

Christian Russo

HOJŌ JUTSU

THE WARRIOR'S ART
OF THE ROPE

Yoshin Ryu

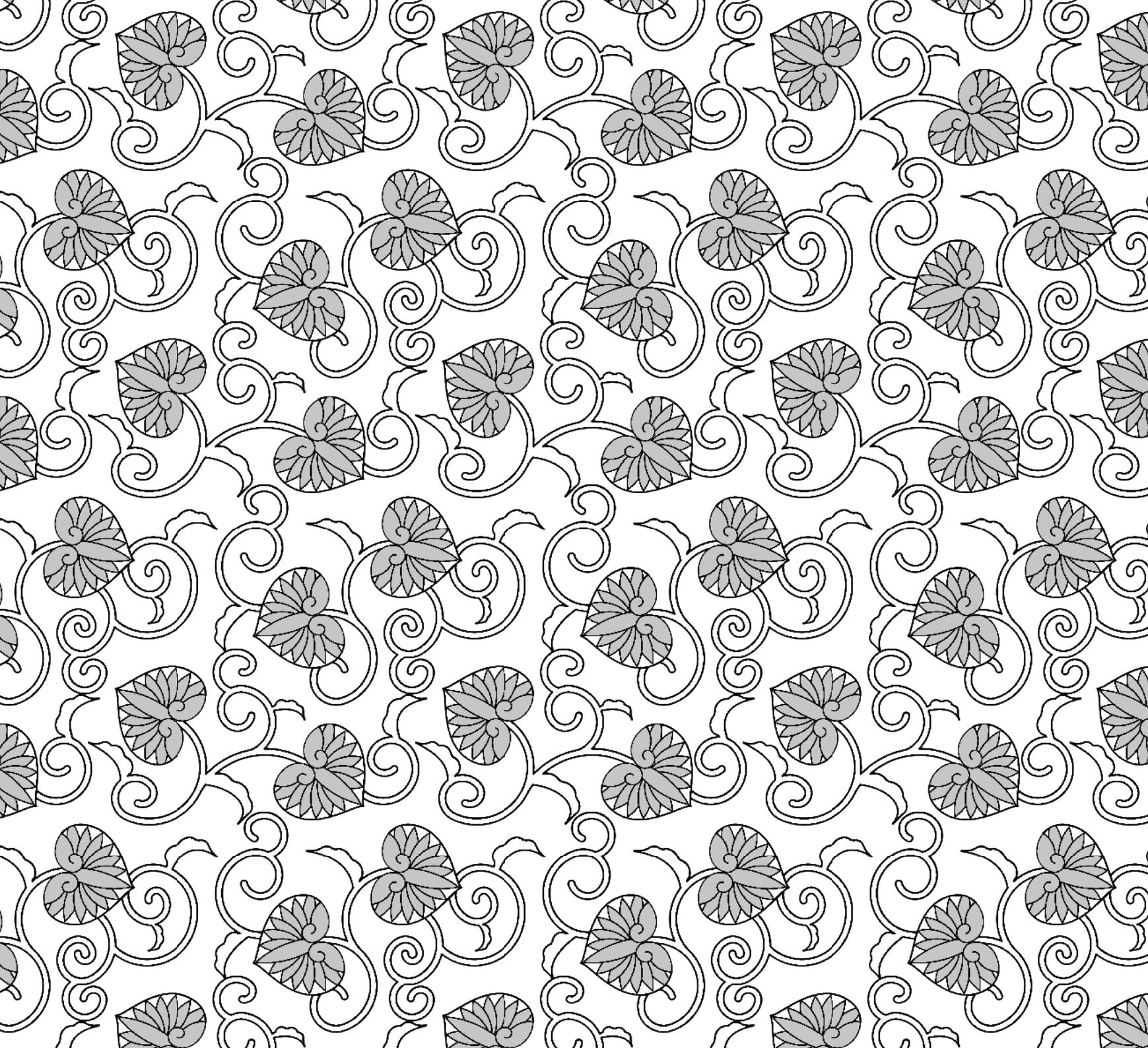
Editions

Little known in the West, *Hojōjutsu*, the Japanese discipline that teaches to capture and immobilize the prisoners by means of a rope, was of Chinese origin and developed by the armed forces during the period of the "Warring States" - Sengoku Jidai (1492-1560). Later, during the long period of Tokugawa peace (1603-1868), it was widely adopted by the city police, and was then outdated then in the modern era. Soldiers, warriors and police officers developed hundreds of intricate tying techniques which referred to esoteric traditions with the intention of rendering these techniques undecipherable while respecting the cast of the arrested suspect according to the Confucian law.

Today *Hojōjutsu* remains the technical and cultural knowledge of very few Traditional schools intent on passing on this antique Art form.

Rich in illustrations and photographs, "*Hojōjutsu - the Warrior's Art of the Rope*" describes for the first time in the West, the history, philosophy, instruments and practice of the Art of the Rope. The text includes the translated reproduction of a genuine and very rare *densho*: a secret teaching manual of one of the most renowned Schools of *Hojōjutsu* created in 1797.







Hojōjutsu



捕縄術

Christian Russo

H O J Ō
J U T S U



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Yoshin Ryu

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Jūtaijutsu
Kai

Jūtaijutsu-Kai | www.jutaijutsukai.eu

Cover, "The capture of Saito Kuranosuke" by Tsukioka Yoshitoshi (1839 - 1892) from the series *Kaidai hyaku sensō* in 1868.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to dedicate this book to the people who made it possible: in times of individualism and loneliness, it is a great fortune and an honour to have been accompanied by the energy of so many for the completion of this project.

Dōmo Arigatō Gozaimashita.

First to the Master, without whom the fire would not have existed nor would have been kept alight; repayment for us all is an arduous task.

To Master Daniela, versatile, enthusiastic and curious, who encouraged me from the very first lines and whom I invite to grace us with the knowledge of at least one of the subjects of which she is an expert.

To the Black Belts and the students of the Yoshin Ryū School of Turin.

To my colleagues: forgive me the bruises...

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To my parents for helping dreams come true.

To Sofia, for the support, laughter and love.



WARNING



The subject of this book is a method of using rope in Japanese feudalism developed for military and police use. Although some techniques are shown for the immobilization of prisoners, this text is not a manual and is not intended to teach in detail the implementation of these techniques. Furthermore, the methods described here are not suitable, and would therefore seriously jeopardize the health of those who practice forms of bondage for erotic purposes as in *Kinbaku* (*Shibari*).

Hojōjutsu should be practised only under the supervision of an experienced teacher and with the necessary precautions to ensure the safety of participants as it involves a high probability of joint dislocation, compression of blood vessels, and of the respiratory and nervous system.

Furthermore, any action by which a free individual, whether consensual or not, is denied the possibility to react, move, escape, or breathe or through which pain of any kind is caused is the serious and deliberate responsibility of the executor.

We disclaim any responsibility for the use of concepts, which are described here for informative and cultural ends, in areas that may cause even temporary harm to people or animals.

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NOTES ABOUT JAPANESE LANGUAGE

Romaji (Roman Letters) is the standard way of transliterating Japanese into the Latin alphabet. The two most frequently used Romaji transliteration methods are the Hepburn method and the Nipponshiki, officially used in Japan.

The Hepburn method is used in the West. The consonants are pronounced in English and the vowels in Italian. This transliteration method has been used in this book.

Consonants Pronunciation

k - "k" as in "cat"

g - "g" as in "guard" (also when followed by "e" or "i")

s - "s" as in "soap"

z - is a sound between "z" of "zone" and "s" of "rose"

j - "j" as in "jam" (also when followed by "a", "o" or "u")

ts - "ts" as in "cats"

ch - "ch" as in "chair"

h - "h" is aspirated as in "hot"

f - "f" is slightly aspirated as in "if"

y - "y" as the semi-vowel in "yellow"

r - is a sound between "r" and "l"; in some cases (ex. The syllable "ri" at the beginning of a word), it is pronounced "l" as in "leg"

w - "u" di uovo

Vowels Pronunciation

The Italian pronunciation of vowels is used (definitely not the English pronunciation).

a - "a" as in "hat"

e - "e" as in "net"

i - "i" as in "see"

o - "o" as in "hot"

u - "oo" as in hoop

In the Hepburn method, the long vowels are marked with a macron. In the syllables "tsu" and "su" the vowel "u" is almost mute. Therefore, tsuki (moon) is pronounced "ts-ki" and imasu is pronounced "imas". Double vowels are considered never diphthongs or diagraphs. For example, the word kumiuta is divided into syllables "ku-mi-u-ta". The group consonant+y+vowels (myo, bya, kyu) is pronounced rapidly without separating te "y" from the following vowel.

SHAKKANHŌ (尺貫法)

Japanese traditional system of length

Unit	<i>kanji</i>	Fraz. di 1 <i>shaku</i>	Millimeters	Meters
Mō	毛・毫	1/10000	0,0303	$3,030 \times 10^{-5}$
Rin	厘	1/1000	0,303	$3,030 \times 10^{-4}$
Bu	分	1/100	3,03	$3,030 \times 10^{-3}$
Sun	寸	1/10	30,3	0,0303
Shaku	尺	1	303	0,303
Ken	間	6	1818	1,818
Hiro	尋	6	1818	1,818
Jō	丈	10	3030	3,03
Chō	町	360	$1,091 \times 10^5$	109,1
Ri	里	12,96	$3,927 \times 10^6$	3927

HISTORICAL PERIODS

Jōmon	10000 - IV/III sec. b.C.	Azuchi-Momoyama	1568-1598
Yayoi	IV/III sec. b.C. - III/IV sec. A.D.	Edo	1603-1867
Kofun	III/IV sec. A.D. - 552		
Asuka	552-646	Meiji	1868-1912
Hakuhō	646-710	Taishō	1912-1926
Nara	710-784	Shōwa	1926-1989
Heian	794-1185	Heisei	1989-...
Kamakura	1185-1333		
Restaurazione Kemmu	1333-1336		
Nanbokuchō	1336-1392		
Muromachi	1392-1573		



FOREWORD

The Art of the capture rope, in Japanese *Hojōjutsu*, has ancient origins.

In Japan it is said to date back to the 13th century. This discipline is practised by the highest level Black Belts at the Yōshin Ryū School of Martial Arts, which I founded in Turin in 1978. Since then, the Yōshin Ryū teaches *Bujutsu* (the art of fighting), in particular *Jūjutsu* (the art of flexibility) and *Jūtaijutsu* (energy body art) and various other Arts of the Japanese culture: calligraphy, the tea ceremony, flower arranging, mask making and many others which are strictly related to *Bujutsu*, though they may seem distant for us from the West. In many years of study, research and practise, it has become clear how all these arts are intertwined; like the spirit with which students approach each other is similar, like the inner discipline, gestures, rituals of teachers and students are permeated by the same symbols and values of the culture in which they originated.

If, when we practise a Japanese art we could forget our Western pragmatic egocentrism and allow ourselves to slip into a collective spirituality, symbolic and naturalistic, we would reach the true essence of the art which we are practising.

Hojōjutsu is an art practised by Japanese warriors and as such it is strictly connected to the martial arts.

In practising a martial art a mental and physical involvement is definitely activated, both individual and collective; you cannot practice alone, *Uke* and *Tori* change roles; who binds and who is bound.

It is certain that a large group will stimulate knowledge through Art to a greater extent than if it were practised by a single pair.

To tie a person and abandon them for a specified time, or to lead them tied as you wish exerts a demonstration of power which triggers emotions probably never experienced before.

motions that remain and which, after the necessary time for elaboration, become a source of thoughtful exchange between participants, before falling into oblivion, sometimes an alibi of one's psychic survival.

To follow this course one should be accompanied by an expert. The word *Sensei* in every Japanese art means "born before"; a non-biological birth, but the practice of an Art.

The Yōshin Ryū, as in the most ancient traditions, is a school of human research.

Using different instruments, pupils confront themselves and others different from themselves and the environment. The aim of this experimental and experiential research is to improve oneself, not dividing black from white, as there are varying degrees of both in all of us.

All research, every attempt to change one's own limits, every improvement obviously has a toll; each person has to constantly choose whether and how to practise; this is one of the reasons for our limited territorial expansion at a national level, but it is essential for the

School and the continuity of Research.

The manual construction of tools or weapons of medieval Japan, using techniques which are as near as possible to those used in the past, is another interesting form of research.

The rope has been used by man for civilian purposes, as an aid for the most diverse needs of the community, and also for military use but, in Japan the warriors and tying masters have transformed it into a fine art, sophisticated and absolutely unique.

I thank the author of this book, a Yōshin Ryū senior black belt, for attempting to render this complex art easier to understand for many though not for all.

I have tried to explain to readers why you can practice the Art of *Hojōjutsu* for purposes of research and growth.

It is probably true that to look into the abyss one may lose oneself but I believe that not to do so one risks falling into it without true awareness.

Cesare Turtoro

Sōke Sensei and founder of the Yōshin Ryū School

捕 繩 術

HOJŌ
JUTSU



INTRODUCTION

The encounter with an art as antique and obscure as *Hojōjutsu*, the Japanese discipline which teaches how to immobilize and escort prisoners using intricately tied ropes, especially with an expert Master, is a decidedly rare event in the West.

I have practised the Japanese martial art of *Jūtaijutsu* since I was a boy at the *Yōshin Ryū* School in Turin, Italy and this encounter took place unexpectedly on the *tatami*¹.

¹ *Tatami* - the rice straw mattress which covers the floor of Japanese traditional homes and *Dōjō*, the sacred places where martial arts are practised.