

# Shibari as a form of Initiation

## Introduction

I am exploring the use of rope art called Shibari (縛り) as a form of Initiation.

Shibari is a practice of tying someone or something. It originates from the Japanese martial art called [Hojōjutsu](#) (捕縄術). Around the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Shibari started to become an art focusing on elements that are erotic and aesthetic. In the present day, people do it for many reasons: to create something beautiful, to meditate or contemplate, to connect to other people, for sadistic/masochistic reasons and more. On a [community](#) level there is a significant overlap between Shibari and BDSM practitioners. Those familiar with the latter will find a familiar terminology in this document. Shibari is generally considered to be a [kink](#).



As a rigger (kinbakushi, 緊縛師, who d in order to create a decent tie, the rigger requires to know the steps well, otherwise s/he might need to fully untie and start again. When practicing with a partner, the rigger also has to take care of safety, use the right pressure not to cause nerve damage or other injuries. There is a limit in time, especially when it comes to ties with less comfortable positions. The creation needs to look organized, aesthetic. Finally, untying needs to be done carefully, as blood flow might become altered by the rope's pressure and a sudden release can create unwanted effects. Nevertheless, it is not just the rigger who has to be careful – the rope bottom (the submitting person being tied) needs to follow some rules as well and signal if s/he feels something is wrong. This is not a full list of “what to be careful about”, but a presentation of Shibari's complexity. The tying process requires mental focus, body awareness and working with one's soul so it ends up being a beautiful art.

The rigger, the dominant person in the practice goes through similar experiences as Black Magicians do during Greater Black Magic rituals: creating a Space by Will and controlling Changes there. The rope bottom, the submissive's state is more similar to Greater White Magic rituals where one feels more of a dissolution. These two different states are explained in the “Domspace” and “Subspace” parts.



# Shibari terminology

**Rigger**, kinbakushi (in short “bakushi) also “rope top” or “dominant”: the person tying someone else(s) or an object, s/he owns and dominates the created Space.

**Rope bottom** or “sub” / “submissive”: the one being tied, controlled and submitting to the dominance of the rigger. This role does not mandatorily mean the submissive gives in effortlessly, sometimes they require to be degraded. I am using “sub” to refer to this role from on, because it fits better into the picture of this document.

**Switch**: those who like to “switch” between the roles of Dominant and submissive.

**Floor work**: doing Shibari on the floor, without suspensions.

**Suspension**: a more advanced version of tying where the rope sub is suspended and hangs in the air. There can be also a partial suspension when the ropes are used to hang only parts of the body.

**Soft limits**: Limits of a practitioner that s/he is ok with. Needs to be communicated clearly, before Shibari practice.

**Hard limits**: Limits of a practitioner that s/he dislikes and not ok with. Needs to be communicated clearly, before Shibari practice.

**Safewords**: the sub uses these words to communicate limits. Most people use colors like “red” meaning “Too much!”, yellow meaning “I am at the limit!” and “Green” meaning “You can be more intense.”.

**Euphoria**: An excited state of joy, a good feeling, a state of intense happiness.

**Aftercare**: After an intensive Shibari practice, the sub nearly always requires mental and physical aftercare.

**Shibari timeline**: Consensus from the participants → Creation of the Shibari Space → Engaging in Shibari practice (invoking Domspace and subspace) → Aftercare

# Creating Shibari Space

Ropes are with us since the beginning of human history. We often use it in daily life, to stabilize objects, create decorations or for religious reasons (eg. prayer ropes). Hereby, when working with them, they can be utilized as strong symbols.

My way to utilize Shibari, is to Create a connection between me and partner(s) or something subjective (eg. creating a beautiful tie on a guitar representing art). By doing that I explore Life itself and my own Self. The rope is a tool that is used to create boundaries – just as Life requires limits to be created in order to function.



As Shibari requires knowing personal boundaries well, getting to actual practice should already be done through Initiatory steps. First of all, One needs to reflect on Shibari itself if it is really something s/he wants to get engaged in physically or just prefers to watch and learn about it. Most people find it interesting because of the overeroticized media contents at present days and some books, movies, but only a few get to the point where actual practice happens. There is a warning here: I don't recommend jumping into getting any serious tying or BDSM-like activities without being prepared for them – it might create more damage than bring good. This kind of reflection is missed too often and I emphasize to first get familiar with the basics, read about the art itself and watch live performances or videos. If you decide that this is something for you, you might want to look for a reputable rigger, teacher or try some very simple self-ties. When someone is ready s/he needs to be able to discuss the soft and hard limits.

Saying that we have arrived to another point where we can find Initiatory value: learning to reflect on values and becoming familiar with One's own boundaries, limits.

The Magical Change starts when you first perceive a rope and feel, think about it differently. Creativity begins there. This is just a glimpse of moment, but an important one as it has the potential to start a process of growth of a new activity that deeply integrates into an Initiate's Life. The more time you spend learning Shibari, the more intense experiences you will become able to Create.

As a Black Magician rope top, I capture moments where the aforementioned Spaces extend into further action: practice, photo shootings and therapy. For some, I am the first person to tie them and as time passes I see their kinky development. These are experiences I can beneficially reflect on and also a reason why Shibari needs to be done responsibly.

Seeing their happiness, smiles of joy and euphoric states (even if there is pain alongside it) means to me that my rigger efforts truly worth it: I am passing on patterns so the participants become more aware of their Selves, their boundaries, . I find it the best kind of feedback for a Black Magician whose Will is to create meaningful Magical Spaces.

The preparations are very similar to Greater Black Magic. The place needs to be ready to make the participants be able to get into the right mood. There is no strict rule there, but being organized is important, especially when it comes to the ropes (eg. store them with quick releases) and safety. If

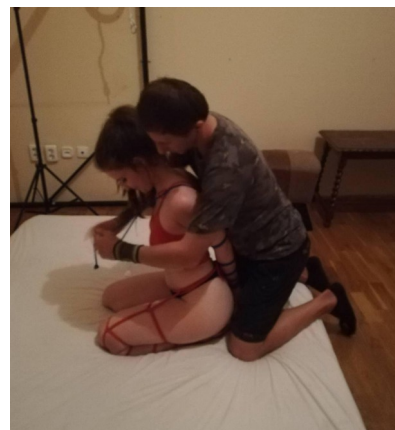
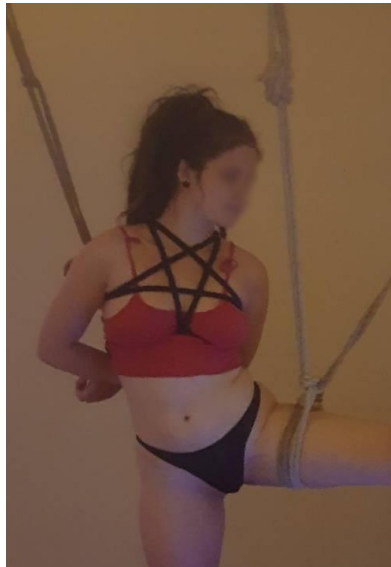
*A Work from VBF Cycle V.*

there are sounds from the street, music can be used. You can also do it in the nature at carefully chosen location where nobody disturbs. Organize the place your liking - in a way that it reflects what you want to Create, Manifest.

You know you have Created a successful Space if time flies and you just realize that hours have passed without losing focus. Timewise, count on 2 or more likely 3 hours for each Shibari session.

During Shibari practice or therapy it is preferred to speak less or not at all if not needed and focus more on the process, to truly experience what is happening. This is a non-verbal communication of a Self who is dominating the Space and of another submissive Self who immediately reflects back on the creation.

There are great extractable values from Shibari Workings: the the possibilities of reaching deeply contemplative states, having releases from past traumas, learning to become more responsible and building trust.





# Shibari rules

## *Shibari Rules*

### General rules

*A decent respect and trust is required between the rigger/rope top and the rope bottom. Safety is the responsibility of both. Limits are discussed before practice and must be respected on both sides.*

*The rope top keeps observing the the bottom's physical and mental state.*

*Bottoms express their state by saying colors:*

*'Green': go on.*

*'Yellow': this is good, but I am at my limit.*

*'Red': that is too much.*

*Saying "Full stop" will stop the whole process.*

*Turn off everything unneeded and contemplate into Shibari.*

### Photoshootings

*Keep the general rules. Be patient and focus on being creative too. Help expressing what you'd like to see on the photos.*

### Practice

*Keep the general rules.*

*Keep focusing on the process and contemplate Shibari. We only talk about topics that are related, but it helps if you share your ideas and feelings. The goal here are mutual development and enjoying time.*

### Erotic Shibari és Therapy

*Keep the general rules.*

*The rope bottom is not allowed to speak without permission, except the use of colors. Keep focusing on the process and your feelings.*

*Before the beginning, wait silently at the specified location and the rope top will instruct you when it is time.*

*Both parties respect the discussed limits.*

*Aftercare is part of the process.*

## Extracting values from Domspace

Domspace is defined as a state where the Dominant feels and expresses dominance over the place of practice. If you have been to any Workings lead by me, you have seen some expressions of that.

The goal here is to lead and Create boundaries, making sure the rules are kept. In case of Shibari, this is mostly expressed by the ties. Of course, there are many other ways to dominate a submissive, but this is out of the scope of this document.

Whatever the dominant does is truly his/her responsibility and if something goes wrong during the practice, it will be rightfully blamed on him/her. This a value I have mentioned before: learning to take responsibility and be responsible of actions. This is also one of the most important quality a Black Magician have to possess.

Dominants are nearly always sadists too. Note that, in fact, there are many sadistic and masochistic patterns around us (eg. in military, people in the gym, yoga classes, teachers pushing students overlimits and so on). Why this is important is that human nature somehow requires to be trained and taught. We are forcing a lot on ourselves, sometimes it even gets to a point where we even torture ourselves - for instance with a job we don't like or by thinking about gloomy or negatively nostalgic images. Working with dominance can illuminate One about these patterns and which of them are self-destructive and which of them are Creating something Great.

Personally, I enjoy triggering the destruction of unhealthy ego patterns. Most often I need to reiterate or initiate the reiteration of a past trauma, so the submissive can feel it again - but this time s/he can also overcome it in a controlled environment. This is what many yogis and spiritual teachers do as well, though they are not considered sadists even if they are.

## Extracting values from subspace

As a dominant, I am not fully aware of submissives' experiences, but can rely on their feedback and my self-tie experiences.

It is often said that the goal of a submissive is to reach an euphoric state. Some people refer to subspace as a "*flying*" or "*floating*" state.

For those who cannot meditate alone or are afraid of their thoughts, Shibari can provide a safe place of release. This therapeutic use requires the dominant to have experience in handling strong emotions and provide high quality aftercare. My number one rule here is: "*You are allowed to feel anything.*". What comes is a non-verbal dialogue and a mental release.

Isn't it interesting? With Shibari it is possible to create boundaries while getting released from traumatic past experiences.

Personally, when I create a self-suspension for myself and do contemplate (or meditate) this is a similar experience as doing it without ropes. The difference and what I like is the feeling of "flying in air". This is a joyful state and for some rope bottoms, this is a trigger for euphoric states.

# Conclusion

As presented, the complex and beautiful art of Shibari allows the participants to express and explore themselves deeply. It possesses many of the qualities Initiation requires, so I conclude it can be a Great Initiatory tool for those who resonate with its unique World.

I more or less felt that conclusion already when I first started to do research on Shibari. Now in VBF Cycle 5, as I was Working on putting this document together, made additional research, contemplated and reiterated my experiences: I feel more confident about my decision of starting to Work with it as it supports me on the path of Initiation.

That is something that Works for me – it is up to you to decide if this is your Magical tool of choice or “kink”.

## Table of Contents

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Introduction.....                    | 1 |
| Shibari terminology.....             | 2 |
| Creating Shibari Space.....          | 3 |
| Shibari rules.....                   | 5 |
| Extracting values from Domspace..... | 6 |
| Extracting values from subspace..... | 6 |
| Conclusion.....                      | 7 |