he might even be briefly arrested in 1930 for doing prints that were viewed as a satire of Confucianism but an issue of Sunday Mainichi magazine, a very "normal" publication, featured a visit to his studio. He was becoming famous or, at the very least, infamous.

It should be pointed out that Itoh Seiyu wasn't the only artist exploring the nascent connections between art and SM at this time. There were others. For instance, admired "pulp" authors such as Shimosawa Kan and Nakauchi Chouji and illustrators such as Kanamori Kan'you and Natori Shunsen were writing and drawing for various general audience magazines in the 1930s and frequently slipping in SM and seme-e type material. In addition, the late 1920s and early 1930s was also the time of the avant guard *Ero-Guro* movement in Japanese literature and the arts.

The name *Ero-Guro* (or *Eroguronansensu*, in full) is an anagram of sorts made from the English words "erotic grotesque nonsense" and describes early 20th century Japanese art and writings that depict violence and the bizarre in a somewhat erotic manner. These words were used because they had an air of the new and modern for the Japanese artistic intelligentsia of the 1920s. Roughly contemporaneous with the excesses of Weimar art and culture in Germany, the erotic, grotesque, nonsense, movement was a fringe group of artists but they did influence the various media of photography, graphic design, painting, poetry and detective fiction. Well known Japanese literary figures such as the mystery novelist Edogawa Rampo (real name Taro Hirai -- the pseudonym "Edogawa Rampo" is actually a Japanese rendering of Edgar Allan Poe) and pioneering sexologist Dlliehara Homumei were major figures. Although Itoh was not a part of this movement per se, it is significant that both he and the *Ero-Guro* occupied the same time frame in the early 20th century and both involved themselves with what, at the time, was controversial writings and art.

Nor was Itoh the only photographer doing hojojutsu inspired "bondage" studies. It's likely that a man named Itoh Keijiro (no relation to Itoh Seiyu), who more commonly went by the name Itoh Chikusui, also arranged seme-e photographic sessions in pre and post World War II Japan. These photos by various photographers were later sold by Chikusui to early SM magazines and appeared as the work of a seme-shi ("domination artist/master") named Kanai Yukio, a fictitious name created by the magazine's editors.

However, Itoh Seiyu was the lightning rod for most of this type of material. Despite increasing right wing censorship in the 1930s he published book after book (six on seme between 1928 and 1932), paintings, scrolls and sketches, and by so doing began to draw other like-minded individuals into his circle.

Throughout his over 50 year career, Itoh would often hold sessions in his atelier or at other locations where a model or models would be tied (sometimes in elegant costumes and using elaborate sets) and photographs, sketches and paintings done. Participants in these daring events encompassed a wide cross section of artistic types including the above mentioned Itoh Chikusui, an onnagata named Sendai Baiko (who became a disciple of Itoh Seiyu's) and Deda Seishiro, a fledgling publisher. Not surprisingly, quite a few of these talents would emerge later in the century and be active in the rise of post war SM publications. And while Itoh couldn't be said to be consciously developing the techniques of what would become modern kinbaku, his need to create safe versions of hojojutsu ties and seme for his models was leading him and his followers in that direction. It only needed time and a degree of public interest and acceptance for this historically based erotic art to evolve further.

Unfortunately, all such explorations were postponed by the devastation that was World War II. As is well known, between 1939 and 1945 Japan, like much of the rest of the world, was decimated by this conflict which left the country in ruins. What is often forgotten by the student of hojojutsu and seme-e art is that many of the most valuable and important historical pieces concerning these subjects were destroyed in this conflict. Itoh Seiyu himself is said to have lost everything, all his early artworks, in the American bombings of Tokyo in the summer of 1945. As a friend living in Japan recently told me, "People couldn't save treasures, let alone themselves, their children, their old parents. It was bad."

With the end of the war life began to return to a semblance of normality and, in the flurry of reconstruction and the calm of peace, conditions were suddenly right for the re-emergence of SM oriented art, including the emerging techniques of kinbaku, this time in spectacular fashion.

Kasutori-shi ("bootleg sake") and the "golden age" of SM magazines

The tale of how the first truly SM oriented magazines began publishing in Japan can be somewhat garbled depending on who's telling the story but the basic outlines are fairly consistent. After the war there appeared a number of what we in the West would call "pulp magazines" catering to various interests. These were wryly called "kasutori-shi" ("bootleg sake" or "low grade liquor") because of the cheap paper on which they were printed and because of their often vaguely salacious and erotic content.

The most famous of these pulps was the now legendary Kitan Club Magazine, its name taken from the abbreviation of the word "*ibunkitan*" meaning "strange stories" or "curious tales." This tabloid journal combining sensationalist fiction with vaguely erotic content was launched in 1947 and intended for the general reader. It quickly gained a loyal following including two readers from Osaka who were to have a decided impact on the future of kinbaku.

Suma Toshiyuki was hired by Kitan Club's publisher, Yoshida Minoru, as an editor early in the magazine's formative years and Tsujimura Takashi was a reader who, one day in 1948 while bored at his post war job of counter duty at the local hardware store, decided to submit a short story to the magazine figuring he couldn't do any worse than the writers he was reading. To his delight it was accepted and this started him on a 25 year association with the magazine.

Suma Toshiyuki in time would become the author, editor, publisher and bakushi (rope artist) known as Minomura Kou and, taking the name of Kita Reiko (his wife's maiden name), one of the greatest shibarikinbaku artists ever to put paint to paper, a legend in Japanese SM. Tsujimura would become one of the most famous early bakushi and a writer whose column, "Camera Hunt," would be one of the magazine's most popular features, one that profoundly influenced the course of Japanese shibari/kinbaku. For his column Tsujimura would carefully tie amateur enthusiasts and professional models in a variety of creative ways using safe tsumi (suspension) and newaza (floor) techniques and then give his readers a record of this play in words and pictures. For many this was their first introduction to the concept of shibari/kinbaku as an affectionate, mature and consensual erotic activity.

Minomura had been a member of Itoh Seiyu's circle and Tsujimura had been interested in shibari since childhood so they were perfectly placed and ready to step in when publisher Yoshida began casting around for some new ideas to help increase circulation. Stories with a vague seme-e (SM) style and content were decided upon and began to appear. In 1950 the first illustration by Kita Reiko was published and in 1951 a novel by Tsujimura made its debut.

At this time it's interesting to note how literary these "pulp" really were. In large part these were magazines of stories: historical, comic, thrilling and erotic, in all genres, even mystery and science fiction. Photographs were expensive to publish and didn't reproduce well on cheap paper and illustrations were time consuming to do, so the written word was paramount. This meant the audience for these "low grade" magazines was actually quite literate, a significant plus, generally speaking, for consumer appreciation of erotic fantasy and imaginative material of all kinds. As an old Japanese saying goes, "Anything is permissible ... in the mind." Or to put it another way, to safely appreciate fantasy, erotic or otherwise, it's best to have some intelligence, common sense and imagination.

It was in 1952, in the July issue to be exact, that a true commercial breakthrough occurred when the magazine



"Ten Positions of a Naked Tied Woman" By Kita Reiko - Kitan Club, 1952

published Kita Reiko's famous illustration, "Ten Positions of a Naked Tied Woman." This simple but elegant line drawing of 10 "bondage" images caused a sensation in the buying public and increased sales significantly. This so pleased publisher Yoshida that he set the future course of Kitan Club firmly in the direction of erotic SM.

In their comprehensive study, *Nihon Kinbaku Shashin Shi* ("The History of Bondage Photos in Japan"), co-authors Chimuo Nureki and Masami Akita state that, "*Ten Positions of a Naked Tied Woman*" was the trigger that set the magazine on a specialized course of bondage, ... and is without doubt Japan's first (publicly printed) modern illustration of blatantly sexual seme-e, ... that quite clearly targeted its appeal to bondage

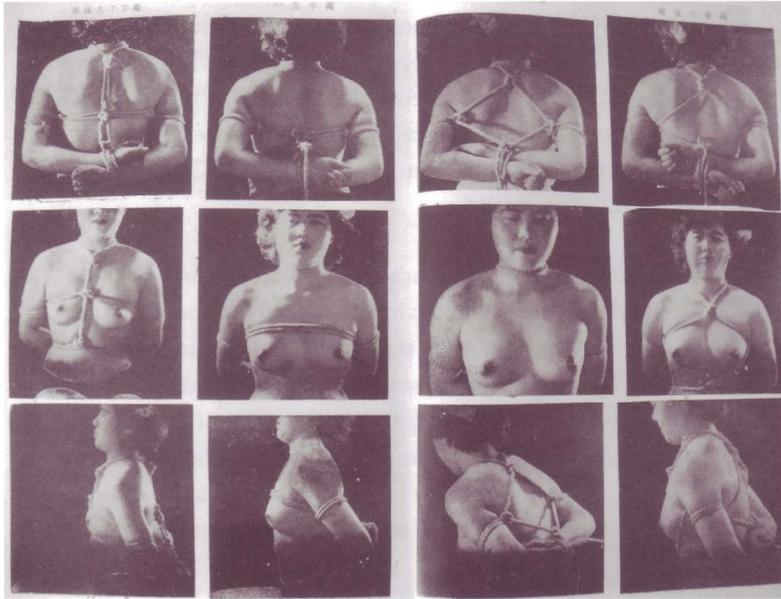
enthusiasts." They go on to state that, "In (sexual) seme-e, Kita Reiko had in fact renewed what was largely a kabuki passion of master Itoh Seiyu."

After this there was no holding back and story after story, drawing after drawing featured bondage used in a generally erotic way. Kita Reiko even produced at least three different versions of his famous illustration (with ever more tied women included) for various Kitan Club issues and stories of male domination were also created and also proved quite popular.

A second milestone was reached that same summer (1952) when editor Minomura, after getting permission from the publisher, asked Tsujimura to tie the model Kawabata Tanako for the first Kitan Club nude bondage photo. Photographs of nude models had appeared in other magazines before this but this was the first nude in bondage done expressly for a commercially published, SM oriented, monthly magazine offered for general sale (as opposed to Itoh's often banned private publications). This event also marked, as Tsujimura stated in an interview published years later, the first use of the words "kinbaku" and "kinbaku model" in print. As startling as this anecdote seems, my inclination is to believe it. In my research I have found no earlier use of this unusual word in any document involving seme-e, bondage art, Japanese history or hojojutsu. In addition, there is other circumstantial evidence that suggests the truth of this claim. Prior to 1952, Itoh Seiyu in his many books and writings always used the words "shibari" and "seme," among other terms, when discussing his work. However, after 1952 and the rise in popularity of Kitan Club he started to use the word "kinbaku" to describe sophisticated, Japanese style, rope bondage.

In my archive I'm fortunate to have complete runs of Kitan Club and its equally famous competitor Uramado and it's fascinating to watch the evolution of both publications and the emergence of the art of kinbaku during these early years. It's especially startling to note that these were truly specialized erotic magazines that appealed to a very selective, interested and sophisticated (in terms of rope bondage and related SM subjects) audience. For instance, after this watershed year of 1952, elegant shibari illustrations by Itoh and many other gifted artists routinely appear in every issue and the techniques of safe tying are often addressed alongside the usual pulp stories and erotica. Photos become more numerous, including many taken over the years by Itoh and his circle and, in a more scholarly vein, several articles by respected experts are published on the history of seme in Japan and on the Tokugawa punishments of 1742 (i.e. by Nawa Yumio in six installments in Uramado).

Taking an issue at random; in June 1954 Kitan Club published a remarkable double page spread of photographs reproducing several classic hojojutsu ties (front, side and back) on a nude model and in the same issue there is a ten



Authentic hojojutsu ties reproduced in Kitan Club - June, 1954

page article (illustrated with nine photographs) by Tsujimura discussing a "kinbaku session" and the tying techniques employed. Various other fetishes are discussed in the issue as are the "aesthetics" of erotic photography and there's a reader's column where customers get to voice their interests and criticisms. There's even a story concerning seppuku, the age old tradition of ritual suicide for disgraced samurai!

According to Minomura, there was a passionate interest in the types of ties used in the pictures and illustrations of those early days and new techniques were avidly commented upon. Because

of this a controversy erupted over certain kinbaku photos then being produced.

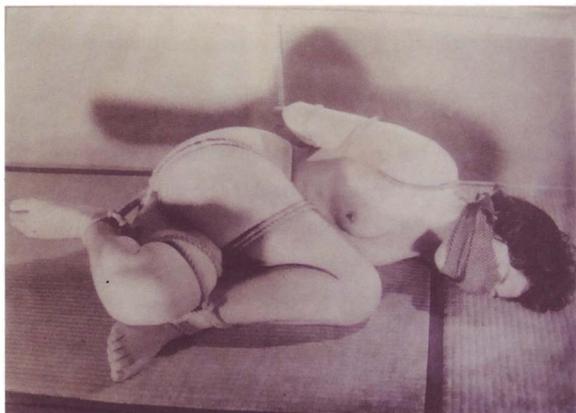
Nude "bondage" images were becoming much more common and various photographers strove to create striking patterns and bold designs. However, in some photos the kinbaku became secondary as ropes were loosely "draped" over the obviously posing models. In fact, there was a veritable outburst of this, so called, "rope fixing nude art" during the early years of the first SM magazines and this infuriated people like Hoh Seiyu and his followers who considered it to be a "despicable imitation of true bondage art." As is obvious from looking at his work (and that of people like Minomura Kou), bondage was something more than just the mechanical fastening of ropes around a subject's body. To Hoh such fake techniques led to insincerity, commercialism and pornography. True passion and emotion as well as skilled craft had to be demonstrated if the kinbaku was to be called Art. Some say it was Hoh Seiyu's revulsion against these "fake" works of bondage art that led him to devote his energies toward the creation of a distinct bondage "school" and this school in time became the mainstream form of rope tying as an art form in Japan. In consequence, Hoh's status as one of the founding fathers of kinbaku as an artistic means of expression seems secure.

By 1956 Minomura Kou had left Kitan Club to start his own magazine, the aforementioned Uramado or "Back Window" magazine, which quickly rivaled Kitan Club in popularity. One of its greatest calling cards was the illustrations it published featuring, of course, the beautiful work of Kita Reiko (AKA Minomura Kou). So devastating a loss was this defection to Kitan Club that they hired noted artist Shibatani Saijiro and gave him the name Taki Reiko in the hopes that Kita Reiko might not be too badly missed!

The use of these pennames for authors and contributors to the magazines became quite common at this time, as it had for the "pulp" in the United States in the 1930s. The reasons were a desire for anonymity when writing and drawing erotica and to make the magazines appear to have more columnists than they actually did. Suma Toshiyuki (AKA Minomura Kou/Kita Reiko) used at least 9 different names when writing his articles, short stories, criticism, novels and creating his illustrations and a young man named Iida Toyokazu, who Minomura hired as an editor on Uramado, used at least a dozen! This young man would continue in the business as both a prolific author and an admired bakushi, first as Toyo Kanichiro and then under the near legendary name Nureki Chimuo. Nureki, now nearing eighty, is generally regarded as the greatest living kinbaku master. He also continues to write

books on the subject he knows best, including the above mentioned *Nihon Kinbaku Shashin Shi* ("The History of Bondage Photos in Japan").

In addition to running interesting articles and locally produced kinbaku photos and art, these early SM magazines also printed illustrations from the early Western "bondage" publications of John Willie and Irving Klaw, including cartoons by famous "fetish" artists such as: Willie, Stanton, Tim, Mario and Eneg. These were obtained for the magazines by Morishita Takashige of Phoenix company who had many contacts in the US and it's interesting to speculate how much Willie (real name: John Alexander Scott Coutts, 1902-1962), whose is generally regarded as one of the finest Western bondage and "fetish" artists ever to have published, might have been influenced by the Japanese and visa versa. Evidence suggests that he, and by extension the course of "Western bondage," was strongly influenced.



Imo mushi shibari by Minomura Kou, 1953



John Willie, Hollywood, CA, circa 1957-1961

According to various sources, including the authoritative second edition of "The Adventures of Sweet Gwendoline" by John Willie (Belier Press, 1999), the artist was quite aware that his art and photos were being published in Japan because he was being sent copies and/or excerpts of *Kitan Club* (and possibly *Uramado*) by an American correspondent known as "Doc," a US military officer stationed in Japan in the 1950s. The images of kinbaku he saw apparently inspired him and he, "extracted a few ideas for use in his own photographs."

Fortunately, a lot of John Willie's photos and art have been published over the years and it's clear by comparing the dates when the photos were taken that more than "a few" ideas from kinbaku were borrowed. In his early photos, done between 1937 and 1944, the bondage is quite simple and there is almost no Japanese influence or inspiration. However, in the 1950s, especially during his "Hollywood period" of 1957-1961, it's clear that he was often copying Japanese ties that first illustrated the early Japanese SM magazines of 1953-1956. We know Willie was the one being influenced because many of the Japanese ties pictured in *Kitan Club*, etc. were, of course, based on the hojojutsu patterns and Edo Era punishments of centuries past. This is particularly obvious in Willie's photos because he does so many positions that clearly mimic such classical kinbaku ties as the *ebi shibari*, the *agura shibari* and the *imo mushi shibari* and because he does so many pictures using short bamboo sticks (*takezao shibari*) and the *hashira*, the ubiquitous standing pole of Japanese architecture that is so rare a detail in Western architecture. This only goes to show that even at this early date there was cross cultural communication and influence.

In fact, in many ways *Kitan Club* and *Uramado* were both quite similar to John Willie's legendary magazine "Bizarre" which also tried to provide a forum for "alternative" sexual interests in the late 1940s and early 1950s in America. The Japanese might have been more successful than Klaw and Willie, whose publications and companies soon perished under US censorship, but it wasn't easy.

In 1955 Kitan Club ceased publication for over a year due to governmental pressure and only came back in a reduced format in 1956. It's shocking to see the difference between the issues of those years. Gone are the pages of daring photos and art and even the creative and beautifully colored covers have been reduced to stark black and white. The magazine wouldn't really recover until 1960.

Much of the material in the above section comes from well known author and kinbaku model Saotome Hiromi whose 2003 book, *Kitan Kurabu no Hitobito* ("Kitan Club People"), written in collaboration with Kitahara Dohmu, is a mine of fascinating information. It's clear from her timeline that, as opposed to what Westerners often think, it was a long fight to gain the freedom of action Japanese publishers of erotica currently enjoy.

1962: The March issue of Kitan Club is labeled as harmful material (*yuugai toshou*) by panels in Kanagawa and Hiroshima prefectures because of the color photos. In response, the editors start some self-censorship -- cutting the so-called "gravia" photos (big color photos). On May 4, they are formally told by a publishing association to self-regulate.

The famous novel, *Hana to Hebi* ("Flower and Snake") begins to serialize in Kitan Club from the Oct-Sept issue. Written by Kuroiwa Yukihiko (better known as the respected SM author, Dan Oniroku) under the early penname Hanamaki Kyotaro, this novel would be a landmark in SM literature and would be republished under the Dan Oniroku name in various formats numerous times over the years.

1964: Kanagawa prefecture again slams the magazine, this time for the pictures in its January issue. In response, the number of shops refusing to take the February issue increases rapidly. The censors also put the brakes on *Hana to Hebi* and start cutting certain words from stories and serialized novels.

1965: A youth protection committee sharply criticizes the February issue. In the March issue no photos at all are printed. Kanagawa Prefecture complains that it doesn't see any evidence of self-censorship in the November issue.

1969: On the February cover, the words "for adults" appear for the first time. Tsujimura complains that Kitan Club is being singled out for censorship, "Why are they only strict with Kitan Club?"

1972: "Gravia" photos are back from the January issue.

1973: Increased censorship, including erasing parts of pictures and the use of stamps to cover objectionable images, begins.

1975: After nearly 20 years Kitan Club, now a shadow of its former self, ceases publication with the _____ issue.

In truth, by the middle of the 1960s, due to increasing pressure from the authorities, the first "golden age" of SM magazines was to all creative intents and purposes over. Uramado had also ceased publication, after 9 years, in 1965 transforming itself into the far safer, more ordinary and much less controversial Suspense Magazine.

While this is to be lamented, what is remarkable is that these early SM magazines were published at all and that they contained so much quality material. Regardless of one's thoughts on the morality and effect of "erotica" on society, these publications contained numerous examples of superb art by talents as diverse as the mysterious amateur Ishizuka, the classically trained religious artist Obinata, the *bijin* ("beautiful woman") specialist from the ukiyo-e tradition Kitoh Akira and the noted surrealist Nakagawa Ayako (AKA Fujino Kazutomo). As was the case during the time of shunga, many remarkably fine artists turned their hands to kinbaku and SM art in these years,

even if they did it using a nom de plume.

As for the evolution of the art of kinbaku, these were truly the formative years. Beginning with fairly rudimentary techniques heavily influenced by hojojutsu, kinbaku began to evolve because of the need to tie for photo sets and as a result of the interest in SM "play." Rope patterns that once appeared on the backs of prisoners switched to the fronts of beautiful models. The challenge was to make these effective historical ties safe, beautiful to look at and, if possible, erotic; for the most part the same qualities required of the honnawa ties of hojojutsu. Only the eroticism was added but this was a seismic shift in intent as the punishments of hojojutsu and some became the art and eroticism of kinbaku.



Colorful Kitan Club covers - note effects of censorship on the middle issue.

This is also the time when the naming of various ties and positions began in earnest, again influenced by hojojutsu and some traditions. Minomura Kou and Tsujimura Takashi (and, of course, Itoh) were at the forefront of this creating many of the classical kinbaku patterns we use today and some remarkable advances in "rope technique" occurred just before the first "golden age" magazines crashed. However, as was the case with the censorship of kabuki art in the 19th century, this latest freeze was also not to last and there would soon be a second flowing of "low grade sake" in the 1970s, distilled by many of these same creative people.

The emergence of "modern" SM and the second wave of magazines

What we would recognize today as familiar kinbaku art and modern SM really began in the second wave of SM publications beginning in the early 1970s. At this time, censorship was relaxed (save for the scapegoat Kitan Club) and numerous specialty SM/kinbaku magazines found their way into publication. Arriving sometime in the decade between the early 1970s and the early 1980s were such titles as: SM Collector, SM Select, SM Kitan (first published as Abu Hunter before changing its name), SM Mania, SM Fan, SM Sniper, SM Spirit and SM King.

What prompted this explosion was the emergence, in the late 1960s, of SM as a legitimate erotic activity in the mainstream consciousness of the Japanese public. Itoh's secret obsession was suddenly "hip" and as long as the practice of it didn't disturb the *wa* ("harmony") of society by being too overt or too offensive it began to be tolerated. Generally speaking, this is the same attitude that prevails today. Society's understanding of sadomasochism had changed and become more open in part because of the success of several films and the late

night television program "11 pm," which frequently addressed the subject of SM and other formally risqué subjects. Tsujimura Takashi even appeared as a fairly frequent guest on the program after he provided expert advice and did the bondage for several historical films directed by Ishii Teruo and produced by the Toei Company, a very mainstream studio. And he was not alone as other SM "players" soon followed. In short, the term "SM" became generally known and came out of the closet; a major shift after being a hidden culture for years.

In many ways, this second wave of SM magazines picked right up where the first had ebbed. The differences being that the magazines were now more overtly sexual and the printing technology had improved. In consequence, the quality in the reproduction of both photographs and art had vastly increased. Color had also become the norm, for at least some of the magazine's pages, and this allowed for vivid reproductions of an artist's work.

Minomura Kou was again influential in this era as "adviser," artist, author, bakushi and critic for both SM Collector and SM Kitan as well as a contributor to many of the other publications. The magazines he worked for became known for their fiction, commentaries, cartoons, kinbaku tutorials (offered by Nureki Chimuo under his first bakushi name Toyo Kanichiro) and outstanding color art inserted into every issue. In addition to the always unique work of Kita Reiko, several of the older artists continued to be represented, such as Obinata and Kitoh Akira. Added to these talents were newer names that began to receive favorable notice such as the remarkable pencil sketch master Muku Youji, the bijin painter Kasuga Akira and Kaname Ozuma whose trademark would become the astonishing and brilliantly colorful irezumi (tattoos) with which he regularly adorned the intricately bound Edo era maidens in his paintings. In the early years of the SM resurgence magazines competed for these fine artists.

Illustrated short stories continued to dominate the pages of the magazines and authors like Nureki (under his numerous pennames) and Minomura Kou wrote reams of copy. Another greatly admired and prolific writer was Chigusa Tadao. A very private individual and a man of great talent who never revealed his true identity, Chigusa was said to be a high school teacher in Kanazawa. He first wrote for Kitan Club and Uramado and then throughout the SM resurgence of the 1970s, ultimately publishing over 420 works of fiction. Today his much sought after erotic novels often fetch hundreds of dollars apiece when they appear on auction.

Women authors also made their mark at this time with the talented Matsui Raiko working for several magazines at once and penning her own SM novels. And these novels were not just serialized pulp magazine versions. Several publishers (Uramado, Amatoria-sha, etc.) put out series of high quality, hard cover volumes that usually included numerous color and/or black and white illustrations by name artists and written by the best talents in the field.

The most famous SM writer in these years continued to be Dan Oniroku (of "Flower and Snake" notoriety) who began his own magazine in 1972 called SM King. This "kasutori-shi" really tried to be a cut above the others and got a lot of early buzz as a magazine edited, "only by female editors." It was quite an ambitious publication as every issue featured: illustrated fiction (involving kinbaku and other fetishes), portfolios of color art by the best talents, numerous kinbaku photo sets and tutorials, early SM manga (comics), interviews with notable SM people, historical articles, reader's columns and occasional film criticism. Dan even hired Tsujimura Takashi as kinbaku shidou ("kinbaku teacher") for SM King to supervise some of the tying shown in his magazine and to continue his always popular "Camera Hunt" column. So popular did this feature once again prove with readers that Minomura Kou countered with his own column, "Rope Hunt," for his own magazines!

One notable difference between the first group of SM magazines in the 1950s and 1960s and this second batch is the slightly greater reliance on photographs as the years went by. Most magazines featured at least two well produced kinbaku photo sets per issue with models tied in ever more interesting and stylish ways. Males in

bondage and domination were also featured and Western "bondage photos" were still being imported from the United States. Looking at these Western images it's hard not to notice their crudeness and more pointed misogyny in comparison with the better Japanese efforts. Partly this is due to the higher quality Japanese photography by such masters as **Norio** Sugiura whose use of strong, dramatic, "single source" lighting in *SM Select* and *SM Fan* would become his trademark. That said, it's also true that in most ways the Japanese "take" on this kind of material was more aesthetically complex and sophisticated.

True fans (called "maniacs") could even tell the subtle differences between kinbaku styles in the various magazines. Minomura Kou, for instance, when he worked as a bakushi, favored elegantly simple and traditional floor ties and patterns that were carefully constructed to cause models the least amount of physical stress and instead created situations of *shuuchi* ("shyness" or "shame"). The younger Toyo Kanichiro (Nureki Chimuo) favored a more forceful style of tying using many ropes and complex patterns and Tsujimura Takashi, always creative, began to experiment with safely creating *tsuri* (suspensions) for his willing partners.

It's difficult to know exactly how popular these monthlies were at the time but some conclusions can be drawn from the sales figures of one of the most successful publications, *SM Select*. In Dan Oniroku's autobiographical writings published in 1999, *Hana wa Kurenai* ("Flowers are Crimson"), he states that *SM Select* boasted 100,000 copies sold per month at its zenith, much more than *SM* magazines had in the past which he further suggests usually sold no more than 50,000 copies. Regardless of the exact figures, if even remotely accurate, this is a remarkably healthy circulation for such a specialty magazine. Even so, these monthlies were usually bought by the already interested "maniacs." The general public became aware of kinbaku and SM because of TV and the movies. The filmic side of all of this is a fascinating story and worth a slight detour.

SM in the movies and the remarkable case of Nikkatsu studios

The complex history of Japanese erotic films is worthy of a book of its own and luckily there is such a volume and it's in English! Thomas and Yuko Mihara Weisser's excellent "Japanese Cinema Encyclopedia - The Sex Films" (1998, Vital Books Inc.) is a well written and entertaining source of information on all aspects of the Japanese erotic film industry: its history, censorship, films, stars, producers and directors. Fortunately, as far as the SM side of this business is concerned, the history is fairly straightforward.

By the early 1970s, about the same time as the second SM magazine boom began, the Japanese film industry was in serious trouble. Audiences were deserting the theaters in droves for television and the glory days of post war Japanese Cinema, the years when directors such as Ozu Yasujiro, Mizoguchi Kenji and Kurosawa Akira had astonished the West with such masterpieces as "Tokyo Story," "Ugetsu Monogatari" and "The Seven Samurai" were long over. Both Ozu and Mizoguchi had passed away by this time and Kurosawa had even tragically attempted suicide after the failure of his independently produced 1970 film "Dodesukaden." Fortunately for movie lovers the world over, Kurosawa would recover and, with financing from *outside* Japan and the help of such admirers and fellow directors as George Lucas ("Star Wars") and Francis Ford Coppola ("The Godfather"), go on to create several more cinema masterpieces in the 1980s and 1990s.

Nikkatsu studios, created in 1912, was one of the major Japanese production companies then feeling the strain. On the verge of bankruptcy they came up with the novel idea of throwing their dwindling resources into **pinku eiga** (erotic/sex films) which until 1971 had only been the province of second and third rate companies. To get an idea of how momentous a decision this was, imagine the reaction in the United States if MGM had dropped the musicals and gone into pornography!

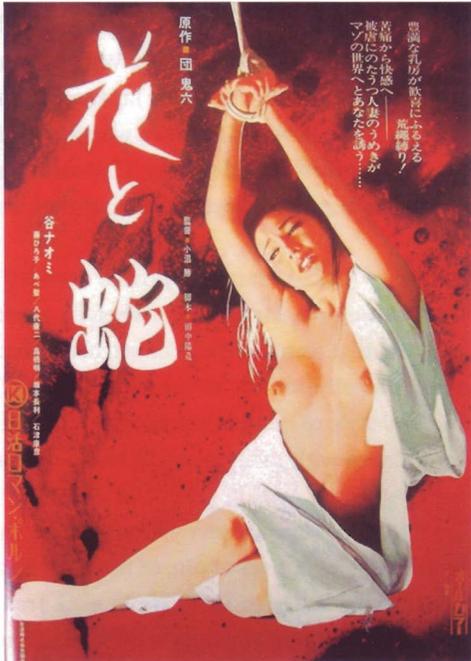
As shocking as this seems, the move proved relatively successful and in 1974 the company's board decided to try a new line of pinku eiga, which they had re-named roman-porno ("romantic pornography"), this time incorporating SM themes. On June 22, 1974 the first film version of Dan Oniroku's famous novel *Hana to Hebi* ("Flower and Snake") was released and was quickly followed by *Ikeniie Fujin* ("Wife to be Sacrificed"). Both films were directed by Konuma Massaru and starred the remarkable actress Tani Naomi. Whether this was sheer commercial desperation or a shrewd understanding of the zeitgeist of the moment can't be known but the results were spectacular. "Flower and Snake" was very successful but "Wife to be Sacrificed" turned out to be a blockbuster, becoming not only Nikkatsu's biggest hit of the year but also one of the studio's five top grossing films *of all time!* Further SM oriented films quickly followed.

Although remarkable, perhaps we shouldn't be too surprised by this success given Japan's general tolerance for sexual material in the past. Films with erotic overtones had been accepted and admired for quite a few years with director Suzuki Seijin's 1964 classic "Gate of Flesh," a story of turmoil and passion among prostitutes at the close of WW2, generally being considered the first mainstream Japanese film to contain nudity. Still, to produce quality films concentrating on SM themes was a bold move.

The stories for Nikkatsu's SM product were a mixed bag ranging from the frankly tasteless and misogynistic to the artful and psychologically complex. The intense "Wife to be Sacrificed" tells the story of a deranged divorced man who kidnaps his ex-wife in order to try to reconcile and "Flower and Snake" explores the intertwined lives of a younger man trying to overcome an early sexual trauma and the young wife of a rich older man who learns she's attracted to SM. Clearly, such relative psychological and narrative complexity takes these stories out of the realm of pornography and, while it's true that in most Western countries these films would never qualify as "politically correct," the argument can be made for artistic merit. That said, perhaps the West is becoming more tolerant. "Wife to be Sacrificed" had its US premier 24 years after it's initial release when it opened in San Francisco in 1998 to good reviews.

Tani Naomi in a recent interview reflecting on the success of her Nikkatsu films said, "I believe these films offer *quality* consisting of 1.) a highly dramatic plot, 2.) an entertaining aura coupled with 3.) a distinctly Japanese ambience." The quality she speaks of was the other important factor that allowed the best of these tightly scripted films (each running no more than 70 minutes in length) to do well at the box office. Nikkatsu had the resources to give them first rate production values and better than average acting. Although not expensive to make (most cost no more than about 1.8 million Yen, about \$180, 000 at current exchange rates), they did draw on the expertise of fine studio craftsman, attractive stars and solid writers and directors.

In Matsushima Toshiyuki's book, *Nikkatsu Roman Porno Zenshi* ("The Complete History of Nikkatsu Roman Porno"), Konuma Massaru, director of "Wife to be Sacrificed" and "Flower and Snake," talks about how the studio allowed the directors great control over the content of their films, only requiring that a sex scene be included every ten minutes! Handling these scenes was a major challenge since full nudity was strictly prohibited by the censors. In truth, a great deal of creativity had to be shown in order to stay within the bounds of what was permitted but



Poster for "Flower and Snake" starring Tani Naomi - c. Nikkatsu Studios, 1974

these limitations often provoked remarkably interesting ideas and visuals. Obviously, this meant that the more intelligent the filmmaker the more interesting the result. Certainly Konuma was one of these unique talents as attested to in a recent documentary by one of his more famous younger assistants, Nakatu Hideo; a young man he also mentored and the director of the horror hit "The Ring."

As far as the shibari/kinbaku in these films is concerned, that posed a special challenge. It was one thing to tie for still photos but to bind actors in the classical style and not fake the techniques while still allowing them to act was quite a feat. It certainly required more skill than loosely tying the heroine to the railroad tracks! As mentioned previously, Tsujimura Takashi had pulled this off for several very violent historical films for Toei studios: *Tokugawa Onna Keibatsu-shi* (1968), *Zankoku-Ijou-Gyakutai Monogatari: Genroku Onna Keizu* (1968) and *Tokugawa Irezumi-shi Semu Jigoku* (1969). For "Wife to be Sacrificed" and "Flower and Snake" the job fell to a now largely forgotten but quite talented bakushi named Urato Hiroshi.

In a 1977 issue of "Sun and Moon" magazine Urato talked about his experience of being the "kinbaku shidou" for these famous films. He describes how director Konuma asked him for his creative suggestions on what types of kinbaku to tie for each scene and then, surprisingly, let him do pretty much what he wanted. He also mentioned that he liked Konuma because he was a "romanticist" like himself. The result of this creative freedom and similar take on the material was a remarkably inventive series of kinbaku ties that beautifully complimented the narrative. Urato used all sorts of classical and modern techniques and, working in some very difficult conditions of wind and rain, produced artistically interesting ties that challenged and, like a fine costume, enhanced the beautiful Tani Naomi. In *Kifujin Shibari Tsubo* ("Nobel Lady: Bound Vase") from 1977 Urato even had to tie Tani naked to her lover, back to back, and riding bareback on a galloping horse! This was a very dangerous stunt to do and, even using a hidden belly strap for the horse and creative camera angles, required a lot of skill.

Quite a few of the more spectacular scenes in these films involved doing tsumi (suspensions) with actors, not just stunt people, pulled high into the air and it was at this time that intelligent bakushi like Tsujimura and Urato, building on the experience of doing the magazine still shoots, worked out safe methods for recreating what were after all serious torture techniques. These dazzling circus type stunts even became the stuff of stage shows as the pioneering SM maestro Osada Eikichi took up these safer techniques and began his legendary performances in Tokyo, attracting huge crowds. As mentioned earlier, his shows became the forerunners of today's SM club acts, most of which involve exciting kinbaku aeriels.

Dan Oniroku continued his collaboration with Nikkatsu and Tani Naomi until her retirement in 1978. Together they turned out 15 slickly produced SM films, a remarkable total for only six years. In addition to the films already mentioned, here are a few of the more interesting Nikkatsu SM titles featuring stories by Dan, the lovely Ms. Tani and/or artful kinbaku in various combinations: *Ori No Naka No Yosei* ("Fairy in a Cage"), *Dan Oniroku Shoujo Shibari Ezu* ("Image of a Bound Girl"), *Dan Oniroku Nawa To Hada* ("Rope and Skin") and *Hakkinbon Bijin* ("Beauty's Exotic Dance - Torture!"). *Hakkinbon Bijin* is loosely based on the autobiographical writings of Itoh Seiyu and *Dan Oniroku Nawa To Hada* is Tani Naomi's last film.

By the time Nikkatsu's Roman Pornos began to run out of steam at the beginning of the 1980s, the studio had produced more than 1100 titles, many of them SM themed, and although even Nikkatsu used the term pornography to describe their "pink" films, these movies should not be confused with "porn" as we know it today. More accurately and in fairness, *pinku eiga* should be called erotica. For while it's true that the genre indulges in some strong and perverse storylines -- pink movies have forever been attacked by church groups and moral guardians worldwide -- all the Nikkatsu films are soft core and in Japan, at least, were seen as viable escapist entertainment.

Shibari/Kinbaku today: Art, pornography or personal passion?

Today, SM and shibari/kinbaku have become accepted parts of the Japanese erotic and even cultural landscape. No longer the "flavor of the month," they have become an almost commonplace element in the huge Japanese erotic industry that arose in the 1980s. Hoh would be amazed. SM images and "performances" appear more openly than ever before in magazines, manga (comics) and on film and, of course, it is its own category of video pornography. As might be expected, this has both its pluses and minuses.

On the plus side, the very popularity of this type of material has led to more commercial opportunities for talented rope artists. Since the late 1970s some very skilled practitioners have appeared on the scene and lifted the art of shibari/kinbaku to new heights. Talented bakushi like Yukimura Haruki, Arisue Go and the late and brilliant Akechi Denki each contributed their considerable skills to different types of media exploitation and helped raise the bar for creative, dramatic and beautiful shibari everywhere they appeared. In the 1980s and 1990s Akechi Denki, wearing his trademark dark sunglasses, seemed to especially represent the art of Japanese kinbaku to the rest of the world.

On the minus side, as the practice of shibari/kinbaku and SM became more commercialized and the province of big business, it lost much of its novelty and not a little of its artistry. Like your favorite small restaurant that, due to popularity, decides to expand and in so doing loses many of the qualities that made it your favorite, the consequences of blatant commercialism are often mixed.

In publishing for instance, many of the better second wave SM magazines (SM Kitan, SM Collector) were out of business by the mid-1980s, casualties of competition and various censorship pressures. Dan Oniroku's SM King folded in 1975 and the remarkable Minomura Kou suffered a stroke sidelining him from most of the creative activities he once dominated. In their place the so-called "modern" SM magazines, such as SM Sniper, began to monopolize the marketplace and others were created, such as the fairly recent Mania Club. These periodicals placed a premium on still photographs and so-called "sensational" material for younger readers. Out went much of the art and almost all of the fiction and in came pages of glossy photos and "photo features" on scatology, cutting, orgies and other controversial, "edgy" subjects. In addition, reports began to circulate about models being "tricked" into posing for stills by some early 1980's magazines, a practice that can only be viewed with contempt.

Taking up recent (2007) issues of SM Sniper and Mania Club at random is instructive. Once past Sniper's eye-catching cover, in this case a photo copying an inventive 1940's cover illustration for John Willie's "Bizarre" magazine, we find a periodical that's almost one third advertisements.



Modern "adult" SM magazines, model books and video/DVDs

These ads for sex clubs, various dominatrix and sex performance aids are garish in the extreme. There are very few articles of any sort and almost no art in the magazine, the bulk of its pages being filled with "reports" from various "sexual events" whose amateurish pictures, though liberally catering to different erotic interests, seem to compete for "shock value." There are several professional photo sets, one that's quite well produced from the well known photographer Tanaka Kinichi, but here again the interest is in viewing the hapless model from all angles while the kinbaku is perfunctory and uninteresting. The issue of Media Club shares these same qualities exactly except that many of the models seem nearly underage and there is a greater emphasis on scatology. The single quality shibari/kinbaku photo set is by Norio Sugiura. He, at least, doesn't seem to have forgotten how to take a dramatic and interesting picture.

Comparing these commercial products to the "golden age" magazines is to realize with a shock how much art and sophistication has been lost, for if one phrase characterizes most of Japan's "modern" SM magazines it is "lack of imagination." That almost surprising literary quality of years past intended for the relatively educated and sophisticated reader is gone. This is why, when the winds of change first began to blow, Tsujimura Takashi decided to end his "Camera Hunt" column. He felt it was no longer as relevant as it once was when people had few sources of information about SM and he felt he simply couldn't keep up with the new reader's expectations for SM play with enemas and vibrators. Kinbaku legend Nureki Chimuo apparently agrees, often decrying in interviews the lack of creativity shown in today's "everything is permissible" environment and referring to himself as "a shibari robot;" one who ties but seldom with the necessary emotional commitment for art.

Of course, as the old joke goes, "One man's pornography is another man's erotica" or, to put it another way, each age gets the entertainments it deserves. Mr. Matsumoto Yutaka, a senior editor at Sanwa Erotica, one of Japan's major publishers of SM and other sexually oriented magazines, recently said in a interview, "Us here, who are in the SM publishing industry, we are actually providing cutting-edge entertainment, ... By catering to the fantasies of our readers we are constantly pushing the envelope, breaking taboos, opening new possibilities for sexual quality time. And as such we are making an important contribution to Society."

Be that as it may, there is still the question of taste and there seems no question that in comparison to the early years of Minomura Kou, Dan Oniroku and the others, of the up to 100 magazines currently published each month that deal with some type of SM and/or shibari/kinbaku material many lack a decided, ... elegance. Of course, not every magazine is devoid of interest. In fact, the same SM Sniper has contained one feature since its founding that is simply remarkable.

One of the most famous and internationally respected Japanese photographers is Araki Nobuyoshi. He has published numerous highly regarded photography books, appeared in gallery exhibitions all over the world and photographed the cover of the "Spring Fashion Supplement" for the New York Times. Also, since 1979 his photo essay "Kinbaku Sha Rosen" has appeared each month in SM Sniper. This alone says volumes about the tolerance for sexual individuality in Japan for I can think of few other countries where such a daring act by so famous a figure wouldn't at least raise an eyebrow.

Each month he creates an elegant bondage photo essay featuring an amateur or professional model. Apparently, these women (and sometimes men) flock to him from all over the country, asking to pose in kinbaku and then be photographed by this internationally known artist. Former Sniper editor Konishi Yoichi was the individual who got Araki started in this venture and it's interesting to hear how it all began.

Konishi relates that he approached Araki out of the blue in 1979 and proposed that he do SM photos for the magazine. As the editor tells it, "The SM magazines that existed at that time were 'mania magazines' geared to

doctors, lawyers, school teachers - in other words, *real readers* (author's italics). Hoping to make something just a little more commercial, I looked to Araki for his assistance." Araki agreed and after the first shoot found he thoroughly enjoyed it. He comments, "On a shoot I always tell the model, 'I'm not going to tie your heart. Just let me tie your body.' However, in truth, the moment I tie them their expression changes... they show me who they truly are."

Araki's shibari photos are like no one else's. Beautifully composed and featuring interesting backgrounds and settings, his models, most of whom apparently have a true interest in SM, always come across as real people living their lives but revealing intimate moments. As artful as the photography is one wishes the kinbaku was as skilled since the same relatively simple techniques and positions are repeated ad infinitum. However, the tying is usually done by a SM Sniper editor as Araki shoots so this creative area seems less under the artist's control. So popular have his bondage photos become that Araki has had released (in Japan and Germany) six books of these pictures, the last two being the most unusual. In 2008 a book of his shibari photos combined with classical Japanese woodcuts was published under the title "Araki meets Hokusai" and in 2006 he created, in the manner of Hoh Seiyu, a scroll of black and white kinbaku photos brilliantly hand accented with brightly colored paints. This last effort, released in a numbered and limited edition, is kinbaku photography approaching fine art.

In film, by the end of the 1980s, with the advent of cheaply produced adult videos (AV's) and stiffer government intervention, the theatrical pinku eiga market began to wane. The old methods of studio film production simply could not compete with videos shot for a fraction of the cost. In the face of such competition from the Godzilla that is the Japanese adult media industry, Nikkatsu closed its production facilities in 1988. Along with the demise of the theatrical film went much of the need for interesting plots, good acting and better than average photography. Censorship was still in place so some restrictions on what could be shown and what had to be digitally obscured still applied but the era of the porn video was at hand.

In this booming "adult" market SM became a profitable specialty item and several companies began to prosper by releasing large numbers of books, magazines and videos. These included: Taiyoh, Art Video, Sanwa and Cinemagic. The Taiyoh group is probably the largest company in the field having far flung publishing interests outside of erotica. Cinemagic, begun by Yokobatake Kunihiko (the former publisher of the short lived but excellent SM Graffiti magazine) and concentrating more on video production, is perhaps the best known in the West since a fair number of their titles were imported overseas, either legitimately or in bootlegged versions, beginning in the 1990s.

Japan's adult industry is remarkable for the variety of "product" it turns out. In fact, it's safe to say that there's an adult DVD, magazine, book or computer game for every niche and fringe interest no matter how odd, obscure or politically incorrect. Their freedom is extraordinary even as their content and its related moral questions complicate our perceptions and muddle our understanding. This is certainly true of the "adult" SM market and its use of shibari/kinbaku.

As Hoh had feared when "rope draping" had so offended him, the art of shibarikinbaku usually comes in second when used in pornography. In one sense, this is a natural evolution from the time Dan Oniroku first wrote "Flower and Snake" and first combined seme with sex. However, as in all such matters, it's a question of degree and the taste and artistic skill (or lack thereof) of the people involved. As pornography became more explicit, often verging on the tasteless, violent and definitely misogynistic, kinbaku began to seem the natural partner of this type of material instead of an art that had been usurped. Regrettably, it's when Westerners see these sorts of videos or still images that their impressions of shibarikinbaku, without any historical or cultural context, are formed and this often leads to a complete misunderstanding of what the art truly is or, at least, could be. At it's worst this results in

the owners of Western Internet "torture" porn sites using ineptly done shibari to dress up their sordid offerings, a move made all the more callus and objectionable by the porous nature of the Internet which allows children to be but a mere mouse click away from such material.

Interestingly enough, the Japanese have long understood this dichotomy and have, even in the world of adult publishing, to some degree attempted to address it. The truth is there are two types of shibari/kinbaku adult media. One type is fictional and accommodates the wildest flights of fancy running the gamut from the relatively innocent to the perverse. It includes most of the true pornography that's produced. The other presents kinbaku as an art form and as an activity to be enjoyed by consenting adults. These two distinct types of media both utilize shibari/kinbaku but depend on the maturity and intelligence of the consumer to distinguish between them. Minomura Kou, perhaps the most talented artist and editor ever to work in the SM field, addressed this issue in a column he wrote for the magazine *SM Collector* in 1981 toward the end of his career but at the beginning of the AV era. Talking about the types of images created for pornography and film he wrote, "There are many interesting things that seem like they would be simple and interesting to do that should be left to the world of fiction. One should not be taken in by that irresponsible, romantic, world."

Since this book is about the *art* of shibari/kinbaku, I'll leave the irresponsible to themselves and concentrate on a few of the more exceptional examples from the current scene.

It should be obvious that the most important aspect of the art and practice of kinbaku is when it's used in a personal way, as part of a consensual and loving relationship. Fortunately, for those more interested in doing than watching, for over 30 years there has been a slow but steady stream of "self help" instructional books and, more recently, videos and DVDs produced concentrating on practical SM and kinbaku techniques. These items were and are aimed at a general audience and supplanted the more specialist information once contained in the "golden age" SM magazines. While not always perfect, these releases do attempt to address what's clearly more than a puerile interest in the public and should be appreciated for helping to create a better, more mature, understanding of the art.

The first of these efforts dates from the early 1970s or from about the time when SM was beginning to be perceived as a legitimate erotic activity by the wider Japanese public. As such, these "how to" books suggest a very healthy and accepting trend and a concern for safety. The first useful guide to understanding and carefully practicing SM and shibari/kinbaku that I've seen is from 1972 and was authored by Urato Hiroshi, the talented bakushi responsible for the fine kinbaku in the Nikkatsu/Dan Oniroku films "Wife to be Sacrificed," "Flower and Snake," etc. Its title, translated on the cover into English (!) is "SM Play: You Can Play SM." Like the title, the contents are simple and direct and offer general advice and photos on how to create straightforward but attractive kinbaku ties and enjoy various "scenes." It was an auspicious beginning for this genre.

During the last 15 years many more famous bakushi have offered up information on their art and craft. Some of the more notable examples are: The "Rope World" series of videos from Cinemagic and Nureki Chimuo, the "How to Play SM" book and videos by Nagaike Takechi (one of Dan Oniroku's more frequent recent collaborators) and Arisue Go's 2 volume set, "The Book of Five Rings for Rope Arts" published by Sanwa. Haruki Yukimura, one of the most artistic and respected of bakushi, recently published a very intelligent beginner's guide to kinbaku on DVD and, of course, one must not fail to mention the numerous books and instructional DVDs that Randa Mai, that younger Turk of shibari/kinbaku, famous from his AV productions and stage performances, has released over the last few years.

Speaking of stage performances, these too have had their artistic moments. Ever since the late Osada Eikichi

virtually invented the form in the 1960s, bakushi have taken to the stages of clubs, theaters and SM bars to entertain their fans. Competition from all the other SM venues using kinbaku may have reduced the numbers of paying customers since Eikichi's day when hundreds of eager fans might spend as much as \$1000 for a ticket to see such a show, but some quality still rises to the top. Randa Mai, when performing, does an act that would rival many a Las Vegas casino with its glitz and fireworks. On a more restrained level, the German born Osada Steve, whose friend and mentor was the great Osada Eikichi, does an elegant suspension dominated performance with his beautiful aerialist partner Asagi Ageha. And women don't only function on the bottom half of these bills. Female bakushi such as Sayaka and Kanou Chiaki have also performed on stage and some talented women, such as author and model Saotome Hiromi, even dispense with the male member of the team altogether and do solo "performance art" style acts featuring all manner of self suspensions and dance.

In film, beginning in the early 1990s and after the fall of Nikkatsu, some independent producers and directors emerged dedicated to continuing the pinku eiga tradition and some of these films met with quite decent success despite the domination of the AV market. In the SM field, the venerable Nawa Yumio contributed the scripts to two historically accurate, if graphic, costume dramas involving the Edo Era, *Onna Hankacho I & II* (1995, King Records). Directed by Tsushima Masaru, they each tell the story of a government agent on a secret mission from the emperor to ferret out injustice in the shogun's capitol. Various cases, supposedly drawn from history, are investigated.



Still from "I am an SM Writer," directed by Hiroki Ryuichi and starring Osugi Ren

In 2000 came the truly delightful "I am an SM Writer," directed by the very talented Hiroki Ryuichi and based on another novel by the venerable and prolific Dan Oniroku. Director Hiroki cut his teeth in the pinku eiga world and he brings that insider's knowledge to what is basically a bittersweet romantic comedy chronicling the trials and tribulations of an SM novelist. The marvelous Osugi Ren plays the eponymous narrator of the piece, a successful SM author who recounts the details of why his wife left him some 20 years before due to his preoccupation with the more intellectual side of the sexual act as opposed to the physical. Immersed in his own fantasies, he feverishly documents staged SM scenarios (featuring kinbaku by Yukimura Haruki) acted out in his living room by his young assistant and "rope expert." Oblivious to his wife's own burgeoning sexuality, he fails to notice her increasing interest in her tennis partner, a brash young American hunk, until the obvious is pointed out to him by the assistant. His reaction? After the initial rage he scribbles down the details of their imagined liaison for use in his work. Eventually, bored with the lack of emotional depth in the relationship with the American and now fascinated by SM, the wife moves on to the assistant as a last ditch attempt to provoke some degree of interest from her husband, a man who is more prone to SM ideas than the more carnal reality behind them.

What's marvelous about the film is that, in much the same manner as the indie US film "Secretary" from the same year, the SM material, despite some strong scenes, hardly exists for the sake of exploitation in its own right but



Still from "I am an SM Writer" with shibari by Yukimura Haruki - c. Goldview, 2000

rather as a light-hearted comic drama set against this backdrop; a post-modern pinku, if you will. The bondage scenes are sparse and not staged for the sake of titillation and for the most part the film charts the emotional trajectories of Osugi's and his wife's characters. Within this context there is true validity to the whimsical portrayal of what would be considered a strict sexual and filmic no-go area in other countries. What Hiroki and his talented cast get exactly right is that the key point of the SM power play, as is so often forgotten, is that both partners *consent* to acting out their fantasies -- the "victim" in those scenes is a paid model who laughs as she helps tie up her own knots and addresses the writer as "sensei" (teacher/master) while it's the SM

writer who truly suffers.

Making an even bigger impact was the box office success of 2004's major SM release "Flower and Snake" and its follow-up, 2005's "Flower and Snake 2 - Paris." Once again, Dan Oniroku's famous story of a young wife and a disturbed youth has been re-worked, this time for a big budget version. The production values of these two films are completely first rate, surpassing even the Nikkatsu standards. In truth, the original "Flower and Snake" film from 1974 looks more than a little creaky today, despite the presence of the always radiant and convincing Tani Naomi, but these skillfully executed remakes take the story firmly and slickly into the 21st century. The director and writer of both is the very interesting talent Ishii Takashi; a veteran of the later Nikkatsu years and an acclaimed manga and screenplay writer. As a young man Ishii contributed haunting illustrations to such "golden age" SM magazines as SM King and SM Select and it was this visual skill that allowed him an entry into film.

Both pictures star the lovely Aya Sugimoto as the wife that ventures too far into the film's operatic world of SM. Her performances are quite remarkable, although the Japanese fans had a hard time forgiving any actress that would dare try to take the place of their beloved "goddess" Tani Naomi. There is a great deal of kinbaku in these movies, some even as challenging to execute as in the Nikkatsu years, and that's done in fine style by bakushi Arisue Go. Although the first film was the bigger success, resulting in part 2, it's the second film, "Flower and Snake 2 - Paris," that's artistically more satisfying. This is due to the fact that the intriguing plot, involving the creation of some beautiful SM art with Ms. Sugimoto as the conflicted model, is based on the extraordinary work of the quite brilliant Miyabi Kyodo, one of the youngest and most gifted seme-e masters working today.

The most recent filmic foray into quality is the excellent 2007 documentary "Bakushi," again from director Hiroki Ryuichi. This time the goal is to examine the lives and work of several world class bakushi, those rope artists who ply their trade as teachers, producers and "riggers" for video, books and magazines. The men selected are Nureki Chimuo, Yukimura Haruki and Arisue Go and they are joined by their favorite models: Saotome Hiromi, Sumire and Uzuki Taeko. Each rope artist is presented in a working situation or session and then reflects on his career. Each of the models the men work with also give their thoughts.

All of the nawashi are very articulate and are shown to quite good advantage, especially Arisue Go who has the most visually interesting section; a beautiful private session with his model in an elegant tatami suite. Another plus is being backstage at a photo session with Nureki in collaboration with master photographer Sugiura Norio as they tie Saotome Hiromi. This was a request of Saotome who had worked with both men many times over the years and

who wanted to get the three friends together again, "one last time."

Even in the generally fallow AV video field there have been flashes of quality. Cinemagic is a company that's been very successful, usually releasing SM pornography. However, they have also done several series of greater interest. One such presents kinbaku only sessions (i.e. without graphic or violent content) featuring the best of the modern practitioners: Nureki, Yukimura and the late Akechi Denki, each working with attractive professional models. Another series, whose title loosely translates to "It's only Bondage," continues the themes of the old Tsujimura "Camera Hunt" column. In these videos supposed "amateurs" and "ordinary people" volunteer to experience kinbaku done by skilled bakushi and talk about their feelings and fantasies while a camera records the experience. Of even more interest, Cinemagic has released several historically themed videos showing Edo era techniques and, more poignantly, a "testimonial" tape honoring Minomura Kou done shortly after he had suffered his stroke. In this quite wonderful program, directed by Yukimura Haruki, many of the major SM figures of yesterday and today (Dan Oniroku, Arisue Go, Nureki Chimuo, etc., etc.) come together to talk about the artist and celebrate his art.

On occasion, individual bakushi have been able to release their own kinbaku performance tapes allowing the viewer to better study their techniques. However, here a word of caution must be raised since, unlike true "how to" programs, these "performance" tapes often hide as many techniques as they reveal. The legendary Akechi Denki did these sorts of videos for several years utilizing impressive sessions he'd done out of his well known "Studio Phantom" in Tokyo and Yukimura Haruki, perhaps the most prolific video producer of them all, has released hundreds of such tapes through his own company, Sunset Color, and also through the Taiyoh group. Even when a bakushi works for a major pornography producer it's possible for worthwhile material to occasionally appear. The younger and very talented kinbaku master Naka Akira has worked for many years for Art Video, one of the more determined and graphic porn producers. Recently, he's been given the chance to produce his own series of soft core kinbaku centered DVDs called the *Nawa-Etsu* or "Rope Rejoicing" series. These are beautifully lit and photographed kinbaku performances with more than a whiff of old Edo that attractively present his impressive skills.

As was the case with scenes of seme-e in the late Edo era of the 19th century, some of the most interesting and startling examples of today's artful tying come to us in the books of art, both graphic and photographic, that daring publishers have created. Over the last three decades almost every year has brought at least one real treasure that transcends the commerciality of the "adult" industry.

In photography some particularly impressive examples would include Ishigaki Akira's "Strange Fruit" (1982/1993, shibari by **Roppongi** Kaoru), the Nureki Chimuo/Fuji Akio collaboration "Bind" (the small book/catalogue that records Fuji's impressive photo show at the Mole gallery in 1992) and Yukimura Haruki's, "Trans Body Bondage" (1998 - photos by Takahashi Junko) and "Shibari 1,2,3" (1998 - with photos by Oka Katumi, Higure Keisuke and Watanabe Tatsumi, respectively). Interestingly, these last three exquisite art photography books are in the small format used for the ukiyo-e books (*nishiki-e*) that were printed as souvenirs for travelers to Edo in earlier times. This continuing preference for less than pocket sized books comes from Japan's history of making small, easy to carry volumes since until the modern era just about everyone, except noble lords, were walking when they traveled. The rest had to go in cramped palanquins and pay for their luggage to be carried, so smaller was better.

It might surprise the reader to learn that in Japan light bondage often makes an appearance in attractive, coffee table sized collections of erotic art photographs of beautiful female celebrities. The kinbaku can be a major theme or hardly there and several photographers and bakushi specialize in this type of publication. Arisue Go, with his somewhat gentler style, is particularly well suited to this format and has done the bondage for several very attractive soft core erotic photo books featuring such famous actresses as: Toyota Maho, Akiyoshi Kumiko and



Akechi Denki masterwork, 1995

volumes are, they pale in comparison to what is probably the most beautiful of all of these types of books, "Pleasure and a Little Pain" from 1995. This quite stunning volume features the actress and model Asabuki Kate with photography by Tanaka Kinichi and shibarikinbaku by Akechi Denki. What separates this effort from all the others is that every element, the lighting, settings, classic costumes, Ms. Asabuki's expressions and Akechi Denki sensei's sometimes simple, sometimes complex but always beautiful rope work, combine to enhance one another and produce magical images of mystery, eroticism and dramatic power. If sophisticated and beautiful kinbaku photography interests you, this truly is the gold standard.

Perhaps the most familiar Japanese "bondage" books for the Western consumer are the ubiquitous adult "rope books" that have appeared consistently since the 1950s. Most are simple paperbacks offering page after page of more or, often, less expert shibari/kinbaku applied to a wide variety of models in various situations. Minor porn publishers and major publishing houses have produced and exported these items over the years in large numbers. The format never seems to go out of style even as its tedious similarities blur any distinctions between the books or their publishers.

Without question, the earliest examples of this type of volume are the most unique and important with the honor of being the first commercial publication completely dedicated to shibari/kinbaku photography going to a special summer edition of Yomikiri Romance magazine, published on July 2, 1952 and edited by Ueda Shishiro, one of Hoh Seiyu's collaborators. Basically a large pamphlet, it cannot be said to be a true book and it featured relatively simple shibari. Still, it was a groundbreaking event in SM publishing.

A far more considerable achievement appeared on July 1, 1953 in a limited edition of 500 copies that sold for 500 Yen each (quite expensive for any Japanese book at that time). Each volume was a hand made, high quality album of 36 actual photographs of nude models in kinbaku, each photograph carefully glued onto an individual backing and preceded by a delicate page of rice paper containing an impressionistic description of the tie and/or the photo. This lovely book was put together by Kayama Shigeru, soon to become a close associate of Dan Oniroku and a noted SM personage in Japan. The title is loosely translated as, "Beautifully Bound - The Only Album of Bound Women." The kinbaku is by the master Minomura Kou.

Oginome Keiko. He once even tied a female professional wrestler for a similar photo collection. His most impressive effort is probably "Pleasure in the Fall," a lovely book of photos by Kawai Takao with the former Nikkatsu actress Ogawa Minako. More experimental in style is fashion/fine Art photographer Gomi Akira's "Yellow's the Revenge-Kinbaku Shashin" which digitally revisits the world of Hoh Seiyu. Using video captures and other modern photographic techniques he lends a new look to classical kinbaku and seme-e the es.

However, as attractive as these

The shibarilkinbaku presented in this beautiful album is of great interest because it depicts ties that are halfway between the older hOjojutsu schools and more modern shibari/kinbaku. As such this book is a missing link of sorts for martial arts and shibari researchers. In amongst the older honnawa patterns are the *takate-kote*, the *ganji garame*, the historical *ebi*, various *tsuri*'s and even more exotic ties such as the *imu mushi shibari* or "green caterpillar tie" (for descriptions of all these kinbaku patterns please *see* the Glossary). Below is an elegant photograph from this album labeled only as "The Alcove Ornament." Note the obvious hOjojutsu details of the neck and arm ropes.



"The Alcove Ornament" by Minomura Kou, 1953

"Beautifully Bound" was a tremendous success and spawned a sequel only a few months later, this time with kinbaku by Tsujimura Takashi. And so the deluge began; if only the quality could have been maintained! Over the years thousands of these types of books have been published. Some fairly interesting examples include several quality series created by the Haga Shoten Company in collaboration with Dan Oniroku, various "Special Photo Editions" from several "golden age" SM magazines and, most recently, a number of the books published by the Sanwa company. The best of these modern versions are often the work of photographer Norio Sugiura and feature shibari by his long time collaborator Ureki Chimuo and also by several younger bakushi such as the very talented Marai Masato. As striking as the photography is in these current "rope books," the reader should be advised that the material is sometimes quite graphic and, though inventive, potentially disturbing.

Of course, over the years there has been less serious work released. The author remembers with a smile a "3-D" book from the 1970s where you had to wear colored glasses to have the tied models pop out at you. There have also been numerous books of manga and other cartoons and even, on occasion, toys. As some readers might know, Japan is also the land of beautiful dolls and toy models. Everything from miniature replicas of samurai, recent pop stars, "Star Wars" characters, creatures from current TV shows and gorgeous kimono glad dolls have been and are being produced for avid collectors. The same is true of shibari/kinbaku figures! A few years ago the Ero-Pon



Itoh and model- toy figures by Ero-Pon

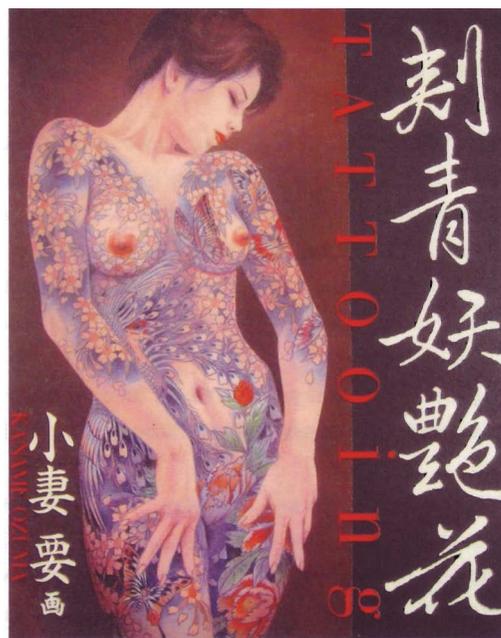
company began to release beautifully executed kinbaku art models. So far there have been 3 editions. The first depicts well known scenes from Itoh Seiyu's paintings and illustrations, including a little Hoh figure shown drawing a bound model! The second reproduces more modern shibari ties from recent books and magazines and the third replicates some of the very detailed drawings of the master pencil sketch artist Muku Youji. While it's possible to get them in boxed sets, I'm told most are sold in vending machines! Only in Japan.

Finally, there are what could be called, for lack of a better term, the collections of shibari/kinbaku fine art. Hoh started this tradition with his publication of some paintings and sketches in the 1920s and it has continued up to the present day. In 1952 the classically trained artist Shibatani Saijiro

published a beautiful limited edition of seme-e/kinbaku art based on historical and legendary incidents and Itoh Seiyu did something similar with his lovely "12 Months of Strange Punishments" album in 1953. Each of these elegant books features colorful prints separated by rice paper upon which the incident or tale depicted is described. Today Itoh is himself considered a legendary artistic figure in Japan so it is perhaps fitting that two of the most recent and lavish seme-e/kinbaku art books contain many of his most beautiful designs. *Itoh Seiyu Gashu* ("Collected Pictures of Itoh Seiyu") published by Shinchosha in 1997 and "The Secret Notebooks of Itoh Seiyu," published in 2002 by Futami, collect many of his most dramatic and distinctive paintings, sketches, photographs and commentaries.

During the "golden age" of the SM magazines some quite wonderful art was created. Unfortunately, very few publishers at the time realized the potential goldmine this art represented so only two or three small compilations of this material were ever released. The best is probably *Nawa to Onna* from 1970 which catalogues a good number of black and white images from illustrators such as Obinata, Kitoh Akira, Yamada, Oki and Ishizuka. A second worthwhile book is *Tanbi no Hakken* released as an "art supplement" to a series of novels published by SM Bugaku. This modest little volume includes a few images each from such major talents as Minomura Kou (Kita Reiko), Sogabe Yasushi and Kasuga Akira.

In the last few years more publishers have realized the value of this early magazine art so several portfolios from modern seme-e masters have appeared. Unfortunately, it's been a hit or miss proposition and such acknowledged geniuses as Minomura Kou (Kita Reiko) and Obinata Ichimu have 110 collections of their seme-e work while several considerably lesser lights do. Still, such major figures as Fujino Kazutomo, the noted surrealist painter who did his SM art under the name Nakagawa Ayako and Akiyoshi Ran, the fantasy/fabulist painter who did many of the "golden age" SM magazine covers both have deluxe editions of their work available. On a lesser scale the same goes for the elegant Kasuga Akira, who became such a favorite of Dan Oniroku's that he did the covers for several of that author's more famous novels. Perhaps the two most fortunate artists from the "golden age" are Muku Youji and Kaname Ozuma. Each of these superb craftsmen has had multiple books of their seme-e art published in recent years and Ozuma's tattoo filled kinbaku paintings and prints command high prices at the Tokyo gallery that handles his work.



Deluxe portfolio of art by Kaname Ozuma

As I write this, several prominent younger artists have turned to SM or shibari/kinbaku for their themes and inspiration, and not just in Japan. The Englishman Trevor Brown created quite a stir in Italy recently with his beautiful "Japabon" series of colored pencil drawings inspired by visits to several of Nureki Chimuo's kinbaku sessions. Domestically, the highly regarded Yoshitaka Amano, master of fantasy, animation and manga, collaborated with Dan Oniroku on a book of watercolor washes and finished paintings to celebrate the release of the recent "Flower and Snake" films. In a quieter vein, Editions TREVILLE has published a deluxe three volume set of the internationally known artist Takato Yamamoto's Ukiyo-e inspired, erotically charged studies of delicately featured youths. Perhaps most interesting of all, from a historical perspective, is the arrival of the hyper-realist artist Miyabi Kyodo as a significant figure in kinbaku art. Miyabi worked as an editor on SM magazines in the early 1980s and developed a friendship with the aging Minomura Kou with whom he'd discuss his work. As

such, he claims to be Kita Reiko's (Minomura's) "last student." If so, it's a deserved title for Miyabi's quite graphic and powerful imagery certainly does carry on the potent legacy of that remarkable master.

It seems a long journey from the Jomon pottery and Shinto shimenawa of ancient Japan to today's modern kinbaku art but perhaps it's not so far as all that. In correspondence with the artist Miyabi Kyodo I asked him what shibari meant to him. Here is his reply:

"Shibari is not something you can learn in school. It is part of the basic Japanese culture conveyed from parents to children. In Japan, the nation of Shintoism, tying with nawa is a sacred act. You can see this in such examples as the 'shimenawa' used at Shinto shrines. For anything holy in which the Japanese feel 'Kami' (god, sacredness) they tie or surround it with nawa. By tying, a Japanese shows his respect. What is behind the nawa is sacred and so tying with nawa connects the 'Kami' with the human. Therefore, shibari is neither truly art nor performance but actually a sacred act. Only those who believe in Shintoism make things sacred by tying. By the way, I am a follower of Shintoism."

And so it sometimes is in the world of shibari/kinbaku, that sacred and profane art from the land the author and musician Masami Akita calls, "the sadomasochistic kingdom of the world."

Questions: .

"What are the origins of kinbaku?"

After 30 years of study, I have come to the conclusion that there are actually several, distinct, historical and artistic antecedents for modern shibari/kinbaku. In no particular order these are: the martial art of hojojutsu, the 1742 Tokugawa law and punishment decrees known as the "One Hundred Articles," the rise of ukiyo-e (woodblock print) art and the popularity of kabuki theater in Edo era Japan. While such pairings of brutality, justice and art might seem discordant, each of these is like a stream that, combined with the other three, form the river of Japanese SM whose images and techniques so fascinate the world.

"If shibari/kinbaku has some of its origins in hojojutsu, how come we can't trace specific shibari/kinbaku masters to the heads of the various, historical, martial arts schools?"

Well, actually, we can ... in a way. With the Meiji restoration in 1868 and the rush to modernize, the samurai class was abolished and with it most of the hojojutsu schools that trained them. By the early 20th century almost all vestiges of that feudal world were gone. However, when Itoh Seiyu began his explorations of some we know from the various testimonies of his colleagues and the many study photos and sketches he produced and left behind that he had learned hojojutsu skills from an original practitioner and applied those to his researches. Itoh, in turn, passed on many of these techniques and designs to others, including Minomura Kou (Kita Reiko) who was a member of Itoh's circle. Minomura, in turn, influenced Nureki Chimuo and Dan Oniroku and they have influenced many, many, more. And so it goes.

"How did a Japanese martial art become an erotic art?"

As I hope the preceding pages have shown, it was a slow process involving many artists, incidents and cultural factors. Shibari/kinbaku has evolved because of Japan's tolerant religions and their attitudes towards sexuality, its history and martial arts, its 250 years of self-imposed isolation from the West, its love of beauty, art, form and pattern and the mysterious alchemy that connects all of these.

Twenty-five Key Figures in Shibari/Kinbaku History

This list of artists from various disciplines was by no means easy to compile. There were and are many creative people who have either influenced or contributed to the history and art of shibari/kinbaku over the years. That said, the names on *this* list all fit at least one of two criteria. They are either unknown or unjustly neglected in the West or they are significant figures in the *evolution* of shibari/kinbaku and have produced important works that are, in some form, available for study and appreciation *outside* of Japan.

In this group of short biographies you will find: writers, painters, producers, film directors, models, actors, magazine illustrators, martial artists, historians, publishers and, of course, rope masters (*bakushi*). In short, a wide variety of professions and artists, from the totally commercial to the rebel outsider. Both types are listed here in a generally historical order, that is, from the earliest to the most recent.



Yoshitoshi Tsukioka
(1839-1892)

Yoshitoshi Tsukioka - ukiyo-e master

At the tender age of 11 Yoshitoshi was apprenticed to the ukiyo-e (Japanese woodblock print) master Kuniyoshi and at 14 published his first full color print. By age 20 he was fully independent and listed 10th in a ranking of leading ukiyo-e artists of his day. The print series "Twenty-eight famous murders with verse" (see main text) completed in 1866 made him famous. Although known today for such images of violence, these pictures comprise only a fraction of Yoshitoshi's output and are on a par with much of the art of the era. At the time of the fall of the shogunate (in 1868), horror and cruelty were common themes in Japanese popular culture and people who were not involved in the political upheaval could experience the turbulence vicariously through Yoshitoshi's and other artist's violent prints. In those days there was even a tradition of performing kabuki plays with horrifying subjects in the heat of the summer to produce shivers of fear!

In 1875 he became a newspaper illustrator bringing his skills to a much wider and more diverse public when his prints were sold as supplements or souvenirs. These prints also broke new ground by showing specific events in contemporary people's everyday lives. He also began to teach and was known as being a loyal, devoted, conscientious and generous master. As modernization proceeded, Yoshitoshi (and other traditional print artists) fell upon hard times. He was often ill and at one point was even forced to rip up the flooring of his own home for heating fuel. Through it all Yoshitoshi persevered and, as he aged, moved away from the bloody prints of his youth to do work with poetic undertones and great psychological depth, such as the magnificent "One Hundred Aspects of the Moon" series begun in 1886.

Widely recognized today as the last great ukiyo-e master, he is also regarded as one of the form's greatest innovators. In a career that spanned two eras, including the last years of the Tokugawa and the first years of the Meiji, he remained interested in the modern (he used Western-style visual perspective brilliantly) but became increasingly concerned with the loss of many worthwhile things from Japan's cultural history. And in a country that was turning away from its own past, he almost single-handedly managed to push the traditional Japanese woodblock print to new creative heights before the form effectively died with him.

His influence on the art of kinbaku comes not from his admitted genius for depicting violence but rather because of his ability to aestheticize and eroticize images of *seme* (domination). The best known picture of this sort might be



Lady Muraoka of the Konoe Clan -1887, from the series "Lives of Modern People." Published by Yamato Shimbun Newspaper

from the bloody "28 murders" series but of the five remarkable "bondage" images Yoshitoshi created during his career, four depict far more sex than violence. Consider this newspaper print from 1887.

This provocative young woman is lady Muraoka (1786-1873), a political opponent of the shogun's who was tortured numerous times in 1858, along with her kinsmen, for disloyalty. This print was done by Yoshitoshi for the Yamato Shimbun newspaper in 1887 as part of a series devoted to people who helped shape modern Japan. With her hojojutsu tie, her beautiful kimono and the wisp of hair in her mouth (a typical sign of sexual arousal in Japanese Art), the artist has created, to quote distinguished Yoshitoshi scholar Shinichi Segi, an image that "borders on sadomasochistic fantasy: she looks quite seductive in her ropes, and far younger than the seventy-some-years she would have been at the time of her arrest)." Obviously, Yoshitoshi reduced his subject's age to heighten her erotic appeal.

Other compositions reveal the same qualities. There is another newspaper illustration from about the same time that shows a bound girl swooning into the arms of the rescuer that has saved her from drowning and an elegant image of a young woman suspended from a pine tree, her toes curled in sexual ecstasy, from the "Picturebook of a Journey to the West," published in 1883.

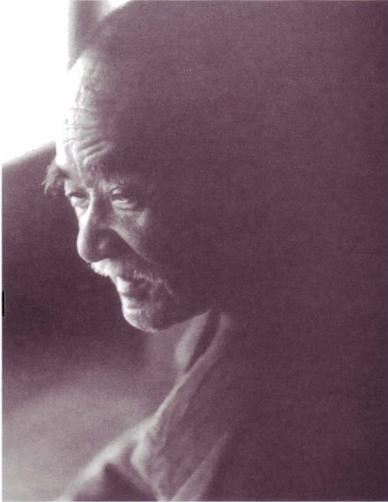
Finally, there is his most stunning image.

"The Lonely House on Adachi Moor" has been confounding critics ever since its creation in 1885. Generally regarded as Yoshitoshi's most provocative image, it recreates the Noh drama/horror fable of a vampire-type hag who waylays travelers. This print is in the vertical diptych format that Yoshitoshi used for what many critics consider his finest works and the artist brilliantly exploits the vertical space. Of course, it's the subject matter of the pregnant girl suspended in a sakasa zuri, smoke curling past her hair in a stunning visual while the brutal hag sharpens her knife that has horrified and fascinated viewers for years. This composition was considered so intensely disturbing that, although printed, it was one of only two Yoshitoshi designs ever suppressed by the Meiji government. The subtle eroticism as well as the overt brutality has fascinated Japanese SM artists for years and it's an image that continues to be provocative. In 2007 the San Francisco Asian Art Museum mounted a magnificent two-part retrospective of Yoshitoshi's art. This was the only major piece not to be exhibited.



"The Lonely House on Adachi Moor"- 1885

Itoh Seiyu - artist, the father of modern kinbaku



Itoh Seiyu (1882-1961)

Itoh Seiyu (1882-1961), real name Itoh Hajime, controversial seme scholar, seme-e master and legendary artist, is arguably one of the most important figures in the history of Japanese shibarilkinbaku and SM. Born during the last days of the Meiji Restoration, Itoh, a painter, wood block print master, photographer and writer, provides the link between the feudal and the modern in Japan's fascination with sadomasochistic practices. As an artist, he was extraordinary. As an inspiration to several generations of Japan's greatest shibarilkinbaku masters and SM artists, he was unique.

Itoh was apparently born with a sadomasochistic streak and, according to his own writings, could remember being fascinated at the age of ten by Japanese folk tales of captive princesses told to him by his mother and grandmother. His life-long fascination, truly a fetish, for black, disheveled, woman's hair also began at this time because of pictures in a storybook by Ryutei Tanehiko (1783-1842) that his grandmother read to him.

At 18 he decided to become a seme-e (or torment/domination scene) painter and never wavered from that path for the rest of his life despite taking jobs as a kabuki scene painter and a newspaper and book illustrator to support himself. Inspired by such ukiyo-e (wood block print) masters as Yoshitoshi and Kunisada, both of whom dabbled in seme-type subjects, Itoh became a seme-e master of tremendous imagination, variety and skill.

It was during the Taisho period (1912-1926) that Itoh began taking photographs, a novel hobby in early 20th-century Japan. In 1923 he created his most famous work, the previously discussed, "Woman Suffering in Snow." He was forty-one. Apparently he was inspired by the folk tale *Chujo Hime* as well as an early textbook on torture techniques entitled *Semekata Kokore-gaki* and a play he found particularly erotic in which a woman is subjected to suffering in snow, *Akegarasu Yume no Awayuki*. Having learned hojojutsu techniques from an elderly practitioner and using his camera to record his work, he copied various examples of shibari and tsurizeme (suspension with rope) and took many photographs of his bound model in a winter landscape.

His use of his own shibari photographs as studies for his paintings and sketches became his standard technique. As notorious as his escapade in the snow, he once copied Yoshitoshi's famous and disturbing ukiyo-e masterpiece, "The Lonely House on Adachi Moor," with its startling depiction of a bound and suspended pregnant girl, using his own pregnant wife as his model! He had carefully worked out the safety precautions using pulleys and numerous assistants and was delighted by the results. Such reckless behavior caused him to become a most controversial figure. In fact, so famous had Itoh become that the June 1924 issue of Sunday Mainichi magazine, a very "normal" publication of large circulation, featured a visit to his studio.

Over the years, Itoh published many photos as well as paintings, drawings and commentaries in several books of seme-e and in volumes on other topics which created quite a stir in artistic circles. He is especially noted for his fine illustrations of Edo era customs and manners including pictures of feudal signs, toys, circus acts, street peddlers, religious figures, lamps, foods; in short, all manner of unique people and things soon to pass out of existence in the Meiji era's rush to Westernize Japan.

His major publications include:

Six volumes on the history and customs of feudal Edo/Tokyo - published from 1927 to 1932.
Seme no Kenkyu (1929) - "The first bondage photography collection in Japan" - banned by the censors.
Seme no Hanashi (1929).
Rongo Tsukai (1930) - Itoh's first seme-e art collection - banned by the censors.
Gaka Seikatsu Uchimaku-Hanashi - an artist talks about his life (1930).
Onna Sanjyu-roku Kii (1930).
Binjin Ranmai (1932).
Edo no Sakariba (1947).
Makura (1948).
Kuronawa-ki zen (1951).
The Twelve Months of Strange Punishments (1953) - an art portfolio.

Despite his fame, Itoh was not always held in such high regard. In fact, he was often rebuked and himself often despaired of having wasted his talents on seme-e. After a lifetime of work he confessed to *Amatoria* magazine in 1950 that, "The only recognition I ever received, as a person who has studied bondage since 1908, was the 'pervert' tag." Today Itoh's perversion is considered a respected "mania" and on occasion an art form as well as being part of big business and he is responsible for at least part of this change. He is especially credited for inspiring a distinct bondage "school" which in time became the mainstream style of erotic rope bondage known as kinbaku and an art form in Japan.

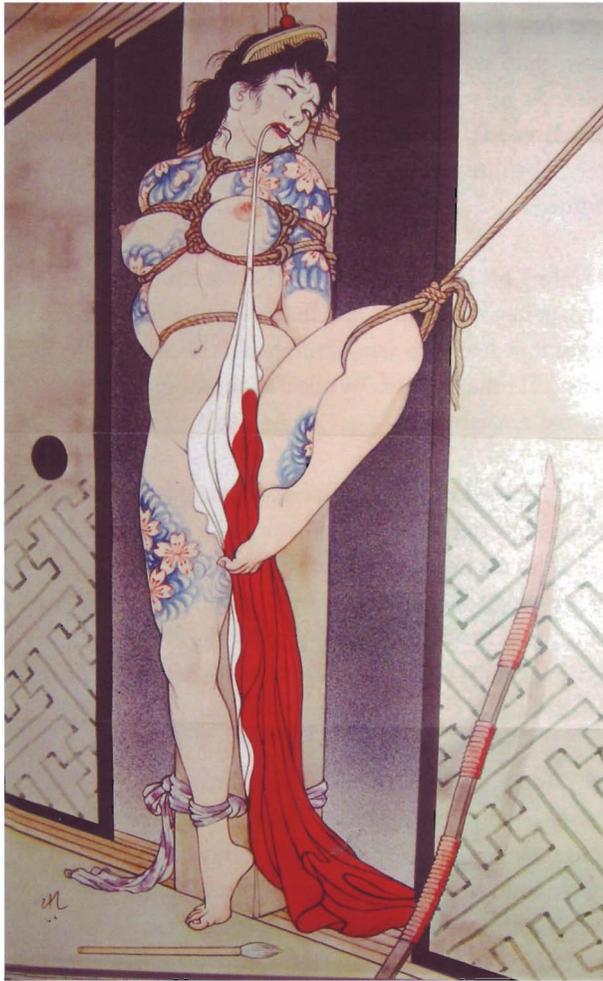
Because of his artistry in several fields, by the mid-20th century, he had begun to influence a whole new generation of shibari/kinbaku masters, editors, and graphic artists, all talented people interested in the erotic and artistic power of kinbaku and SM. Figures such as the brilliant painter and editor Kita Reiko (AKA, Minomura Kou), the legendary shibari master Nureki Chimuo and such latter-day figures as shibari master Osada Eikichi, author Dan Oniroku and master photographers Akio Fuji and Gomi Akira all credit his influence on some of their work. In his own right, Itoh's paintings, sketches and photographic studies continue to be published and as late as 1982 a beautiful book on the history of crime and punishment in Edo era Japan (*Nihon keibatsu juzoku toshi*), written in collaboration with Fujisawa Morihiko and originally published between 1946 and 1952 in three volumes, was reproduced combining the books into one volume and featuring only the illustrations of Itoh Seiyu.

Although Itoh was not the only early 20th century artist or researcher interested in seme and seme-e, he is the most famous. There are five biographies of Itoh (and one about his first model, Oyou), several high-quality art books dedicated to his work and he has been depicted in a variety of films, sometimes as a demented egocentric and sometimes as an artistic genius.

Itoh's strength as an artist came from his great visual skill and taste and determination to capture what he called "Beauty in Suffering", that is those emotions of real desire and real drama caught on the razor's edge between pain and pleasure during the experience of sadomasochism. Like his great western contemporary John Willie (John Alexander *Scatt* Coutts, 1902-1962), he brought artistic genius to his passion and in our own age when so much Internet "bondage" and especially torture imagery is only crude misogynist pornography masquerading as fetish art, his delicate and sensitive studies of beautiful maidens "suffering" with pleasure and desire still have the power to impress and inspire.

Minomura Kou - artist, author, publisher, bakushi, genius

Minomura Kou (1920-1984), real name Suma Toshiyuki, principal artist's name Kita Reiko (taken from his wife's maiden name), was quite simply one of the most multi-talented and accomplished persons ever to work in the SM



Kita Reiko - Image from SM Kitan, December 1975

field in Japan. Famous as one of the first editors of the legendary Kitan Club magazine and then as the creator of Uramado magazine in the first "golden age" of SM publishing in the 1950s, he was also a novelist, short-story writer, film critic, essayist, columnist, bakushi, photographer, painter, book jacket illustrator, magazine illustrator, "adviser" to SM Kitan (formally Abu Hunter), SM Select and SM Collector magazines in the "second wave" of SM publications in the 1970s and a member of Itoh Seiyu's artistic inner circle in post war Japan.

Born in Kyoto, Minomura was a precocious and imaginative child which made his remarkable introduction to shibari and SM all the more important for his future life and artistic career.

According to legend, Minomura's father had died when he was quite young, making his mother a widow at the age of 29. She was apparently a very temperamental woman and quite demanding. She would often punish young Minomura by locking him in the storage warehouse his grandfather owned. On one of these occasions, when he was seven years old, he discovered a stash of "seme-e" literature in the storehouse. He didn't yet know that's what such illustrations were called but he was transfixed by the images of princesses and lords and damsels in distress tied to trees. He has said that finding these pictures was the moment Minomura Kou was born and, after that, he didn't mind being locked in the storehouse. He later learned the collection of

illustrations belonged to his grandfather and he believed he'd inherited his grandfather's sadistic tendencies. Considering that the artist remembered these images in detail well into adulthood a more classic case of what psychologists today would call "imprinting" could hardly be found.

Then came a fateful day. He went into the warehouse as usual, planning to look at the pictures again. As he climbed to the second floor he heard a sound and peering through the flickering sunlight and dust he saw a naked woman tied to a pillar. At first he thought it was one of the women in the illustrations magically come to life. He couldn't believe it was his mother. However, it was. His mother was stripped naked and tied with rags and kimono sashes. Her hands were bound behind her back and the end of the rag rope was tied to the warehouse pillar (hashira) supporting the roof. She was sitting, helpless, on the floor.

He later learned that his mother had squandered much of what his father had left them by playing around with actors. In fact, she had gotten involved with a younger kabuki actor and was planning to abandon the family and run away with him. Somehow her brother-in-law, Minomura's uncle, had got wind of this and was punishing her. She had obviously been left there to ponder her offense, unable to meet the actor who was waiting for her somewhere in town.

The boy was terribly shocked, and began to cry. His mother, as soon as she was aware of him, screamed at him to go away, no doubt preferring to be helpless over having her own child see her like this. He tried to untie her but she screamed that he mustn't or his uncle would get mad at him. So he embraced her, enthralled by her white skin and lovely curves and for the first time felt something like sensual, erotic, excitement. Three years later, in Showa 3 (1928), he saw this vision again in an illustration in a magazine. The illustration was of a woman in exactly the same predicament, and her name was even the same as his mother's.

He once told a famous psychologist named Takahashi about finding his mother tied up in the storehouse. The psychologist concluded that Minomura Kou harbored hostility against his mother and that is why he liked to "mistreat" women by tying them up. Minomura said he thought this diagnosis was "completely ridiculous." What he thought when he saw his mother was how "beautiful she was." He then wrote, "While Takahashi might be a good psychologist, he doesn't understand a thing about 'abnormal' sexuality!"

This tale is worth the retelling not just because it's a remarkable glimpse into a formative experience in the life of a major kinbaku talent but also because of how this incident would continue to resonate throughout Minomura's artistic career. Though the story might seem to be apocryphal, at least a few elements are probably true. Minomura repeated it many times over the years (the version presented above comes from a column he wrote for the May 1975 edition of SM Collector) but more than this the truth of the story is reinforced by the evidence of countless elegant drawings and photos. Over and over again the artist Kita Reiko and the bakushi Minomura Kou would return to the subject of a beautiful woman bound to a hashira.

Minomura served in the Navy during the Second World War where he claimed to have learned a number of quick release ties and other rope techniques that he used in his SM work. After the war he befriended Tsujimura Takashi, Dan Oniroku, Nureki Chimuo and many others and influenced most of their careers as he quickly became one of the dominant talents and one of the most famous and respected names in SM publishing. He was the shibari master for one of the first commercial "rope book/albums" ever published in Japan and the popular success of his sketch "Ten Positions of a Naked Tied Woman" in Kitan Club in 1952 is often cited as one of the principal reasons that magazine turned to SM for its general content and so began the tradition of SM publications that continues today. He suffered a stroke in the early 1980s which greatly reduced his prodigious creative output and he died in 1984 in Tokyo.

As a bakushi Minomura is said to have had a singular style. He preferred to use only five ropes for his ties and to create positions intended to cause shuuchi (shyness or embarrassment) in his partners. Clearly he was more interested in the subtle psychological side of SM play than in the flash of performance. Perhaps this is another echo of his experience with his mother at age seven? A student of shibari history, he discovered and named quite a few of the kinbaku ties still in use today. He used hemp rope for his photographic studies but often switched to very soft cotton in order not to discomfort particularly sensitive models. He apparently disliked tsumi (suspensions) intensely and never drew them. This the author can confirm. After an exhaustive search through all known sources, there seem to be only three depictions of suspensions in his entire output. From his interviews and articles Minomura comes across as plain speaking with a good sense of humor and a healthy attitude towards sex. He was loyal and generous to his friends. He also appears to have had great common sense as regards the difference between fantasy and reality in SM play and to hold his kinbaku partners and models in high regard,

Regrettably, the art of seme-e master Kita Reiko (Minomura) has never been collected in book form save for two modest, limited edition albums now long out of print. A memorial video tape, directed by Yukimura Haruki, was released by Cinemagic shortly before his death but many of his magnificent illustrations now exist only in the fading "golden age" magazines and novels prized by avid collectors who often pay *hundreds* of times their original

cover prices to possess them. To put it simply, without the artistry, energy and genius of Minomura Kou there would be no Japanese SM as we know it today.



Tsujimura Takashi (1921-1987?)

Tsujimura Takashi - the romantic bakushi

Of all the major figures from the early days of SM publishing and the evolution of modern shibari/kinbaku, Tsujimura Takashi (1921-1987?) is the least remembered today. This is more than a shame because Tsujimura was one of the most influential bakushi of his day, a talented writer and a man largely responsible for developing many kinbaku styles and attitudes about SM that still have relevance today.

Tsujimura Takashi was born in 1921 in Sakai City near Osaka, Japan. He traced his interest in SM to his third or fourth year of elementary school when, in a festival on the grounds of a Shinto shrine, he saw a dramatic seme-e theater attraction billed as a "zankoku" (cruel) show. It portrayed various acts of domination, including bondage, much in the manner of the Grand Guignol theater troupes in France. It was this show, he said, that made him fall in love with rope.

At 14, he lost his virginity to the daughter of a relative, who later became the first woman to allow him to tie her and eventually his wife. When he graduated from high school he was to go to Manchuria to work. The day before he left he tied this girl for the first time. He considered it a romantic parting. He was soon drafted; served in the armed forces, survived the conflict and, when the war was over, returned to Japan and settled in Nara Prefecture where he ran a hardware store.

Tsujimura had plenty of time to read magazines while he watched the shop and one of the magazines he came across was Kitan Club. Thinking to himself that he could certainly write at least as well, he sent a manuscript off which was accepted in consideration for a small fee. That story, published in the summer of 1948, was the start of a 25-year connection with Kitan Club. He wrote for Kitan Club under three different pen names: for comedy he used the name Shinto; for historical fiction he used the name Midori Takehiko; and for essays and stories set in modern times he used the name Tsujimura Takashi. He also contributed to other SM magazines.

In 1948 or 1949, while visiting Kitan Club's editor, Minoda Minoru, Tsujimura met Minomura Kou for the first time. The magazine was still a general tabloid then but when it was decided to turn it into an SM magazine Tsujimura was asked to contribute a story. In the September 1951 issue of Kitan Club the name Tsujimura Takashi appeared for the first time.

At that time nude photographs of women had started appearing in various magazines, including Kitan Club. However, up to that date there had been few photographs of women in bondage. Kitan Club decided to try this. In the May-June issue in 1952, at the request of Minomura and using a model named Kawabata Tanako, Tsujimura did the bondage and so became the first magazine bakushi. According to Tsujimura, that issue also included the first use of the word "kinbaku" in a magazine and also the first use of the term "kinbaku model." In 1964 Tsujimura launched his column "Camera Hunt," which ran until 1973 and was one of the most popular features in the history of Kitan Club. In it Tsujimura worked with submissive women, professional models and amateurs, and gave readers a record of his SM play in text and photographs. In the mid-1970s he continued the column on the pages of SM King.

By reading the "Camera Hunt" columns one can feel how kind a man Tsujimura was. Although he was dominant he was never violent, and was in fact a true romantic who cared deeply about his model's comfort, happiness and safety. This is why submissive women were able to trust him. And that is surely the reason this feature was so successful with readers and continued for so long.

In 1968, upon the recommendation of his friend Dan Oniroku for whom he later worked on the magazine SM King, he was invited by Toei film company to be the "kinbaku shidou" (kinbaku adviser/teacher/leader) for a movie directed by Ishii Teruo entitled *Tokugawa Onna Keibatsu-shi*. He then did the rope work for two other Toei films directed by Ishii: *Zankoku-Ijou-Gyakutai Monogatari: Genroku Onna Keizu* (1968) and *Tokugawa Irezumi-shi Semu Jigoku* (1969). Also in 1968, Tsujimura was invited as a guest on the late-night television program "11 PM" which was a "coming out" of sorts because his family and friends saw him live on the show talking about SM for the first time. He appeared on the program several times after that as an expert bakushi. He also performed in his own productions of the "zankoku" (cruel) show that had so excited him as a boy.

By the early 1970s, society's attitudes towards SM had changed and become somewhat more open, in part because of the success of director Ishii Teruo's movies, the SM magazines and "11 PM," which frequently addressed the subject of SM and other formally taboo topics. The word "SM" became well known and the practice shifted from being a hidden culture to one that was generally understood. Observing this, Tsujimura decided to end his "Camera Hunt" column. He felt it was no longer as relevant as when people had few sources for information about SM and he also felt that he could no longer keep up with the "new reader's" expectations for more outrageous or violent SM play. When SM King ceased publication in 1975 Tsujimura basically retired and slowly slipped from view.

Tsujimura Takashi's importance is based on his technical achievements and on the attitude he brought to his kinbaku/SM play. Technically, he was an innovator who used the older hojojutsu forms in the development of his own "quick tying" style of kinbaku. On meeting him for the first time in Osaka in 1967, Dan Oniroku was amazed by his speed. He was also instrumental in creating the techniques for doing safe tsuri (suspensions) with his models. His direct kinbaku descendants, Osada Eikichi, Nureki Chimuo, Akechi Denki (who once trained with Tsujimura), Shima Shikou and others who popularized and further refined this type of flashy "flying," all owe a debt to Tsujimura sensei.

However, it's probably the attitude of affection and appreciation for his partners, that he clearly expressed through his very popular magazine columns, that will have the longest impact on the history of modern erotic shibari kinbaku. This is SM as loving, consensual play and is a fitting legacy for this most romantic of bakushi.

I once asked the former SM magazine editor and artist Miyabi Kyodo for his opinion of Tsujimura Takashi and he responded, poetically, as follows:

"Mr. Tsujimura Takashi was a shining giant star in the world of kinbaku in Japan. But today, nobody talks about him any longer and his shibari techniques have been all but lost. His shibari was first rate.....like water fits into any bowl so magically flexible kaleidoscopic. I have the greatest respect for his work He undoubtedly occupies the highest seat in the Japanese kinbaku scene."

Nawa Yumio - author, historian, Edo era martial arts expert

Nawa Yumio (1912-2006) was one of Japan's foremost authorities on the history and methods of hojojutsu (rope capture and restraint), law enforcement and interrogation in Edo era Japan. He was born January 3, 1912 into a

family that had been retainers to a samurai clan in the old province of Mino. He began training in martial arts at an early age, proved very talented and eventually became the head of both the Masaki-ryu ofkobujutsu (school of ancient martial arts) and the Edo Machikata Jitte-jutsu (school of Edo constabulary truncheon arts). He spent over 70 years collecting and researching traditional weapons and techniques used in the capture of fugitives and his personal collection is now housed at Meiji University in Tokyo as part of their famous criminology collection.

Nawa Yumio authored numerous well-respected books including: *Goumon Keibatsu shi* ("The History of Torture and Punishment") and *Ninjutsu no Kenyuu* ("The Study of Ninja Arts"). His most recent book, published in 1996 by Yuzankaku Shuppan, is *litte Hojou litten: Edo Machi Buggyou no Soubi to Taihou-jutsu* ("The Encyclopedia of Rope and Truncheon Capture: the Art and Equipment of the Edo era Constabulary").

Nawa Yumio also advised television and movie producers on historical accuracy and authored a popular tome, *Machigai Darake no likaigeki* ("Historical Shows are Full of Errors") that criticized the way the Edo era is portrayed in television shows. He wrote the script for the 1964 film *Nihon Goumon Keibatsu-shi* ("The History of Torture and Punishment in Japan") released by Shintohe and directed by Yoshida Yoshiaki. He also wrote the scripts for a more recent two-part historical film depicting similar Edo era themes, *Onna Hankacho I & II* (1995, *King Records*).

Nawa Yumio was influential in the Japanese martial arts community as well as in the SM and shibarilkinbaku world for almost a century. During the early years of the first "golden age" of SM magazines he contributed 11 articles on hojojutsu, Edo era tortures and related topics to *Uramado*, the SM magazine started by Suma Toshiyuki (Minomura Kou) and was largely responsible for opening up this historical world to its readers. Over the years he also contributed authoritative articles to *Suspense Magazine* and *SM Fan*. His importance to the evolution of shibarilkinbaku from the martial art of hojojutsu is central and obvious for it was his historical scholarship, understanding and expertise that allowed both public and professionals alike to adapt this ancient martial art to the modern era. He is prominently profiled in Saotome Hiromi's 1998 book *Sei no Shigoto Shitachi* ("Masters of the Underground Erotic/ Sex Trade").



SM Collector - February, 1977

Muku Youji - master of the pencil sketch

During the "golden age" of SM magazine publishing in Japan readers were blessed by the talents of numerous illustrators who helped bring the fiction to life and who created early manga cartoons or comics. These artists also created beautiful, eye catching covers and even portfolios of shibari/kinbaku/SM art that were inserted into the magazines. In the earliest days, when photographic reproduction was poor, these drawings helped create erotic worlds of imagination and often, as in the case of Kita Reiko, the illustrators became as popular and important to sales as the story's authors. One of the most admired and hard working of these was Muku Youji (1928-2001) who seemed to contribute to all of the magazines at one time or another and probably produced more illustrations than any other artist of the time.

Muku Youji was born in Osaka on Nov. 11, 1928. After a fairly uneventful childhood living with his parents who

were farmers, he spent most of the war years in the relative safety of the countryside. Immediately after WW II he returned to the city and worked in various minor jobs, including stints at a hotel tea room and a pachinko parlor (authors note: pachinko is a Japanese mechanical game played for amusement and prizes and related to the American pinball machine). According to several revealing autobiographical articles he wrote for the short lived magazine SM Graffiti in 1980, it was at about this time that he had his first experiences with shibari/kinbaku, taking photographs of his tied partners.

Eventually he moved to Tokyo to become a fine arts student and there joined an advertising agency while continuing his extracurricular explorations of kinbaku. Finally, in the mid-1960s, after submitting a sketch to Minomura Kou's Uramado magazine, he joined its editorial staff. He first used the penname Ochiai Ryuji before settling on Muku Youji for his illustrations which began appearing regularly on the magazine's pages and masthead. He also wrote novels using the name Toyonaka Yumeo. Something of an all around talent, he also learned professional photographic techniques and became a jack-of-all-trades around the magazine.

After five years of constant work he decided to become an independent artist and began freelancing for most of the SM magazines then being published in the early 1970s. He also did skillful manga and book illustrations and even published a volume of shibari/kinbaku photographs, *Kinbaku no Hada* ("Bondage Skin"), in 1971.

Three features distinguish Muku Youji from most of his colleagues. First, he was a tremendous representational artist. Using no more than a # 2 pencil, Muku could create figures that almost breathed with life they were so realistic. Second, he was a connoisseur of sophisticated kinbaku. The bindings he chose to represent were meticulously drawn down to the last detail. Using his own photographs as inspiration (much in the manner of Itoh Seiyu), as well as carefully studying the techniques of such rope masters as Nureki Chimuo, Muku could reproduce the most detailed ties and expressions with complete fidelity. Finally, the artist had both a great sense of drama and a good sense of humor. There's always a story and life lingering around the edges of his illustrations, even those not tied to an actual narrative, and his cartoons and manga, for which he became famous, can be truly amusing.

From the early 1980s Sun Publishing began reprinting the manga he did for the early SM magazines and in the 1990s he did illustrations for SM Shosetsu and SM Mania, both from My Way Publishing. Muku Youji was one of the luckier artists of the "golden era" and found himself constantly in demand by publishers and "rediscovered" by SM fans in the 1990s. This resulted in further reprinting of his comic work and even a deluxe limited edition of his more erotic material, published in 2000. In addition, hundreds of his images have been transmitted over the Internet making much of his work available to fans.

He died on July 30, 2001 at the age of 73, one of the most famous and respected of SM illustrators.

Osada Eikichi - Father of the SM stage show

One of the true innovators in the world of SM and shibari/kinbaku is the legendary Osada Eikichi (1925-2001), the man responsible for creating the modern SM club show. Born in Tochigi prefecture in 1925 he became interested in the writings of the Marquis de Sade in his 20s when that controversial author's works were first translated into Japanese in 1947. In 1952 Osada discovered Kitan Club and soon thereafter Uramado magazine, the "Camera Hunt" columns of Tsujimura Takashi, the illustrations of Kita Reiko and the bondage photographs of Itoh Seiyu, all of which convinced the young man that he wanted to follow in these artist's footsteps.

Unfortunately, the 1950s were a puritanical time in Japan and Osada had no idea how to enter this world. Instead, he found himself making a living running a printing business which prospered in the Japanese economic boom of



Osada Eikichi (1925-2001)

the 1960s but still left him feeling discontented. A chance opportunity to see a modest semi-style show finally opened the door to a new creative life. Produced, directed and acted by a man named Kazuya Mukai, this show featured a modest scene of bondage. Impressed, Osada Eikichi came to the show as often as he could and eventually found himself working for Kazuya and handling all the tying duties.

Still, Osada chafed under the restrictions of this modest entertainment and longed for the day when he could let his imagination run free and create his own performances. That day finally came when a chance conversation with a movie producer client, for whom Eikichi was printing a poster, produced a submissive model and a tip from another friend yielded a former ballet school space for use as a theater.

Osada Eikichi's first production in his own style was at the former Ars Nova ballet studio in Tokyo in 1965. Osada hoped for 20 spectators at most and was astonished when over a hundred packed the small space. Excited and tense, the performer and his first model, Rumi Sasamori, put on a show featuring flying ropes, whips and reckless abandon. The audience was stunned and only after Osada exited the stage did they erupt into applause and give the performers a standing ovation.

After this first performance Osada Eikichi began to be known and respected in SM circles throughout Japan. He put on shows, held private "members only" gatherings and taught classes. As his fame grew, the uniqueness of his act allowed ticket prices to soar to 100,000 Yen (approximately \$1000 at today's exchange rate) as Osada played to enthusiastic audiences at various venues, including strip clubs. He did this for almost 35 years. Of course, as the years went by and other SM attractions and acts appeared, Osada Eikichi's fortunes and health waxed and waned but he never lost his enthusiasm. Late in his career he once commented, "I feel better, both physically and mentally, whenever I get a chance to manipulate ropes."

Often, when we comment on or critique stage performances, it's from memory and memories are sometimes faulty. The stage show is an ephemeral experience and, like our memories of youth, sometimes gets better as we age. How great *was* that high school football game? Was your date *that* pretty? Did you really run *that* fast? Fortunately, in the author's collection are two video documents of Osada Eikichi in action. One is a performance tape from the 1980s and the other is a video showing him preparing his act. Both are amazing.

The author can honestly say he's never seen an SM or shibarilkinbaku act or demonstration that had half the impact of Osada Eikichi's. He really was the "flying rope man." To watch him perform on stage, racing from model to model, ropes constantly in motion is to witness the antic imp of SM come to life. In performance Osada Eikichi would suspend a model horizontally in seconds then leap on her back and together they would swing far out over his audience's heads! He was energy incarnate with a true performer's instinct for drama. The documentary tape shows some of his secrets, the use of quick release ties, an instinct for balance and a respect for innovation, but no one could rehearse such energy!

In addition to creating the modern SM stage show, Osada Eikichi is also important as one of the bakushi that helped create techniques to safely do suspensions and so liberate them from the shadows of the Tokugawa torturers. He is also notable for his influence on the model and author Saotome Hiromi, who performed with him for several years, and on the bakushi Osada Steve, who followed in his footsteps.

Edgy "performance art" acts might seem rather ordinary to us today but it took tremendous courage to put on an SM show of the sort Osada Eikichi did in the 1960s. Osada's activities and techniques were, for his day and age, on the cutting edge of trends that would later become accepted practice within the Japanese SM community and every performer who has ever followed him on stage stands in his shadow and is in his debt.

Dan Oniroku - novelist, publisher, producer

Dan Oniroku is the pen name of arguably Japan's most famous SM/fetish writer, born in 1931 in Saga Prefecture as Kuroiwa Yukihiro. He himself says his pen name may be read either as Dan Oniroku or Dan Kiroku but the former is the name by which he is most commonly known. He graduated from Kansai Gakuin (Kansai Academy) with a degree in law but in 1957 he won a newcomer's literary prize for a short story and began his career as a professional writer. After he contributed the story *Hana to Hebi* ("Flower and Snake") to the SM Kitan Club, he became famous as an erotic novelist which became his metier. To date he has penned, edited or published over 159 literary works.

He began writing *Hana to Hebi* under the penname Hamamaki Kyotaro for Kitan Club in 1961, but lost all interest in it after only three chapters. He then met Minomura Kou and Tsujimura Takashi. With renewed interest he finished the story which was published to great acclaim in Kitan Club in 1962. The novel's depiction of the psychology of SM was a startling literary departure for its day and became one of Dan's major themes as a novelist. Over the years, "Flower and Snake" has been serialized and/or republished many times and at least three successful motion pictures have been adapted from it. It remains Dan's most famous literary work.

In 1969 he started his own production company, Oni Pro, and a year later partnered with publisher Haga Shoten and photographers and bakushi Totsuka Eisaku and Kayama Shigeru to publish high quality shibari/kinbaku photo collections on various themes. In 1971 he directed his own film entitled *Nikujogoku* and in 1972 began his successful collaboration with Nikkatsu studios on their "Roman Porno" series of erotic films. Many of his scripts starred the legendary actress Tani Naomi and their collaboration continued until her retirement in 1978 after the production of fifteen films.

Also in 1972 Dan launched his own "golden age" magazine, SM King. A quality publication employing the best writers and artists of the time, it got a lot of attention on its launch as a magazine employing, "only female editors." In 1973 Tsujimura Takashi was appointed as "kinbaku shidou" for SM King and continued his famous "Camera Hunt" column.

In 1989 Dan Oniroku announced that he was retiring from writing and devoted himself to the publication of the short lived chess magazine Shogi Journal (Author's note: Dan is an accomplished amateur player of shogi - Japanese chess). However, in 1995 he returned to writing and published the mainstream novel *Shinkenshi Koike Juumei*. His other major works include: *Ashura*, *Nikuno Kaoyaku*, *Yuugao*, and *Ori no naka no Yousei* as well as a fictional work based on the life of Itoh Seiyu. In 2000 his witty and wise semi-autobiographical novel *Bishonen* was successfully brought to the screen by director Hiroki Ryuichi under the title "I am an SM Writer."

Dan Oniroku has been honored many times over the years for his creative output and in 1999 his autobiography



Tani Naomi

Hana wa Kurenai ("Flowers are Crimson") was published. His influence on the evolution and practice of modern Japanese SM and shibarilkinbaku is indisputable.

Tani Naomi - movie star

The one authentic star to emerge from the Nikkatsu studios pinku eiga era is the beautiful and talented actress Tani Naomi. For her millions of fans she is "The Queen of SM Films" in Japan. Born in 1948 in Hakata, she moved to Tokyo at age 18 to work in the big city. With her striking good looks she was soon modeling and then was quickly offered a pinku eiga role by one of the smaller production companies. At first she was shocked by the idea of appearing in a sexually themed film but she went to the theater to take a closer look. Deciding that with a good plot and good production values these films could have some merit, she took a chance.

Beginning in 1966-1967, Tani appeared in over 200 films before she began working for Nikkatsu studios in their 1972 release, *Shinayakana Kemonotachi* ("Sensuous Beasts"). In this negligible offering she played a small part but it caused her to be noticed by the producers. Nikkatsu tried to sign her as one of their run of the mill "starlet" contract players but she refused, unless they would agree to make and star her in a film based on the novel "Flower and Snake" by Dan Oniroku.

The reason for this startling suggestion was that Ms. Tani believed that "there was something special I was cut out to do. SM was to be my destiny." She thought this because in conversation with her friend Dan she realized that she was perfectly suited to portray his type of heroine. His almost humorous qualifications were:

- 1.) She must look good in a Kimono.
- 2.) She must have long jet black hair.
- 3.) She must have a certain amount of body fat, so the bondage ropes make a clear impression on her skin.
- 4.) She has to be graceful under duress with strong facial expressions.

It should also be added that Ms. Tani also brought to her roles serious acting talent that lifted her performances well above even the hint of sexploitation.

The first of her Dan Oniroku films was *Hana to Hebi* ("Flower and Snake"), released in 1974. It was very successful and was soon followed by *Ikenie Fujin* ("Wife to Be Sacrificed"), also made in 1974 but not from a script by Dan. This film was a box office phenomenon, becoming Nikkatsu's fifth highest grossing film of all time and paving the way for the studio to rely more on the SM genre for their future releases. In short order, Tani Naomi became the top star of the company's "Roman Porno" SM series.

Tani Naomi was notable for taking her roles very seriously and for her complete professionalism, often performing dangerous stunts without the use of a double. In those pre-digital effects days this often meant taking significant risks. She was also smart about maintaining her appearance, even going to the extreme of never getting a sun tan during her entire 12-year movie career for fear of compromising her lovely white skin. It was this concern for her appearance and reputation for quality that caused her to retire from film at age 31 after 15 successful collaborations with Dan Oniroku, the last of which being *Nawa to Hada* ("Rope and Skin") in 1979. She Simply wanted her fans



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also more forceful and favors *kuzushi nawa* - a term sometimes applied to the art of Japanese calligraphy but one that can also be used to describe a kinbaku style whose rope design is "calculatedly unstudied" or where the pattern is uneven and apparently random. Nureki is also one of the bakushi (along with Tsujimura Takashi, Osada Eikichi and several others) who should be credited for creating techniques to more safely incorporate tsumi (suspensions) into SM and shibari/kinbaku play and performance.

In 1985, in collaboration with the talented photographer Akio FUji, Nureki formed *the Kinbakubi Kenkyu Kai* or *Kinbiken* society ("Society for Researching Beauty in Bondage Art"). This group sought to avoid the "crass commercialism that masquerades as bondage art" and "produce art that is more than just an extension of ordinary (bondage) photography." One of the distinctive features of the group was that all of the models were volunteers. Nureki has commented that, "One of the main reasons I started the circle was to provide a facility for masochistic woman who are often misunderstood." Before it ceased operations in 1996 it produced more than 300 videos of Nureki's techniques as well as its own magazine and other publications.

To date Nureki Chimuo has tied over 4500 partners, an extraordinary number by any standard. Now nearly 80, he continues to write and work as a bakushi for numerous films, videos, books and magazines. Most recently, he was profiled in the 2007 documentary "Bakushi" with fellow rope masters Yukimura Haruki and Arisue Go. Still critical of the commercialism of today's SM publishing industry, he was asked in the film why he continues to tie. He replied, "I keep hoping to meet my dream girl." Nureki Chimuo sensei is a living legend in the SM world of Japan.

Obinata, Kasuga and Ozuma - three "golden age" master artists

It is remarkable how many gifted artists contributed to the "golden age" SM magazines in the 1950s, '60s and '70s. This is especially true of the many illustrators who created the images that accompanied the stories and also the magazine covers, the SM manga (comics), and the remarkable portfolios of SM art that would often be included in the magazines as a further inducement to buyers and subscribers. In this we see an echo of the Meiji era newspaper's practice of including ukiyo-e prints with the morning or evening paper.

Following in the traditions of ukiyo-e, the most distinguished of these SM magazine illustrators were all very well trained and each brought a unique sensibility to their work. In truth it would have been easy to pick a dozen talented artists from that "golden" era to profile but that would have been prohibitive. Instead, here are three of the very best, each working in a completely different style from the others and each an individual in artistic vision, style, and dramatic expression.

Obinata Ichimu (real name Kimuta Kiyoshi) was a particularly Japanese artist in that his work most closely approximates the best traditions of ukiyo-e. Although he brilliantly utilized Western



"Hebi-zeme" by Obinata Ichimu, circa 1970

techniques of perspective in his often startling and dramatic compositions, his sense of color, form and design was very traditional. Note the beautiful kimono and the almost kabuki-like expression depicted in the above masterpiece, illustrating the infamous (and supposedly true) story of the *hebi-zeme* ("snake torture") taken from the history of the Maeda household of the Saga Prefecture. This skillful depiction of exquisite color and cloth pattern in traditional Japanese costuming combined with a dramatic seme-e incident is typical of this artist.

It is perhaps not surprising that Obinata was so classically inclined since he actually trained as a religious painter of Buddhist subjects. And it is interesting to note that he practiced and was employed at this type of religious art at the same time as he illustrated SM magazines; another remarkable example of the Japanese tolerance for the sacred co-existing with the profane.

Obinata began illustrating for Minomura Kou's Uramado magazine in 1960, for which he continued to draw regularly until 1964. In the 1970s he worked for many publications including Suspense Magazine, SM King, SM Collector, Abu hunter, Bessatsu SM Fan, and SM Select. He also created striking art for several of the better quality SM novels published during that era and, under his real name of Kimuta Kiyoshi, illustrated numerous mainstream books on a wide variety of subjects including young people's stories and historical novels.

He seems to have all but stopped working at about the time when the second wave of SM magazines crashed in the mid-1970s. On their return in the 1980s photography had all but eliminated most artists' jobs and Obinata faded from the SM scene.

Unfortunately, except for a few plates in the long out of print art compilations *Nawa to Onna* and *Tanbi no Hakken*, very little of Obinata's large output has ever been collected and published. This is doubly regrettable since Obinata, as one of the most imaginative older artists, originated many of the techniques used in modern SM illustration while still working in the traditions of classical ukiyo-e.

The younger artist Kasuga Akira (real name Muro Shouichi) was something of a protégé of Dan Oniroku when he came to prominence in the "golden Age" of SM magazines. Dan employed him constantly during this period, illustrating numerous stories for his SM King magazine of the 1970s as well as several of his later novels. Soon this fine craftsman was working for most of the major SM publications of the time.

Kasuga was a master illustrator in the *bijin-ga* tradition. *Bijin-ga* (literally "pictures of beautiful women") was from the inception of ukiyo-e a principal genre for Japanese printmakers. In Edo era Japan these pictures depicted the fashionable and enticing women of the geisha trade, illustrated ideas of feminine beauty and/or were used to display gorgeous fabrics and fashions. Such prints were then used by the vendors of fabrics and kimonos to advertise their wares. Kasuga Akira was a serious student of this specialty and studied under the renowned modern *bijin-ga* master Iwata Sentaro, an artist who today is much sought after by collectors.



Kasuga Akira-SM Collector, September 1979

In Kasuga's skilled hands this tradition of depicting feminine beauty became an erotic examination of SM sensuousness, usually depicted from the woman's point of view and as pure pleasure. Seldom is violence depicted

in his work, even when such a scene could be justified by the story he was illustrating.

Instead, his lovely impressionistic wash sketches usually convey the languid sexual contentment of his beautiful, romantically bound women.

In the 1970s and 1980s Kasuga Akira illustrated several of the better quality SM novels of the time and in the 1990s he was featured in a book of Dan Oniroku's favorite SM images published by the Alligator magazine corporation. He also illustrated several modern erotic SM novels published by Green Door Bunko. This resulted in a small but elegant album of his beautiful shibari/kinbaku/SM artwork being published in 1993, also by Green Door. Shortly after this Kasuga Akira retired from SM illustration.



Ozuma Kaname - shibari with irezumi

Perhaps the most fortunate of all the "classical" illustrators is the extremely talented and prolific **Ozuma Kaname** (sometimes credited as Ozuma Youko). Over the years he has had more collections of his work published than any other artist of the "golden age" SM era. This is perhaps not so surprising since, in Ozuma's art, three different specialties come together in one beautiful image: the sensuous seme-e scene, the *bijin-ga* and the *irezumi* (tattoo) masterpiece.

Born in 1938 in Niigata prefecture on the Sea of Japan, Ozuma Kaname attended Musashino Art College but had to leave prior to graduation. Forced to accept any assignment in order to make ends meet, Ozuma began illustrating for SM magazines in the early 1970s. He soon became a regular contributor to most of the era's publications and was particularly favored by SM Select, SM Collector and SM King.

Early in his career Ozuma experimented with many different styles and often aped more famous artists such as Kita Reiko. However, as he grew more proficient in his art, his creativity and dramatic imagination began to attract a large following. It was in the late 1970s that he began to combine his skills with seme-e and irezumi and started to produce his signature style of picture; Edo era maidens with flowing black hair covered in glorious, colorful irezumi and bound with thick hemp rope in sensuous poses of rapture, shame or torment.

Today, Ozuma Kaname is every bit as famous a designer of tattoos as he is an SM artist and is acknowledged as standing in direct descent from Kuniyoshi Utagawa, the early 19th-century ukiyo-e master who first popularized the art of irezumi with his print series "Popular Tales of the Marsh: One Hundred and Eight Portraits of Heroes." Admired throughout the world by tattoo aficionados for his magnificent creations, Ozuma is flooded with requests from tattoo artists and hopeful clients.

Collections of his SM work began appearing early in his career and significant albums of his art have been published numerous times including collections in 1972, 1979, 2005 and, most recently, in 2007. In 2000 the most

sumptuous book of his seme-e and irezumi art, entitled "Tattooing," was brought out in a deluxe edition by Futami Shobo.

Despite his fame, Ozuma Kaname remains a very humble man. In a recent autobiographical essay accompanying the art in his book "Tattooing," he commented that although he was pleased at the collection's publication he was, "a little ashamed that they (the pictures) aren't better." He concluded by saying, "As an Ukiyo-e artist, I hope that this book will find its way into the hands of tattoo fans the world over, and show them at least one aspect of Japanese culture and tradition, art and technique. Nothing could please me more than this." He need not worry on either count. He is a renowned modern master.

Except for the most famous names (Kita Reiko, Muku Youji) most of these artists would labor in obscurity on their magazine assignments, turning in remarkable deSigns on short notice. In my discussions with the artist and former SM magazine editor Miyabi Kyodo he has told me of his early days in the magazine world when he acted as a "runner" and traveled to the artist's homes to collect their work just before deadline.

"It was more than a quarter of a century ago when I, as a beginning editor, worked with Kasuga Akira and Obinata Ichimu sensei. At that time, they were already master illustrators and were extraordinarily quick in drawing. When I went to their places to get manuscripts, they would often ask me to wait a moment while they drew their assignments on a simple white piece of paper on the spot!"



Akechi Denki (1940-2005)

In spite of the pressures of deadline the three talented artists profiled here, as well as many others, brought a unique style and sensibility to their magazine work that certainly lifted their best efforts into the realm of erotic art.

Akechi Denki - a genius for rope

Akechi Denki (1940-2005) was one of Japan's greatest, most renowned, most admired and most accomplished professional rope artists. He was born in Tokyo on September 11, 1940 and often stated that his interest in shibari/kinbaku dated back to childhood when, in elementary school, he happened across a copy of Kitan Club magazine with illustrations of bound women. The beauty of these images fascinated him.

Unfortunately, in youth Akechi was diagnosed with a serious congenital heart ailment that afflicted him throughout his life. At age 20 he began working in the family interior decorating business but health issues continued to plague him. It's said he resigned himself to an early death. However, at age 30, thanks to an operation at the hands of a famous surgeon, he made a miraculous recovery. He then decided to use whatever time remained to him to pursue what fascinated him the most.

By the mid 1970s Akechi Denki had begun to participate in "avant-garde" SM shows in Tokyo put on by the GSC project. He took responsibility for all scenes involving shibari. At the end of these shows he also presented a brief performance of his own creation. These short "curtain closers" were to evolve into the accomplished SM shows he later launched under his own auspices at his Studio Phantom. It was also at about this time that he became friends

with Tsujimura Takashi and would sometimes practice with the renowned older bakushi.

In the 1980s, as the audio visual market boomed, Akechi Denki, in addition to his own stage shows, appeared in numerous videos, books of photographs and even on variety television programs gaining a wide and appreciative audience. Wearing his trademark dark sunglasses he also became the face of Japanese kinbaku internationally with several appearances overseas. With his tremendous skill, showmanship and entrepreneurial vigor, he helped legitimize the mania for SM and shibari/kinbaku.

Akechi Denki was always interested in hojojutsu, the traditional Japanese martial art of rope restraint that developed during Japan's feudal period, and incorporated several classic hojojutsu techniques into his own kinbaku style. That style was remarkably intricate but always astonishingly beautiful to look at with its even bands and elegant geometric patterns ever reminiscent of the finest qualities of Japanese art and design.

Akechi Denki was much admired and loved in his time. His dark glasses, worn for anonymity, were also said to hide remarkably kind eyes and a gentle, thoughtful soul. He once told an interviewer that as a young man he wept the first time a girl allowed him to bind her and when asked a few weeks before his death what shibari meant to him this great master replied, "Shibari is communication between two like minded people using rope ... a connection between the hearts of two people. The rope should always embrace with love."

Luckily, many of his performances have been captured on tape and DVD and two of the most beautiful shibari kinbaku photo books ever published, "Pleasure and a Little Pain" (1995) with photos by Tanaka Kinichi and the more recent "Akechi" (2007) with photos by Saitoh Yoshiki, celebrate his work. All of these can be studied by future aficionados and so his legacy and the inspiration of his incredible rope skills will remain. However, the mystery of his talent, of how he would "disappear" into his kinbaku and emerge with startling beauty is lost forever. It is not an exaggeration to say that if the best kinbaku can be compared to music then Akechi Denki sensei was its Mozart.

What must never be forgotten is his philosophy; that shibari is an art for two like-minded hearts and must always be a loving exchange.

Sugiura Norio - photographer

It is a commonplace that photography has been and is one of the key components in the appreciation of shibari/kinbaku art. Since the time of Itoh Seiyu, photography has given the world ravishing erotic images of kinbaku's complexity and effect. Too often this art has been in the service of crude pornography but often the tipping point between pornography and erotica is a thin one, balanced only on the skill of the photographer and the intent of the image.

Over the years there have been many wonderfully talented artists who have made significant contributions to the art of shibari



Photo by Sugiura Norio



Photo by Sugiura Norio

kinbaku lensing. Tanaka Kanichi and Fuji Akio quickly come to mind but probably no photographer has created more exceptional images than the master Sugiura Norio.

Sugiura was born April 9, 1942 in Nagoya, Japan's 4th largest city, located in the Aichi prefecture. As a student he attended design school but soon dropped out disillusioned by the experience and needing to make a living. A variety of vaguely art related jobs followed including being a scenic construction coordinator for a TV puppet show and working as a lighting technician at a striptease theater.

It was here in the 1970s that Sugiura met the famous SM author Dan Oniroku and began working for him, first as an assistant director for some of Dan's theatrical presentations and then on Dan's influential magazine, *SM King*. Starting in the editorial department he began to organize the photo sessions and, as he puts it, "learned how to handle the camera."

If this casual claim is actually fact it's one of the more remarkable instances of the successful "self taught" artist on record for Sugiura quickly became the consummate professional with a uniquely expressive style. This style consists of the dramatic use of single source lighting that envelopes his bound subjects in a soft glow in order to accentuate their forms with shadows and highlights and an unerring instinct for the dramatic which always seems to find the remarkable expression or pose.

After *SM King* folded Sugiura spent several years in the SM pinku eiga film world before establishing himself as a freelance photographer. In the early 1980s he worked mainly for the magazines "SM Select" and "SM Fan", then the most popular SM publications of the time.

By the end of the decade he had begun to do the covers for various journals, including "SM Mania" and "SM Secret Novel," and had become a much sought-after cover photographer, a key component to a magaZine's financial success.

Since the 1990s, Sugiura Norio has been associated with Sanwa publishers and has produced numerous books of stunning glossy shibari/kinbaku photographs, including several on the history of Japanese bondage and the *Kinbakuzue* ("Kinbaku Collection") series. In these efforts Sugiura has worked with the finest bakushi, including Nureki Chimuo, Marai Masato, Nagaike Takechi and many others. He continues to work for various publishers and has even joined the Internet age by opening a website dedicated to his work, *Kinbakusajiki* ("Kinbaku Box Seat") at www.sugiuranorio.jp/.

On set Sugiura is a sight to see. Something of a tyrant to his assistants and models, he yells his instructions and suffers fools badly. Nureki has said that Sugiura, "dominates with his voice" as much as Nureki does with his ropes! Regardless of the method, the results are often spectacular. And although Sugiura has done his share of images that stray into the pornographic, his best work more often reaches the heights of art. He is an inspiration to anyone who has ever tried to take an erotic photograph.

Yukiffiura Haruki - bakushi, publisher, producer

As with the several of the preceding rope masters, Yukimura Haruki (born 1948) holds an honored place as one of



Yukimura Haruki

the most active and accomplished bakushi at work today. He is also an astute businessman and producer with an astounding 2,500 shibaril kinbaku videos and DVDs to his credit! That might seem to indicate a mass production mentality but this isn't the case as Yukimura is also one of the truly elegant craftsmen in the world of professional shibaril kinbaku.

Although interested in shibari since childhood, Yukimura was a working photographer when he began using rope for erotic photo sessions. Gradually he discovered that he was spending more time doing the tying than the photos and by his early 40s he'd become a professional. This dual discipline (ofbakushi and photographer) helps explain the combination of lovely intricate ties always caught at the right photographic angle and in the most attractive lighting that distinguishes

his best work. Yukimura is also a classicist and often prefers authentic Japanese settings and beautiful kimonos for his books and videos which add to their artistry.

After working for Cinemagic and the Taiyo group, among others, producing and appearing in numerous inbaku videos, Yukimura started his own company, Sunset Video, to handle the twenty or so titles he produces each year. His "Y's Play Bondage" series is particularly highly regarded. He is also sought after to tie for photo collections and has himself produced two high quality shibari/kinbaku photo art books, "Trans Body Bondage" (photos by Takahashi Junko) and "Shibari - 1,2,3," (photos by: Oka Katumi, Higure Keisuke and Watanabe Tatsumi), that rival in quality anything in the field.

Influenced by Nureki, whom he met early in his career, his style of kinbaku is unique and all his own. Dubbed the "caressing style," he dislikes suspensions and usually keeps his partners on the tatami mat where he always strives for beauty in the tie and in the expression of his models. It's said his motto is, "Tying is serving the woman" and when recently asked what shibari meant to him he replied, "To me, shibari is an emotional exchange between a man and a woman. That's unique to Japan - to express love and emotion entirely through the medium of rope. So shibari is not how you do this tie or that tie, it's how you use the rope to exchange emotions with another."

In 2000 he did the kinbaku for the most entertaining fiction film "I am an SM Writer," based on a novel by Dan Oniroku, and in 2007 he was profiled in the documentary "Bakushi" along with Nureki Chimuo and Arisue Go. His position as one of Oapan's greatest living rope masters is thus secure.

Arisue Go - talented bakushi for "model books" and major films

Arisue Go is one of Oapan's most well known and prolific bakushi, with a distinguished career that already spans nearly three decades. Born in 1954, Arisue's interest in shibari/kinbaku dates back to childhood when at an early age he "sensed the eroticism of traditional Japanese bondage." Inspired by the seme-e paintings of Hoh Seiyu and the works of Minomura Kou, editor of the legendary Kitan Club and Uramado SM magazines, he began to teach himself the traditional techniques of shibari/kinbaku.



Arisue Go

Arisue began his career as a bakushi in the 1970s after graduating from Tokyo's distinguished Chuo University where he majored in literature. This was a golden age for SM publications in Japan and he did extensive work for several well-known magazines including SM Select and SM Fan. He also did the rope work for movies, including the erotic romance *Akai Nawa Hateru Made* ("Until the Red Rope Runs Out"), directed by Suzuki Junichi. In the 1980s, as the "adult" video market boomed, Arisue was employed as a bakushi on numerous AV productions for Cinemagic, Toho, Taiyo Tosho, Hoyusha and Sanwa Shuppan. He also created his own bondage video label, Azabu Eiga.

In Japan, light, decorative bondage often makes an appearance in collections of photographs of beautiful celebrities and Arisue has done the bondage for soft-core photos of such famous actresses as Toyota Maho, Akiyoshi Kumiko and Oginome Keiko. He once even tied a female pro wrestler for a similar photo collection. Arisue's gentler flowing style of shibari makes him an ideal bakushi for this type of work and he is much in demand by publishers. His best effort in this field is probably "Pleasure in the Fall," a 1998 large format album produced by Japan Mix and featuring the former Nikkatsu actress Ogawa Minako. Both the photos by Kawai Takao and Arisue's shibaril kinbaku are exemplary.

Arisue also does SM/shibari/kinbaku club shows and has a special interest in multimedia performances in cooperation with other artists. He has collaborated on performances with manga artist Uzuki Taeko and bondage star Saotome Hiromi and appeared at SM performance festivals. As his fame has grown he's become a popular guest for various media outlets including a 2007 comedy guest spot on a Japanese live talk radio program where he suspended a guest!

Most notably, Arisue did the rope work for and performed in the successful mainstream feature films *Hana to Hebi 1 & 2* ("Flower and the Snake Land 2") in 2004 and 2005, directed by Ishii Takashi and based on the SM novel by Dan Oniroku. These films helped make Arisue Go a name recognized outside of Japanese SM circles and brought his work to a wider international audience.

He was recently profiled in a four-page article in a mainstream Japanese men's magazine and, through one of Japan's top publishers, just released a humorous book of short stories about the event filled and thinly fictionalized life of a famous bakushi. Other publishing ventures have included several "how to tie" books over the years including a notable volume, *Jissen Kinbaku: Shibari kata Kyoshitsu*, published in 1997 by Hokuou Shobo and, most recently, "The Basic(s) of Japanese Bondage Theory," published by Sanwa in 2008.

Amid such varied bondage work, Arisue Go has one basic aim which is, "to learn traditional techniques and apply them to expand the boundaries of his own unique form of kinbaku." To date he has performed as a bakushi more than 3,500 times:

As important as his shibari/kinbaku skills, Arisue Go is also a wise and deeply thoughtful commentator on the history, traditions and philosophy behind kinbaku. The major essay in his 1997 book *Jissen Kinbaku: Shibari kata Kyoshitsu* is a wonderful and concise meditation on the many aspects of his art. Like Nureki Chimuo and Yukimura Haruki, Arisue Go was profiled in the 2007 documentary "Bakushi" and joins these two other distinguished rope masters as among the most proficient and well known professionals working today.

Saotome Hiromi - kinbaku model, author

Where would the lover of shibari/kinbaku art be without the models? A foolish question perhaps but all too often as we discuss the finer points of art, theater, photography and their relationship to kinbaku, the models are



Saotome Hiromi

conspicuously absent from the dialogue. Why is this? Is it perhaps because, to the uninitiated, the models appear as figures that something is "done to" and not as "active" participants? Or is it because we're too easily dazzled by the crafts of the rope master, artist and photographer? In either case, this is a gross injustice since without the model there is usually no art. As someone who has attempted to take kinbaku photographs over the years, I know first hand how dependent I am on the grace, beauty, and expressiveness of the courageous people in front of my camera.

Naturally, there are "models" and there are models. That is, there are people who try to make a living modeling in a variety of venues and then there are those who truly love the experience of shibari/kinbaku and happen also to be photographed. It is from the honest emotions of this second group that, in my opinion, the best shibarikinbaku art usually springs. One of these exceptional people is the lovely and talented Saotome Hiromi.

Born in Tokyo in 1963, Saotome seems to have had an interest in S from a very early age. She began her professional career as a model in 1983 and as an actress in 1984 with a small part in the Nikka.tsu film *Nawa Shimai: Kimyona Kajitsu* ("Rope Sisters: Strange Fruit"). This led to numerous appearances in films for a variety of companies including Tokkatsu and, in a leading role in the successful *Jigoku no Raper* series of films, for the Shinto studios. To date Saotome Hiromi has starred or appeared in over 80 adult videos and films.

In 1986 she began appearing with Osada Eikichi during the last years of that ground-breaking artist's long career and added live stage performance to her credits. At the same time, she continued to be a frequent partner in still shoots for Sugiura Norio with kinbaku by Nureki Chimuo. In 1988 she began doing one woman performances featuring self bondage and suspension.

Although this type of performance art has become more common recently and several gifted female artists have been drawn to the form, when Saotome Hiromi began her shows in the late 1980s she was almost alone. In these performances her goal is always to dramatize "the emotional side of sadomasochism" and her combination of erotic dance, symbolism and shibari/kinbaku is both a fascinating mixture and quite unforgettable.

If this weren't enough to demonstrate that Ms Saotome is no ordinary "modeL" she also writes. Beginning in 1985, her intelligent, thoughtful and knowledgeable articles on SM began appearing in such magazines as SM Sniper and SM Mania, for which she continues to write today. In addition, she is responsible for some of the best historical writing tracing the history of SM in Japan. Her books include:

1998 - *Sei no Shigoto shitachi* ("Masters of the Underground Erotic/Sex Trade")

2000 - *Hiromi no Korega SM da* ("Hiromi's SM")

2003 - *Kitan Club no Hitobito* ("The People of Kitan Club")



Saotome Hiromi in performance

Finally, in 2006, Kawade Bunkou published her *Roman Porno no /oyuu* ("The Actresses of Roman Porno"); a fitting tribute to the beautiful and talented actresses (and models) who have fired so many imaginations.

Marai Masato, Naka Akira and Randa Mai - the younger generation of bakushi, stage performers, producers

While Nureki Chimuo and Yukimura Haruki are the most famous veteran bakushi working in Japan today, an even younger generation of skilled rope masters has begun to move into the limelight. These talented individuals all came onto the scene in the 1980s and 1990s and have impressed in a variety of kinbaku related activities.

Marai Masato is perhaps the least well known of these three in the West but his work has been seen in many books and magazines that have been distributed here. In fact, one could call him a specialist in creating artful kinbaku for publishing and the photographic image.

Born in 1957 in Tokyo, Marai Masato majored in Architecture in college. While there he also indulged his interest in SM by writing both fiction and non fiction articles for the popular SM Fan magazine. He also got the chance to assist on several photo sessions for the same magazine and in so doing met two people that were to be very influential to his future endeavors, Sugiura Norio and Nureki Chimuo.

After graduating with his degree he took a job at an architectural design firm but found the work uninteresting. Within a year he quit this job and joined Sanwa Publishing as part of their SM editorial staff. As a major publisher of SM material, Sanwa offered Marai the unique chance to develop his own skills as both a photographer and bakushi and after six years at the company he got the remarkable opportunity to work closely with Nureki Chimuo on several projects. In time honored Japanese fashion, the pupil began watching the master and "stealing" as much as he could and within a few years the neophyte bakushi began creating his own style of kinbaku.

Marai Masato is a most creative rope master whose designs and constructions are both safe and attractive. Like most bakushi that work principally for magazines and photographs, he seems to prefer thin, 4 mm asanawa (hemp/jute rope) which allows him to do very intricate and detailed patterns.

For the last twenty years Marai has worked as a freelance bakushi and done the kinbaku for numerous magazines, including SM Secret Novel and SM Maniac, and many glossy photo books featuring famous AV (adult video) stars. More recently he has collaborated with Norio Sugiura and become one of that master photographer's principal collaborators on his Sanwa publications, especially the *Kinbakuzue* series of books. His work is also conspicuously represented on Sugiura's art photo website, *Kinbakusajiki*. Finally, in the last several years Marai Masato has produced several excellent "how to tie" instructional DVDs and become a major contributor to Maniac Club magazine where his skillful "how to tie" column was published to much acclaim.

As the reader may have noticed, many of the most talented shibari/kinbaku artists have admitted to a fascination for this type of material since early childhood. Whether these are cases of early imprinting, societal influence or simply "hard wiring" is open to debate. However, in the case of the very talented Naka Akira there is no question of this. He had no interest in SM or shibari/kinbaku until he was thirty!

At that time, Naka Akira (born 1961?) was working for a modeling agency placing models and actresses for AV work. One day, the Cinemagic Company called to engage an actress for an SM video and he accompanied her to the shoot. According to Naka, to his amazement and in spite of consciously having "no interest" in SM, he was very "stimulated" by what he saw.

This may in part be explained by the fact that the bakushi working that day was Nureki Chimuo and Naka was very impressed by the master's stunning rope work. Nureki, for his part, realized Naka's keen interest and graciously invited the young man to attend one of his famous Kinbiken (rope study) sessions. According to Naka, he was a regular participant for the next five years.

Looking at his powerful style, it's easy to see Nureki's influence. In fact, it's remarkable how close the disciple's technique is to the master's. When asked in a recent interview if he ever received formal lessons from Nureki, Naka replied,

"No. It was very much a traditional Japanese master-disciple relationship in that he never actively taught me anything. Everything I learned from him I had to learn on my own, by watching. I attended the Kinbiken meetings for over a year before he even allowed me to untie one of the models he had tied, which is of course a great way to learn how the tie is done. If the disciple wants knowledge, he has to 'steal' it. The teacher doesn't just hand it over. This is the way master-disciple relationships are conducted in all the Japanese artisan fields, whether it's a traditional craft or fine cooking."

Eventually, Naka Akira's attendance at Nureki's Kinbiken meetings proved invaluable and provided him with a career breakthrough. At one of the meetings he met the president of Cinemagic, Yokobatake Kunihiko. The president had been observing Naka and offered him the opportunity to do the rope work for a Cinemagic video, but on one condition -- that he also appear on camera. It wasn't just Naka's skill with rope that impressed Mr. Yokobatake, it was also the extensive tattoos that covered the young bakushi's torso! The president wanted them on film!

These tattoos represent a second passion for Naka Akira which does date from an early age. As a child he was fascinated with *irezumi* (tattoos). However, strict parental disapproval kept the young man from realizing this interest until he was thirty, exactly as with SM and shibari/kinbaku. Once committed, a year's worth of visits to the master tattoo artist Horitoku resulted in Naka's entire back being decorated with a famous scene from Japanese mythology, *Oniwakamaru no Koi Taiji*, the tale of a legendary hero's battle with a giant carp. This beautiful piece of body art has made Naka one of the most recognizable bakushi in Japan today.

Apparently, Nureki helped his young protégé get the first Cinemagic job with both a professional recommendation and by coining his stage name for him, resulting in Naka Akira; a moniker that has caused the young bakushi some embarrassment since it "sounds like an Enka singer's name." The closest thing to this in the US would be a colorful stage name that is most appropriate for a country western singer.

Regardless of the name, his first Cinemagic video was successful and this started Naka out on a busy career as a bakushi specializing in AV films and videos, many for Cinemagic and even more for the Art Video Company. Today Naka writes, produces, directs and/or appears in up to 200 to 300 videos and DVDs a year, a remarkable number. Many would qualify as pornography but some, such as his beautifully executed *Nawa-etsu* ("Rope Joy") series from Art Video, are devoted completely to rope bondage without the "distractions" of more typical pornographic content and are truly fine examples of *kinbaku-bi*, "the beauty of traditional shibari art."

Recently, Naka Akira has even branched out into doing shibari/kinbaku stage performances. To the question of why he was venturing into new, uncharted, frontiers he replied:

"Part of it was that I wanted to reach a new audience, and part of it was to challenge myself by doing a different kind of work. From the beginning, I had very specific ideas about what kind of show I wanted to do. I knew I didn't want

to do the sort of tough-guy posturing where the guy pulls the woman out on stage on a leash. When I bring my model out, I escort her, like a gentleman. And I knew I didn't want to do fast, acrobatic rope work. Instead, I work slowly and with feeling, and try to convey all the love and emotion that passes between a man and a woman when he's tying her up. I don't do any other kind of SM play in my shows, like whips or candles, because I want to use the time showing what can be done with just rope."

In his shows and videos Naka displays a classicist's sensibility and only uses the authentic traditional materials of hemp/jute rope, bamboo, and cloth for his kinbaku, eschewing even the metal carabineers that many bakushi use to facilitate suspensions. Despite this precocious ability and his obvious success, Naka Akira remains a humble man. In response to the question of whether he felt he might ever achieve his mentor Nureki Chimuo's level of skill, he's said,

"I don't have that kind of command of the rope. Learning to do that will probably take me my entire life."

Of all the younger bakushi in Japan today, the best known is undoubtedly the charismatic Randa MaL. With his trademark dark glasses and five o'clock shadow, Randa (born 1959 in Tokyo) is something of a rock star in the modern world of shibari/kinbaku. Even his name exudes charisma and poetry, translating loosely as "wild field dancer."

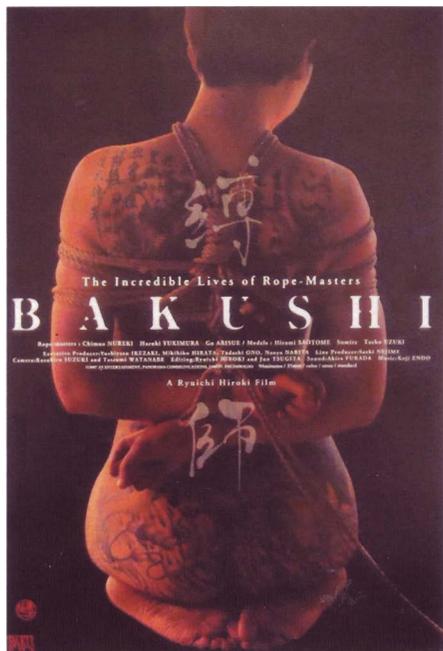
An interest in tying a girlfriend in high school led the young Randa to form an SM club for aficionados in college and soon this energetic and ambitious bakushi was making AV videos, performing in clubs, writing articles and appearing as an SM expert on such mainstream Japanese television shows as "Tonight" and "Gilgamesh Tonight." In addition and as several other notable bakushi have done, Randa early on formed his own video production/distribution company to produce his own SM videos. These have appeared frequently over the years (along with projects for other AV companies such as Cinemagic and Art Video) with prograss1s under the "Black Shower" and "RD" and "RE" labels perhaps being the most representative. Today Randa Mai acts, writes and/or appears in over a hundred adult videos a year.

Although he is said to be performing less on stage recently and devoting most of his time to AV production, in his heyday Randa Mai did an SM club act that in slickness and flash would rival Las Vegas. In performance he is remarkable to behold as he dances around his beautiful, skilled and acrobatic partners combining his tremendous energy and pure showmanship with color, lights, whips, ropes and razzle-dazzle effects to create a true SM extravaganza.

As notable as all these efforts are, it is Randa Mai's quieter role as a kinbaku teacher that just might be his most impressive accomplishment. Although he claims to be self taught, influences from earlier shibarikinbaku masters are clearly evident in his "system" which features Simplified techniques but great sophistication. For instance, watching him create a tsuri (suspension) is a lesson in the mastery of balance and would be of value to any rope lover no matter what their experience level. Luckily, as with his videos, there has been a steady stream of expert and quite useful Randa Mai instructional books (the first from Tukasa publishers appeared in 1997), Internet tutorials (he's been prominently featured on www.kikkou.com) and video/DVDs over the years. In this last format he recently released a most impressive three-DVD set that clearly outlines the main principals of his skillful technique. Of course, as with ALL "how to" materials caution and common sense must be applied when reading or viewing, especially since these tutorials are only in Japanese!

Although Marai, Naka and Randa might be the most noticeable of the younger shibari/kinbaku talents working in Japan today, they are by no means the whole story. Every few years finds even younger names appearing or other

talents coming into view. Performers as diverse as Mira Kurumi, K-san, Roppongi Kaoru, Arakawa Yasushi, Kazami Ranki, Dirty Kudo, Kanna, Miura-san, the female bakushi Kanou Chiaki and the mysterious Kitagawa-san have all risen to some prominence, several to fade as quickly away, over the years. However, to this list must also be added the asterisk that these are just the bakushi who have appeared in the very public worlds of performance, pornography and, occasionally, true artistic endeavor and it is wise to remember that in Japan it has long been acknowledged that the best rope masters sometimes keep the lowest profile.



"Bakushi"-2007, dir. Hiroki Ryuichi

Nikkatsu and other studios until the early 1990s.

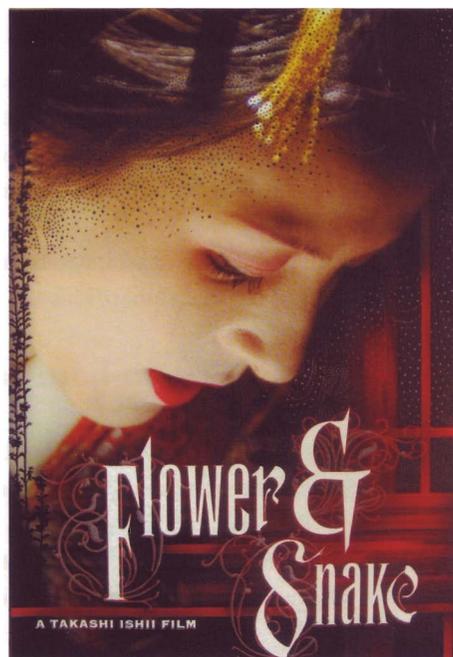
Then, like some of his colleagues, his ambitions led him to try to create something more "mainstream." This resulted in "800 Two Lap Runners," from the novel by Kawashima Makoto, which was voted seventh best film in Japan in 1994 by the Kinema Jumbo critics. Capitalizing on this success, Hiroki continued to develop general audience material but with a difference. His projects often concentrate on the psycho-sexual aspects of his character's lives and do so with remarkable understanding and compassion. Films such as "Midori" (1996), "Vibrator" (2003), "It's Only Talk" (2005), winner of the GRANDPRIX at the Singapore International Film Festival, and "M" (2006) all deal with characters (usually women) struggling with their sexual natures (often with hints of SM) and with the difficulties of communicating honestly and meaningfully with those around them.

In 2000 came the remarkably funny and wise "I Am an SM Writer" (discussed at length earlier) which best combines Hiroki's talents as a filmmaker with his fascinating take on SM psychology and his genuine interest in the subjects of SM and shibari/kinbaku. This

Hiroki Ryuichi and Ishii Takashi - film directors

From the beginning of the Nikkatsu era Japanese films have been made using SM and shibari/kinbaku as elements of plot or to provide erotic content and action. On occasion, these films have been interesting for elements beyond their eroticism but more often than not they have been strictly pinku eiga (soft core erotica) at best or true hard core pornography. However, recently, several of the younger Japanese directors have disdained the old filmic stereotypes and create works that in their sophistication, humor and visual style have brought SM material into a new era of modernity, maturity and psychological depth. In short, truly "adult" films in the best sense.

Like several of Japan's more famous young filmmakers (Morita Yoshimitsu, director of "Lost Paradise" and Suo Masayuki, director of "Shall We Dance," to name two), Hiroki Ryuichi, born January 1, 1954, began working in the pinku eiga/AV industry in order to learn his craft. Beginning in 1982 with *Seigyaku! - Onna o Abaku*, he worked steadily turning out a variety of fairly typical erotic films and videos for



"Flower & Snake"-2004, dir. Ishii Takashi

interest is further explored in his fine 2007 documentary "Bakushi" (also discussed at length earlier) about the lives and working practices of three of Japan's most famous and accomplished rope masters.

All in all, Hiroki Ryuichi is a remarkably talented and insightful director and one watches his evolving career with interest.

The career of director Ishii Takashi is even more varied. Born in 1946 in Sendai, the capital city of Miyagi Prefecture in northeastern Japan, Ishii attended Waseda University where he graduated with a degree in commercial art. He married immediately and, in order to support his family, went to work in several fields including manga (comics) and SM magazine illustration.

During the 1970s he produced dark and moody illustrations for such "golden age" magazines as SM Spirits, SM Select, SM Sniper and SM King. He also created the adult manga comic *Tenshi No Harawata* ("Angel Guts" or "Angel Courage") which attracted the attention of Nikkatsu Studios. In short order they hired the young Ishii to turn his manga into a screenplay. It's easy to see why. As Matsushima Toshiyuki put it in his history of Nikkatsu studios, "Basically, Ishii's mangas were movies."

"Angel Guts: High School Coed" was released in 1978 and became a surprise hit for Nikkatsu spawning a series of seven films. Called effective, "darkly sinister works of exploitative art" by the authors of the Japanese Cinema Encyclopedia, the Angel Guts series gave Ishii his commercial foothold in the movie industry. He also continued drawing and a portfolio of his art was published in 1983. Finally, in 1988, he was allowed to step behind the camera and direct one of his "Angel" scripts.

In the years since, Ishii Takashi has enjoyed considerable success as a director with such films as *Shinde mo ii* ("Original Sin"), winner of the Kinema Jumbo award for best film in 1992, and the 1995 film *Gonin* ("The Five"), which won the Golden Leopard at the prestigious Locarno International Film Festival in Switzerland. However, it is the writing and direction of the two recent and commercially successful *Hana to Hebi* ("Flower and Snake") remakes in 2004 and 2005, based on the famous novel by Dan Oniroku, that have made him known outside of Japan.

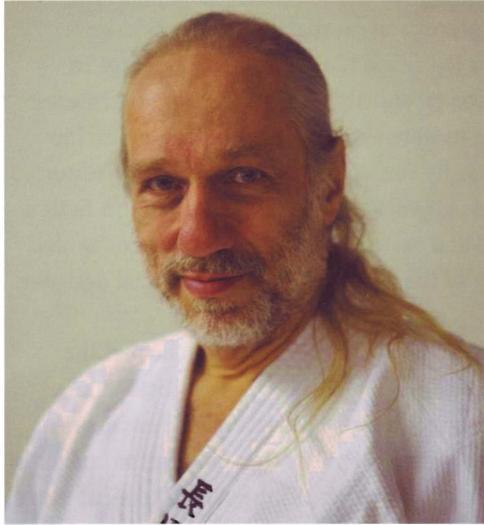
In these films Ishii's remarkable visual sense is taken to almost operatic extremes as he creatively dramatizes Dan's steamy novel of sadomasochistic obsession. Featuring a remarkable and courageous performance by the lovely Aya Sugimoto and boasting state of the art production values and fine kinbaku by Arisue Go, *Hana to Hebi I and II* show what can be done with SM and shibari/kinbaku material if placed in the hands of a true film artist.

Hiroki Ryuichi and Ishii Takashi, two talented directors creating modern films of merit to further the understanding of SM and shibari/kinbaku for a new age.

Osada Steve - Western-born bakushi, stage performer

Osada Steve is the only non-Japanese on this list. This unique distinction is key to his importance but before profiling Steve this author must, in the spirit of fair disclosure, state that Osada Steve has been a good friend for many years. That said, this friendship has in no way that I can discern either affected my critical judgment of his work or my conviction that he deserves his place on this list of 25 influential individuals in the history of shibari kinbaku. Of course, the reader must be the ultimate judge.

Of German extraction, Osada Steve has lived in Japan for almost thirty years after sojourns in India, Thailand, and



Osada Steve

Hong Kong and extensive traveling throughout much of the rest of Asia. He is something of a martial artist having trained in the disciplines of karate, aikido and taekwondo, reportedly gaining such proficiency in the latter that he was engaged to teach it to the Thai Air Force in the early 1970s.

After coming to Japan in the late 1970s, Steve worked at several occupations before gaining some success in the publishing world. In 1998 he had a fateful encounter when he first met the late Osada Eikichi (the father of the SM club show) at a photo shoot for Tokyo Journal magazine. Fascinated by Eikichi's art and energy, he returned to watch the act several times before eventually beginning to assist the maestro with bookings and behind-the-scenes help, much in the same way that Osada Eikichi himself had done with *his* first mentor, Kazuya Mukai.

Steve proved a dedicated student of Eikichi's, observing his every move and studying his style of kinbaku for several years until Eikichi sensei's death in 2001. After formally assuming the name of his mentor, Steve started to perform in his own SM club shows and today gives up to 400 performances a year throughout Japan.

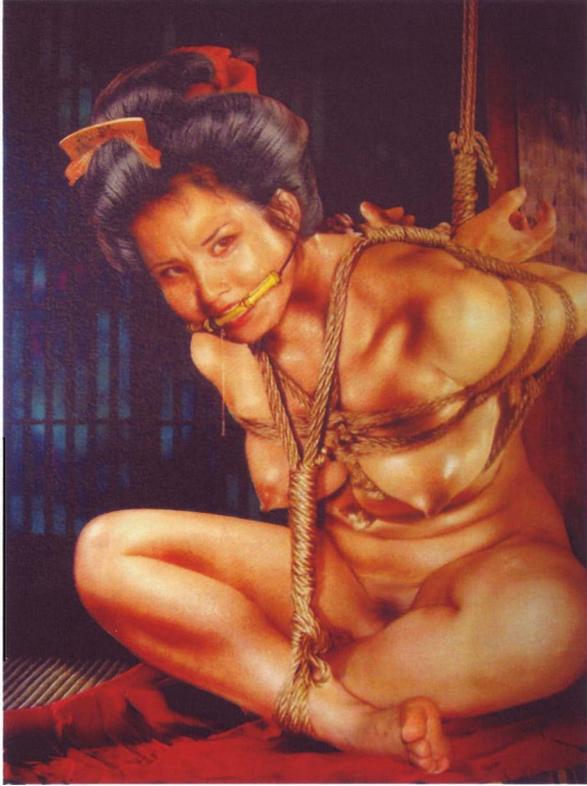
Steve's sincere interest in the art of shibari/kinbaku has also caused him to train under the late Akechi Denki sensei to gain a greater understanding of suspensions and, more recently, under Yukimura Haruki to study floor techniques (*newaza*). This combination of study and sincere dedication has led to an all-encompassing style and Steve is as comfortable performing for large audiences as he is for smaller gatherings where he displays an almost meditative but intense technique. On stage Osada Steve achieves a high level of performance excellence with beautifully crafted kinbaku and elegantly choreographed musical presentations. In this he is helped in no small measure by his lovely and skilled aerialist partner, Asagi Ageha. Their suspension dominated act combines grace and speed as Asagi is lifted high in the air to quite literally dance above their audiences. The team richly deserves their reputation as one of the best SM club acts in Japan.

In addition to performing on stage, Steve also teaches, appears in videos and ties for magazines. While he is not the only accomplished Western "bakushi" pursuing the art of kinbaku, he is the only one living and working professionally in Japan. These are truly remarkable accomplishments for a *gaijin* ("foreigner") in a country notorious for its studied skepticism of outsiders. However, it is not just these activities, impressive as they are, that cause the author to hold Osada Steve in such high regard. It is also because of his constant willingness to share his information on kinbaku, that most Japanese of erotic arts, with the West. For years he has been tireless and generous with his time and advice and it is for this groundbreaking position as a learned conduit of information on shibari/kinbaku to the rest of the world that he deserves our sincerest thanks.

Miyabi Kyodo - modern seme-e master

Without question, one of the finest, if not *the* finest, modern shibari/kinbaku graphic artists working in Japan today is the astonishing Miyabi Kyodo whose hyper-realist, computer generated, erotic art works have taken the styles of classical ukiyo-e and seme-e into the 21st century.

Miyabi Kyodo, an artistic nom de plume that translates as "Elegant person/man of Kyodo," was born in 1957 in Sapporo, the major city of Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost and second largest island. After a childhood and youth



"Agura Shlbari"-1999

depiction of every knot, bead of sweat and elegant expression in almost photographic clarity. The artist's expert knowledge of kinbaku and body mechanics, learned from first hand experience, also lends his work a vivid and astonishing reality.

Like the great shunga artists of the past, Miyabi concentrated on private commissions for many years. However, that all changed when film director Ishii Takashi was inspired by Miyabi's art and included many of his finest compositions as part of the plot in his second successful "Flower and Snake" remake ("Flower and Snake II - Paris") in 2005. This introduced Miyabi's works to a much wider public. In 2006 a show of his most recent work was held at the Vanilla Gallery in Tokyo and, as of this writing, another exhibition of his art is being organized for Paris, France.

Luckily for his fans, publishers have also taken note of Miyabi's remarkable skills. In 2002 Sanwa published a deluxe edition of some of Miyabi Kyodo's most powerful compositions. In creating such art, Miyabi Kyodo continues the traditions of evocative seme-e begun in the early Edo era that inspired the SM pioneer Hoh Seiyu, encompassed the mid-twentieth century genius of Kita Reiko, and still resonate with us today in the intriguing and artistic world of modern shibari/kinbaku.

that included interests in martial arts and music, he graduated from Doshisha University with a degree in literature. However, shortly after graduation, his interest in SM lead him to start working for SM Club magazine where he eventually rose to the position of senior editor. At the magazine his varied duties included being a fiction editor, bakushi and cartoonist. At the same time, he also worked outside of the SM world as a commercial designer.

It was during his time at the magazine that he met the legendary Minomura Kou (AKA the artist Kita Reiko) who became his most important artistic influence. As a junior employee, one of Miyabi's first jobs was to collect magazine copy and artwork from the various contributors by going to their homes. Minomura was recovering from a stroke at this time and Miyabi spent many hours talking and learning from this remarkable master. Because of this it can truly be said that Miyabi Kyodo was the last student of the great Kita Reiko. Miyabi left SM Club in 1985 to pursue his own career as an independent artist.

Miyabi's SM art is like no other's in Japan. Intensely erotic, its precise hyper-realism (created on computer with hundreds of hours devoted to each piece) allows the clear

What's in a name? - The Shibari/Kinbaku Glossary

Some of the most frequently asked questions from correspondents involve the names of various shibarilkinbaku ties. In addition to the understandable desire to put an authentic name to a particular tie, there is often annoyance expressed because certain ties seem to have several names or because the spelling of the name seems to vary widely from source to source. There is no doubt that this element of learning about shibarilkinbaku can be vexing but the reasons for the confusion, once understood, are fairly straightforward.

The first complication arises because the Westerner is usually reading the names of shibari/kinbaku ties in *romaji*, the 19th-century system of translating and transcribing the sounds corresponding to the pictographs of Japanese kanji (the Japanese writing system imported from China) into the Arabic alphabet. This system, though useful and updated intelligently over the years, still has its imperfections and the attempt to create speak-able words sometimes creates vagaries in spelling. Consequently, different sources will sometimes ... differ.

The second complication arises because of the way different shibari/kinbaku names have come into use. Some historical names were inherited from the feudal world of the shogun and hojojutsu. Such terms as *hishi*, *kikkou*, *ebi* and *tsuri* have long histories dating back hundreds of years. Others, like *imo mushi*, *kaikyaku kani* and *teppo* are far more recent and come from a time when prominent bakushi, like Itoh Seiyu and Minomura Kou, were expected to name their own ties just as artists named their paintings or sculptures. As in any language, the names that stuck were accepted and those that weren't faded away and sometimes there were duplications, corruptions and changes over time.

To add to the confusion, certain Western practitioners have made up names that "sound" exotic and slightly Japanese and foisted them on a gullible public. One of the more notorious examples is the use of the word "shinju" or "sinju," usually translated with much pomp and circumstance as "the pearls" and said to mean ties for the female breast. This name was actually coined only a few years ago by a European trying to sound knowledgeable and has never been used in real shibari/kinbaku terminology.

The following list represents 30 years of collecting authentic shibari/kinbaku names and phrases. It is quite detailed and notes most of the approximately 40 basic ties and many of the numerous variations and other terms that make up the shibari/kinbaku repertoire. In short, it isn't perfect but it is fairly complete. As regards spellings, please note that the author uses those spellings that he has been taught or has seen most often in reliable Japanese documents and books. However, each listing usually includes name and spelling variations that appear in the literature from time to time.

Does learning the correct name for all the shibari/kinbaku ties make you an expert? No. However, it is hoped that this list will increase the reader's enjoyment, in much the same way that learning the correct names for Italian and French dishes, or any other sophisticated cuisine, increases the pleasure of dining out.

The Glossary

- *Agura shibari* - Generalized term for any tie where the submissive partner is bound and sits in a crossed legged ("Indian style") position. Sometimes referred to in historical sources as the *Zazen shibari*, taken from the crossed legged Zen Buddhist prayer position. Although somewhat similar in appearance, this tie should not be confused with the far more restrictive *Ebi shibari*.

Aomuke zuri (tsuri) - Generalized term for any suspension (*tsuri*, see below) where the subject is suspended face up.

- *Asanawa* - Traditional Japanese style bondage rope made of hemp (jute).
- *bari* - Sometimes the word *shibari* is abbreviated to "*bari*" when describing various ties, as in *Ebi-bari* (see below).

Donawa - The rope (*nawa*) used to support the waist during a *tsuri* (suspension). A waist rope. Because of the danger of injury, this rope is often tied over an *obi* (the stiffened cloth decoratively tied around the kimono wearer's waist) to protect the soft tissue of the abdomen. Without an *obi* this rope is usually placed over the upper hips (see *Koshinawa*, below) or only used to support the back with the subject positioned face up, as in the *Aomuke zuri*.

Dorei - A term sometimes used to denote a rope captive or partner.

Ebi shibari (or *Ebi-bari*) - The "shrimp" or "prawn" tie where the subject sits cross legged (Indian style) and the upper body is tied close to the ankles in a submissive bow. Originating in the 1500s, it is one of the oldest shibari ties. It was used as a torture technique (*ebizeme*) for 100s of years and was mandated as an official torture technique/punishment for crimes in 1742 by the rulers of Tokugawa Japan. It is referenced in many historical manuals and art works.

- *Enchou Ude Mae te shibari* - The "reach forward binding" where the wrists and arms are bound together with one interwoven *nawa* (rope) and extended in front of the body. Commonly abbreviated to *Mae te shibari* or *Mae te nawa shibari* or *Mae te Gassho shibari* (forward prayer tie - Buddhist version).
- *Ganji Garame* - Generalized term meaning to be completely bound hand and foot; to be immobilized. In shibari/kinbaku various techniques are usually used to create this predicament.
- *Gomon shibari* - A generalized and somewhat archaic term from Japanese history used to describe shibari/kinbaku ties intended to torment or punish (erotically or otherwise) the bound subject; an aspect of shibari/SM "predicament" play.
- *Gyaku-ebi shibari* - A reverse *ebi*, very similar to the Western hog-tie, where the hands and feet of the submissive are tied together behind the back. There are numerous versions both simple and complex. A very strict position for the very limber!
- *Gyaku-ebi zuri (tsuri)* - The suspended version of the *Gyaku-ebi* (see above) with the subject tied and suspended in mid-air, face to the ground, with the hands/feet/legs tied up and behind as in the conventional

hog-tie. One of the most common suspension positions in shibari/kinbaku.

Hashira Ushirodaki shibari - Literally to "embrace" (*daki*) the pole with the hands tied behind. An abbreviated term for tying someone to an upright wooden post or pole (*hashira*) such as often exists in the traditional Japanese tatami style room. An alternate term would be *Hashira Kousoku* or wooden post/pole "restraint." There are various styles.

Hayanawa - A style of *hojojutsu* (see below) martial arts binding used during Japan's Edo era (1603-1868). Done with a strong, thin cord (also called a *hayanawa* or "fast rope") and performed at speed, this energetic tying technique was usually accomplished by one police constable in the course of an arrest and while the prisoner was actively resisting.

- *Hikyaku zuri (tsuri)* - The so called "messenger" or "postman's" suspension where the subject is supported by the *takate-kote* or *gote* (see below) and the legs are lifted and fixed into a position resembling a runner's stride.
- *Hishi shibari (sometimes called the Hishigata or Hishi Nawa shibari)* - The "diamond" (*hishi*) pattern or "water caltrop" tie. Taken from early *hojojutsu* (see below) techniques, this historical and very attractive shibari has several variations but basically creates diamond (*hishi*) shapes (sometimes referred to as "rhombus" or "lozenge" shapes), sometimes with small knots at each of the 4 points, in quite complex patterns of linked quadrangles.

Somewhat similar to *the Kikkou shibari (see below)* and occasionally confused with it, this tie is said to be based on the 4 sided sharp pointed device used by feudal armies to impede mounted pursuers. This, in turn, was based on certain water plants whose pointed structures, fruits or seeds contain spiny burrs. The *hishi* tie pattern is generally done as a restrictive tie with the hands bound behind the back but it can also be utilized without hand involvement for both the upper torso and/or the lower body. One of the loveliest and most distinctive of shibari patterns.

Hojojutsu (sometimes spelled - *Hojojitsu*) - The ancient martial art of capturing/arresting with rope. Occasionally referred to as *Nawajutsu* in some historical texts.

- *Honnawa* - A style of *hojojutsu* used to provide secure long-term binding of prisoners in Edo era Japan (1603-1868). This method of tying was used for transportation of prisoners to a place of incarceration and examination, restraint at legal proceedings and, in the case of particularly severe crimes, for the public display of the prisoner prior to execution. During the Edo era the complex *honnawa* rope patterns created on prisoner's backs were often used to identify the prisoner's social status, crime and punishment. This style of tying is an ancestor to modern shibari/kinbaku.
- *houchi* - verb; to leave as is, leave to chance, leave alone, neglect. In Japanese shibari/SM play this term is used to describe leaving the bound submissive well tied to appreciate the tie and/or his/her predicament. A type of psychological SM play requiring great caution and constant discreet surveillance for safety.
- *Imo Mushi shibari* - The "green caterpillar" tie. An asymmetrical shibari, probably from the Showa era (1926-1989) of Japan, where the subject is bound with the hands tied behind the back and the legs entwined around each other and tied so that the ankle of one leg is tied to the thigh of the other and the ankle of the second leg is (usually) pulled up and behind the back, as in the *Gyaku-ebi* (hog-tie) and bound

to the hands. Another position for the very limber!

- *Iwato-nawa shibari* - One of the most interesting archaic shibarilkinbaku terms in that it references the Japanese creation myth of the sun goddess Amaterasu who once went into hiding in a cave near a place called Iwato, throwing Japan (and the world) into darkness. In order to tempt her out again, a young girl was compelled to dance naked at the entrance to the cave. When Amaterasu stepped out to look, the cave entrance was blocked behind her and sunlight returned to the world. In shibari/kinbaku this term refers to any tie where the subject's legs are pulled wide apart with ropes at the ankles and/or thighs, exposing the groin/genital area, while the upper torso is also bound. The author leaves the symbolism to the reader's imagination.

Jiai shibari - The "self-embracing" tie. So called because the arms of the subject are crossed in front of the body then bent up at the elbow and secured with each hand placed on top or close to the opposing shoulder so that the bound subject appears to be embracing themselves.

Joshiki - The Japanese term for the "universal common sense" that all intelligent people are supposed to possess. A useful word to remember when practicing any type of shibarilkinbaku.

- *Kaikyaku Kani shibari* - The "spread-legged crab" tie. An erotic position where the subject's wrists and upper arms are bound to the upper ankles and thighs of their respective spread legs. In a well constructed version of this tie the legs are then secured to separate support points to further spread the legs and immobilize the subject
- *Kami shibari* - term (probably taken from Shinto) for a hair tie. That is, a tie where the (preferably long) hair of the submissive is bound whoope. Sometimes this tie is incorporated into other shibari positions.
- *Kannuki* - noun; a "gate bar," that piece of metal or wood put across a gate to keep it from being opened. In shibari/kinbaku it is a generalized term for the various cinching ropes used to tighten the wrapped nawa at the breasts, legs, ankles, wrists, etc. Also know as the *shibori-nawa* ("squeezing rope") or the *tome nawa* ("stop rope").
- *Kariudo shibari* -The "hunter's" tie. So called because the arms when bound resemble a rifle (or bow, spear) put over the subject's back. This is an asymmetrical tie with one arm bent over the shoulder and bound to the second arm which is tied behind the back and bent up from the waist. This historical position is also referred to as the *Teppo shibari* or "gun tie."
- *Kata-Ashi zuri (tsuri) shibari* - Any of a number of styles of one leg up lift ties with, traditionally, the subject balanced gracefully on one leg while the other is pulled up to a support point. Alternatively, the bound subject can be positioned lying down with one leg lifted.
- *Kata-Ashi Sakasa zuri (tsuri)* - The single legged version of the classic and dramatic head down inverted suspension (see *Sakasa zuri*).
- *Kata Karada bagu* - A generalized term (sometimes abbreviated to *Kata* or *Karada*) for any of a variety of rope body harnesses both decorative and restrictive. The term *kata* is used in kabuki theater and refers to the "form" or "pattern" of acting, make-up, scenery, music, etc., handed down over generations but

- *m-jo* - This is the most widely accepted term in Japan for the one captured in rope, the "rope submissive." However, most rope captives/submissives (especially those who pose for photographs) think of themselves simply as "models."

m-a - Male version of an *m-jo*.

- *Matanawa* - Generalized term for any pubic area tie or "crotch rope." Sometimes referred to in older shibari/kinbaku literature as the *tatenawa*.
- *Mama shibari* - The "peach" tie. A distinctly sexual tie which balances the subject on their knees and upper torso, causing the posterior to be lifted. The hands are bound in front then drawn underneath the body between the spread legs and attached to the ankles. When completed this tie is quite similar in effect to several of the classic erotic positions of the Shijuhatte, the Japanese version of the Kama Sutra.
- *Mudanawa* - A term meaning "useless rope" and used by shibari artists/masters to describe any *nawa* (rope) used for purely ornamental or aesthetic, as opposed to functional, effect.
- *Mune Hishi Gate shibari* - An inventive upper body pattern that begins as a *Tasuki shibari* (see below) but then elegantly transforms into a *Takate-gote* or *Gate shibari* with a diamond (*hishi*) decorative element.
- *Nawashi* - Actually this means "a maker of rope" but in SM circles it can mean a "rope artist." A more modern term (late twentieth century) for the shibari master. See also *Kinbakushi* (above).
- *Newaza* - Floor techniques. Taken from martial arts such as *judo*, this useful term is used to describe shibari/kinbaku ties done principally on the tatami mat, as opposed to techniques used for suspensions (*tsuri*). In the right hands this style of shibari can be very sensuous and erotic.

Ninoude shibari - An archaic name for the shibari/kinbaku tie where the hands and upper arms are bound behind the back with the rope intertwined *only* between the wrists and upper arms. All cords remain behind the back *without* passing fully around the body. Also known in modern practice as the *Jouwan Gate shibari* and the *Ude Kake Gate shibari*.

Oujou shibari - A classic example of *shuuchi* (embarrassment) style shibari/kinbaku where the bound subject is tied to the *hashira* (wooden support pole) of the tatami room *while kneeling* and with the ankles crossed and bound, causing the legs to be spread.

- *Ryo-ashi zuri (tsuri)* - Any suspension where both (*ryo*) legs (*ashi*) are tied and suspended together. Depending on the kinbaku source referenced, there are several styles of *tsuri* (suspension) where this technique is used.
- *Ryo-tekubi shibari* - This is the simple wrists (*tekubi*) together (*ryo*), in front of the body, tie. Depending on the complexity of the binding technique used, this tie is sometimes called the *Tejou shibari* (or hand-cuff tie) and has its origins in the martial art *hojojutsu* (see above).
- *Sabaki* - from the verb, *sabaku* (to handle). Generalized term for the different techniques used by various rope masters (*nawashi*, *bakushi*) to wind or coil their ropes prior to use or storage.

- *Shibari* - verb; to tie up, the action of tying, noun; Japanese style bondage.
- *Sakasa zuri (tsuri)* - Inverted suspension. The subject is hung upside down by the legs/feet only.
- *Santen zuri (tsuri)* - The subject is suspended by the *takate-kote* or *gote* upper body tie and the ankles, with the ankles pulled up *in front* of the body. The word "*santen*" means mountain top or summit and in this *tsuri* the bound subject supposedly resembles the shape of a mountain range's peaks.

Sarugutsuwa - The traditional word for "gag" used in *kinbaku*. The English word "gag" is also used in Japan and translated/pronounced as "*gyaggu*" but this is a recent introduction. The standard *sarugutsuwa* is a cloth tied through/across the mouth with the material being a woven cotton trade cloth or *tenugui*, which has many purposes from cleaning to cooking to bathing to dress.

- *Shikominawa* - A term used to describe the secure support rope that is often used when doing suspensions (*tsuri*) in shibari/kinbaku play or performance. To this "preparatory" rope (or ropes) metal carabiners are sometimes attached to which the suspension ropes themselves are then strung or the suspension ropes (*tsuri nawa*) are attached directly. The construction of the *Shikominawa* must be carefully and precisely executed in order to provide strong and stable support. There are several standard design patterns for this construction. This support rope is also sometimes known as the *tsuri shiro*, which literally translates as "suspension castle" or "fort."

Suruga-doi shibari - As much 16th-century Tokugawa torture technique as straightforward shibari, this tie causes the wrists and ankles to be bound very closely together behind the subject's back and then pulled up to a support thus causing the submissive to rest on his/her pelvis. This tie differs from the *gyaku-ebi* (see above) in that it is much more stringent. It is said that in feudal Japan prisoners were sometimes suspended using this tie and even had weights applied to their backs for further discomfort. It is named after the ancient Suruga province, now an area that is part of the Shizuoka prefecture which is located in the center of Japan, near the Pacific Ocean and home to Mt. Fuji. A tie *exclusively* for the fit and very limber who enjoy a serious challenge.

- *Shuuchi shibari* - A generalized and somewhat archaic term used to describe shibari/kinbaku ties intended to "make shy" or embarrass the bound subject, an aspect of shibariSM psychological play. Sometimes written as *shuuchinawa*.
- *Takenotsue or Takezao shibari* - Tying someone using a bamboo rod, stick or pole. There are many different versions of this style of shibari which has a long history dating from feudal Japan.
- *Tanuki shibari* - Named after the "badger" or "raccoon dog" of many Japanese legends and folk tales. This tie is so called because the hands and feet are tied close together in front of the subject and then the subject is suspended (in the air or on the back) in the manner of a four legged game animal after the hunt. This tie has a history dating to at least the early 1600s when it was called the *Buri buri zeme* (torture) and reportedly was used to punish disobedient prostitutes in Edo's famed Yoshiwara pleasure district.

Tawara shibari -The "straw bag" binding. So called because it resembles the way sheaves of rice straw were/are bound by farmers in the field. The upper torso is looped horizontally with *nawa* several times above and below the breasts with the hands tied separately to the legs just below the buttocks. Often the legs are then tied together with more horizontal loops (after the upper torso is safely secured to an over-

changeable according to a skilled performers taste.

- *Kuzushi nawa* - A term used to describe a kinbaku tie whose design is "calculatedly unstudied," that is, deliberately and artfully unsymmetrical or even untidy. This term is taken from Japanese calligraphy and art and used to describe, for instance, the deliberately misshapen but exquisitely beautiful pottery sometimes used in the "tea ceremony."
- *Kikkou shibari* - The famous "tortoise shell" tie, so called because the pattern created resembles that found on the Japanese tortoise. This can be a full body tie or used only on the torso. There are two styles of *Kikkou shibari* taught, each descended from different hojojutsu schools.

The more traditional style creates one or more *hexagonal* (six sided) shapes on the bound subject. An alternative and archaic name for this famous six sided style is *Nyugarame*, supposedly taken from the Rokuguryu (school) of hojojutsu dating from the Tenmei years in Japan (1781-1788).

A second style of *Kikkou shibari*, also valid, appears to originate from a *honnawa* (see above) tie done by the Taisho ryu of feudal hojojutsu. It has been popularized in manga illustrations and taught by some *bakushi*. This version creates at least two or three diamond (*hishi*) shapes running from the neck to the pubic area. However, in modern practice this style is more properly called the *Hishi shibari* (see above).

- *Kinbaku* - The art of traditional Japanese erotic bondage.
- *Kinbaku-bi* - Usually translated as "the beauty of traditional shibari art." That is, shibari done in the traditional manner for an aesthetic/erotic effect.
- *Kinbakushi* - A term meaning "rope artist," the one who ties; often abbreviated to *Bakushi*. See also *Nawashi* (below).
- *Koshinawa* - The rope (*nawa*) used to support the hips during any suspension (*tsuri*), i.e., a hip rope. This term was/is also used in the martial art hojojutsu to describe the leashrope tied around a prisoner's waist to control movement and discourage flight.
- *Koutoubu Ryo-tekubi shibari* - An upper body tie where the hands are bound together (*ryo-tekubi*) behind the head (*koutoubu*) and then affixed to the chest harness created from the same length of rope. Note: this tie is also sometimes known as the *Koutouryoute shibari*.
- *M-Ji-Kaikyaku shibari* - The classic ankle tied to thigh shibari (often combined with any version of an upper body arm/wrist tie, i.e. *Takate-kote shibari*, *Tasuki shibari*, etc.) which causes leg immobility and the seated, bound subject to resemble the letter "M." Despite the connection to the English alphabet in the name, this leg/ankle tie is very old being referenced in some versions of the Shijuhatte, the Japanese version of the Kama Sutra containing 48 sexual positions which arrived in Japan, probably from China, after 550 AD. There are several variations of this tie.
- *M-Ji-Kaikyaku zuri (tsuri)* - A suspension where the subject is supported by the *Takate-kote* or *Gote* and the thighs, with the thighs individually pulled up and spread out in front of the body causing it to resemble the letter "M." Sometimes simply called the *Ryo-ashi zuri* or the *Kaikyaku zuri*.

head support) and then all the loops are connected with several vertical strands to make the distinctive sheave pattern.

- *Tengu shibari* -The "demon" tie. So called because the bound subject's arm position resembles classic Japanese illustrations depicting the wings of mythological demons. **In** this shibari each wrist is bound to the respective upper arm and then each arm is pulled slightly back and bound to a, usually, decorative upper body harness (*Kata Karada*) creating the look of "demon wings."
- *Tomoe-tome* -The "comma" stop or twist, so called because the shape created resembles that of a comma. This very useful and attractive technique is employed by some *bakushi* to affect changes in the direction of a rope being used to create a shibari/kinbaku pattern without the use of knots, as in the days of Edo era *hojojutsu*.
- *Tsugi nawa* - Patched rope. The technique by which two lengths of *nawa* (rope) used for shibarilkinbaku are joined together to create one continuous double length cord. This is a useful technique when executing some of the more complicated shibarilkinbaku patterns and/or ties.
- *Tsuka maki* - The "sword hilt" wrap or finish. The tightly twisted wrap used to complete several classic shibari/kinbaku ties. It uses up the end of the rope (*nawajiri*) and imparts added strength to that section of the tie. This wrap is also sometimes called the "iron bar."

Tsukue shibari - Generalized term for any shibari where the subject is tied to the (usually) low table found in the traditional tatami suite; especially one that utilizes the table's legs as a binding point.

- *Tsuri* - Any rope suspension. The subject is bound and supported in mid-air from a secure suspension point. The second classic torture technique (*tsurizeme*) from Tokugawa Japan now evolved into a mainstay of shibari play and SM club performance. There are many different types of *tsuri* but all suspensions must be done with great care and skill. Sometimes abbreviated to *zuri* (see below).
- *Tsuri nawa* - The main rope (*nawa*) used to support a suspension (*tsuri*).
- *Ushirode-Kote zuri (tsuri) shibari* - Generalized/abbreviated term for suspending a subject with his/her hands and arms immobilized *and* lifted by the *Takate-Kote* or *Gate shibari*. This is one of the oldest suspension (*tsuri*) torture techniques from feudal Japan and mentioned in many histories.
- *Ushirode-Gassho shibari* - A tie usually referred to in English as the "reverse prayer tie" where the hands/arms are tied behind the back in a fixed position resembling that used during prayer. This tie is also only for the limber! There are Buddhist *and* Western variations. Note: this tie is sometimes called the *Haimen Gassho shibari* or, literally, "back-side prayer tie."

Ushirode Takate-Kote (or Gate) shibari - The basic box arm tie, the building block of most shibari/kinbaku ties. The arms are tied behind the back and parallel to the ground with the elbows bent at right angles and held in place by ropes that circle above and below the breasts. There are many variations of this tie from the simple to the complex.

Because this tie has been referred to in so many historical sources over the years, it is known by a variety of names and written using several romaji spellings. For instance, the name is usually simplified to *Takate-*

Kote or *Takate shibari* or, even more simply, to *Go-te*, *Gote* or *Kote shibari* and sometimes written as *Ushiro-takategote*.

The main reason for this variety is that, as with the *Kikkou shibari* (see above), there are two different schools of thought on this famous historical tie. One tradition is defined above but another insists that the term *Taka te kote* be used only for ties where the hands are crossed high (*taka*) up on the back; a difficult position for most rope submissives to achieve. For ties that utilize the basic box shape, but with the arms generally tied parallel to the ground, this second school of thought favors the term *Go-te*, *Gote* or *Kote shibari*.)

- *Ushirode Tasuki shibari* - An upper body tie or harness where the rope (*nawa*) binding the wrists/arms behind the back comes over each shoulder and crisscrosses *between* the breasts, as opposed to the usual *Ushirode Takate-Kote* shibari pattern (see above). This term is taken from the name of the cord used to tuck up the sleeves of a kimono and the binding pattern used to achieve this. This term is usually Simplified to *Tasuki shibari*.
- *Ushiro-takategote Isujyou-M-Ji Kaikyaku shibari* - A long name to describe the traditional Japanese "chair tie" where the subject is seated upon a chair (*isu*) with their hands/arms bound in an *Ushirode Takate-Kote* or *Gote* (see above) and their legs/feet are pulled up, spread and tied to the two arms (or sides) of the chair so that the subject, sitting upright, resembles the letter "M."
- *Utsubuse zuri (tsuri)* - Any face down suspension (*tsuri*) with the subject tied facing the ground.
- *Yoko zuri (tsuri)* - Any Sideways suspension (*tsuri*) with the subject tied parallel to the ground.
- *Yukata shibari* - Tying someone in any shibari style who is wearing the light, informal, summer kimono (*yukata*); a classic piece of wardrobe for traditional shibari/kinbaku art photography.
- *Zuri* - Alternate spelling/abbreviation for *tsuri* (suspension). This spelling is used when the term *tsuri* is preceded by another word indicating the type of suspension being done, i.e., *Gyaku-ebi zuri*.

