



JAPAN INFORMATION  
AND CULTURE CENTER  
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## SHIBORI

Shibori (絞り染め), or Japanese tie-dye, is a technique for dyeing that dates back as far as the 8th century. What gives shibori its unique style though are the variety of ways the cloth is manipulated, folded, stitched, or bound before dyeing in order to create distinctive geometric and floral textures.

Shibori was originally developed by the poorer classes as a way to repair and renew old clothes. Fabrics like cotton and linen were not easily accessible, so clothes were often made from hemp. When the fabric got old and faded, the best way to renew it was shibori — patching the old fabric and renewing it using dark fabric dyes like indigo. Under the Tokugawa shogunate, shibori began to emerge as its own unique art form, practiced across all social classes. As shibori grew in popularity, more and more techniques emerged to satisfy the demand for new patterns.

There are currently six main techniques for shibori. Kanoko shibori involves binding certain sections of the cloth to achieve the desired pattern. Typically bound with thread, the location and tightness of the binding dictates the pattern that emerges. Miura shibori is a loosely looped binding, using a needle and thread, and bound using only tension. This creates intricate water-like patterns. Kumo shibori involves very fine pleating of the fabric before binding and dyeing, creating a spider-like design. Ori-nui involves a running stitches to pull cloth tightly together to achieve very fine patterns. The arashi technique requires the cloth be wrapped tightly and diagonally around a pole, bound with thread, and then scrunched up to create a diagonal pattern reminiscent of heavy rain storms. Finally, itajime is a shaped-resist technique involving folding and clamping of the fabric with wood (or now Plexiglas) to prevent dye seeping through. DIY tutorials on all of these techniques can be found online so you can give it a try yourself!