

Textiles: Tsujigahana, Shibori, and Yuzen

At the age of 20, Itchiku Kubota encountered an example of *Tsujigahana*. This encounter – and the desire to recreate this mysterious technique -- led to an artistic quest that lasted Kubota's lifetime.

While the original definition of *tsujigahana* has been lost to time, today it is used to refer to a textile technique involving stitch-resist dyeing and ink painting and a type of textile created with this technique. These textiles are from the 15th and 16th centuries.

Tsujigahana (pronounced tsu'-jee-ga-ha-na) translated literally means “flowers at the crossroads.” Many examples of *tsujigahana* feature floral and geometric patterns, bringing this translation to mind.

It is believed that *tsujigahana* was an outgrowth of another Japanese dyeing technique, called *shibori*. Today, most people think of *shibori* as being similar to “tie-dye,” but it can include all “shaped-resist” dyeing techniques.

Though no one is certain why the *tsujigahana* technique fell out of use after the 16th century, some people believe it was gradually replaced by the *yuzen* technique. Like *shibori*, *yuzen* is a term that encompasses a variety of techniques. Generally it refers to a method of dyeing that involves applying paste resist and dye directly to fabric by hand-painting. *Yuzen* can be combined with many other textile techniques.

Itchiku Kubota was trained in both *shibori* and *yuzen* techniques and knowledge of these methods helped him on his journey to recreate *tsujigahana*. In 1977, after experimenting and developing his unique labor-intensive dyeing practices, Kubota felt he had captured the essence of the lost technique. Using modern materials and dyes, Kubota named his technique *Itchiku Tsujigahana*.

You can read more about *tsujigahana* and view fragments of the textiles at http://www.metmuseum.org/special/Oribe/turning_feature.htm (scroll down and click links mentioning *tsujigahana*).

Explore the *Shibori World Network* (<http://www.shibori.org/>) to learn about several variations on *shibori* techniques.

Read about *shibori* and *yuzen* techniques at <http://www.kougei.or.jp/english/dyeing.html>.

Learn about *Itchiku Tsujigahana* on <http://www.kimonoexhibit.com> by watching the video or clicking “The Search of Tsujigahana” and “Creating The Kimono.”