

Whips, chains and scarves, your flexible friends by Phil West

This article began life when a friend of mine mentioned that Comtech were soon to release a video on Bandanna fighting. Given that America uses a different TV system to much of the rest of the world, I'm not likely to ever see this video, but it did inspire me to jot down any ideas that I could think off. The letter turned into a discussion of flexible weapons in general and Alex from the weapons list saw a copy and asked if he could place it on the website, so here it is.

The techniques here should work with scarves, bandannas, belts, ties, chains, ropes, shoe laces, garrottes, whips, towels, electrical flex, gun slings and lanyards, jumper cables, straps, phone cord, twisted bedsheets etc. This is by no means a complete list -the reader is advised to spend a day thinking how many items he encounters or has that could be used as a flexible weapon.

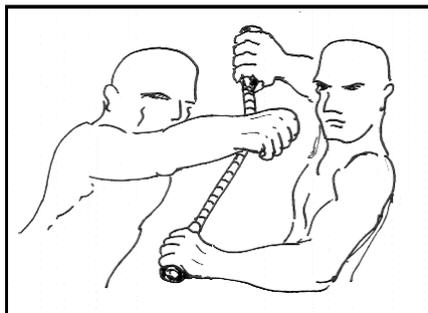
It's often said that anything can be used as a weapon -what many people do not consider is that some weapons are more effective than others. Hitting someone with a handbag will usually do much less damage than if the wielder used their fist or feet. (And it may already have occurred to you that the strap of the bag is a potential weapon). Why do I mention this? Because some flexible weapons can be difficult to use, and if your life is in danger you may be better off using unarmed techniques -find out what suits you. I've not included in this article joined weapons such as the numchuka or three section staff. Many of the techniques described can be applied to similar weapons such as the medieval ball and chain, the kusarigama and the ninja quarterstaves with sections of chain concealed in them. In the past chains have often been added to other weapons to extend their reach or entangle the foe. One variant of kusarigama is comprised of two kama joined by a short length of chain. This was used to parry and bind in exactly the manner that will be described later. For convenience I'll talk about scarves for most of this article.

1) The Unweighted Scarf:

These techniques can be used with weapons that are not heavier towards one or both ends and also with those that are.

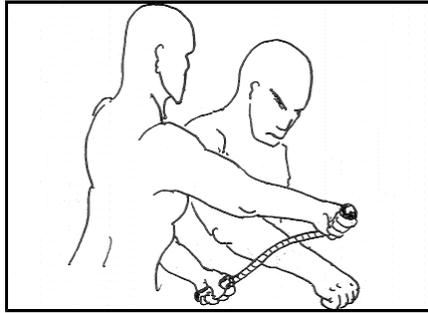
The "Down and Out" Block

This can be an outward or an inward block -or even an upward or downward block. "Down and Out" is my aid memoir for which hand to wrap with. The scarf is held between the two hands and used to block or parry like one would use Little John's quarterstaff -being pulled taut just before or on contact.



Now, you use the outer hand to wrap the scarf over the top of the arm because you want to pull the arm

downward (hence Down and Out).



The scarf can therefore be used to pull the arm downwards either into a throw or a lock. A good tactic is to use this to apply a half nelson which will also position you for a knee strike to the foe's coccyx.

The Up and In block

Not so useful in my opinion but still a valid technique. The block or parry is made in the same way but this time the inner hand performs the wrap. The arm is then forced upwards, usually with the elbow bent, sometimes with the outer hand pushing on the foe's upper arm or elbow, ideally on a nerve point. This is best performed stepping to the foe's outside line, to reduce the opportunity for strikes from the other hand.

The bent arm can be forced back behind the foe's head to force him downward, maybe with the assistance of a reaping Judo style leg action. An opportunity for a hammer fist strike to the face with the inner hand may also offer itself.

When using flexible weapons- or any weapon for that matter , you should be aware that it's not just the weapon you have available to fight with. For example, if you have a knife, you don't just have the edge and point to use, you also have the back edge to club with, the pommel to strike with and the hand holding the knife to punch with, not to forget the other hand, the feet, knees, elbows, shoulders, head, buttocks, hips and teeth.

The even simpler option

Block with the scarf stretched between both hands as previously. Once the force of the blow is redirected, step in and still holding the scarf punch or hammer strike with one or both fists. This is a better option when there is more than one attacker. The strike can be followed or replaced by wrapping the neck or head -more on this later.

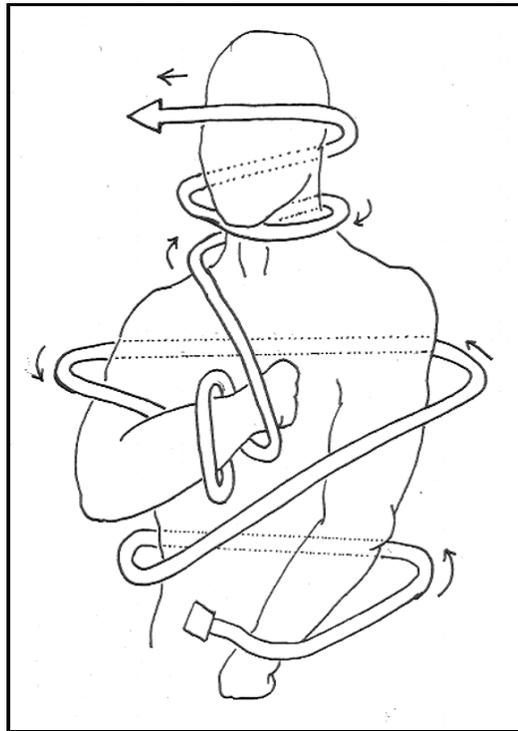
The Hand Bind

A variation of the above wraps, applied to the hand or wrist area, either as a follow up to a block or offensively. This is also the defence to someone grabbing the scarf -with either one or both hands. Once the scarf contacts the foe either the inner or outer hand is moved in a circle, wrapping the foe's hand one or more times. This secure grip can now be used to apply various locks, pulls or throws. With a very long weapon such as a sarong or bullwhip the same techniques can be used to bind the arms to the torso. Basically one or both arms are pinned to the body and the other end of the scarf swung in an orbit around the foe. One coil should be applied to the neck to assist in pulling the foe from his feet. The

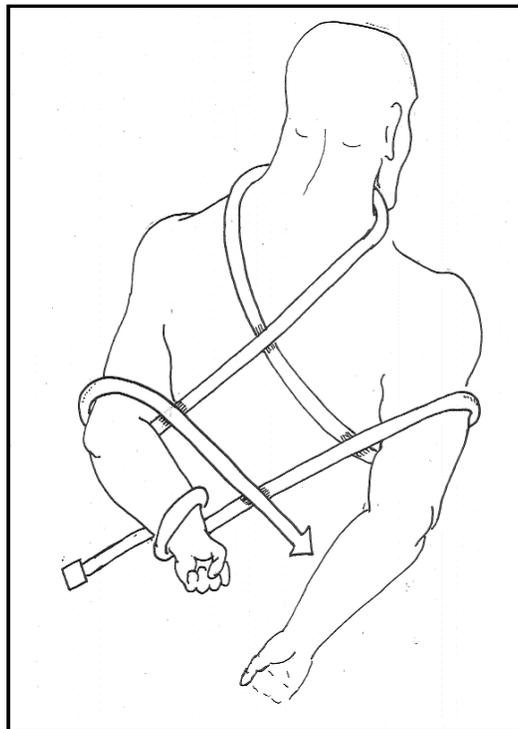
weapon can also be held in both hands and one end moved in a spiral like a gymnast's ribbon. Smaller spirals are made against the limbs to aid control.



Once a foe is grounded, the weapon maybe used to bind him.



Rear view- the cord is knotted or looped around the left wrist, then wrapped over then under the right biceps, then around the throat, then under then over the left upper arm then down and around the right forearm. Another quick tie is to wrap the wrists several times then tie an overhand, give a quick half twist then tie another overhand.



The Handcuff knot -actually a modification of the slip knot. Once the two loops are pulled closed the free ends are tied together. This knot can be quite effective even with just fishing line if applied to the

thumbs. The art of tying people up who don't want to be is Hojo-no Jitsu and a video on the subject may be found at the [BUGEI TRADING COMPANY](#).

As well as wraps against the arms and body, you can also attack the head and neck. I've already covered this partially -the weapon can be pulled while a fist, elbow or shoulder can be used as a fulcrum for a throw. The wrap need not be applied to the neck -across the eyes or under the nose will also be effective. Garrotting techniques are an obvious neck attack but are usually only effective if applied from the rear or side of the foe. For this reason they need good footwork and are preceded by parries, strikes and binds.

Some forms of Garrotte attack

The loop attack involves just a loop of cord in a "U" thrown over the foe's head. A sort length is usually used, the fists being pushed into the side of the neck- sometimes the slack can be taken up by wrapping the cord around the hands -such a technique won't work with wire, of course. This attack can also be done with a sharp upward jerk of the hands, rather like a weight lifter's "snatch". This can damage the throat/larynx or possibly break the neck. Such an attack can be applied purely as a strike, with no attempt to strangle the foe -this may be done if there are multiple attackers.

The loop attack really only works from the rear, though a loop could be thrown over the head of a foe facing you and used to jerk him off balance. Such a jerking attack may allow the fighter to achieve a position for a strangle.

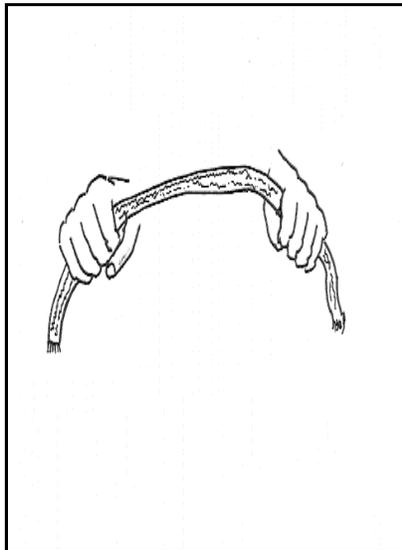
The second attack is made with the hands crossed or the loop in an "alpha" shape before being thrown over the head. The hands are then thrown apart to tighten the noose, often with the knee thrust between the shoulder blades.

The third attack is a combination of the two. The loop starts as a "U" but once thrown the fighter turns his back so the cord crosses and the foe is pulled up onto the fighter's back. I believe this is sometimes known as the "Tall man" method. Once on the back the foe can be thrown over the shoulder -a hold on the garrotte is maintained and a well timed tug will increase the damage to the neck.

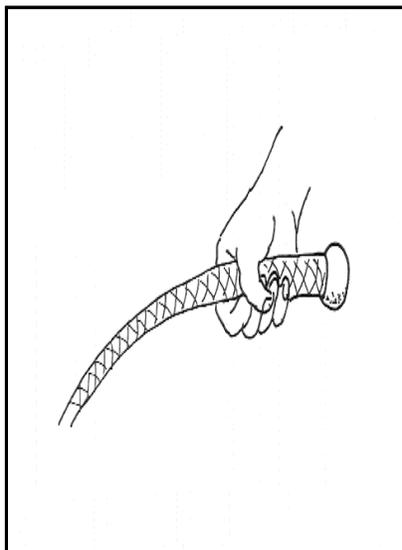
The fourth method can be applied from any side, though behind obviously offers the least vulnerability to counters. From behind the left hand is placed on the left shoulder to distract the foe. The right then wraps the cord around the neck. the left hand is pushed hard into the neck area and the right pulled sharply back- like drawing a bow. If executed from the front the left fist is thrust between the Adam's apple and the suprasternal notch. This left hand can be used as a fulcrum for throws as described earlier. Often throwing attacks will be quicker than conventional strangulation.

Ways of holding a scarf type weapon

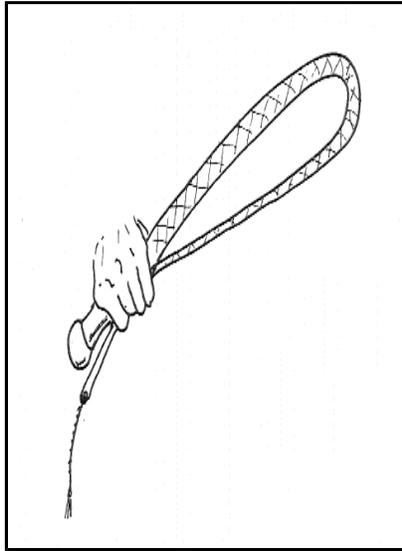
1. With a section between two hands. This has been covered in detail for binding, parrying and strangling.



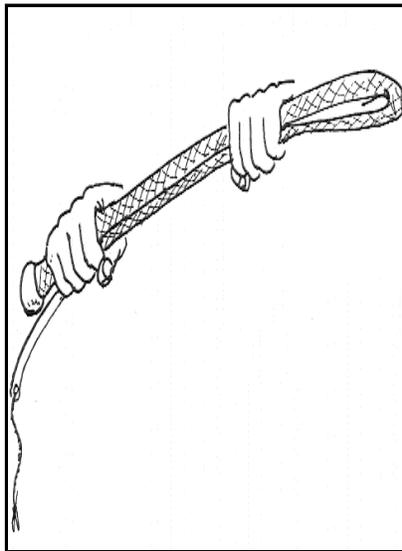
2. *With the Heaviest Part in the Hand.* This allows the weight to be used for butt strikes. This is the standard hold for a whip.



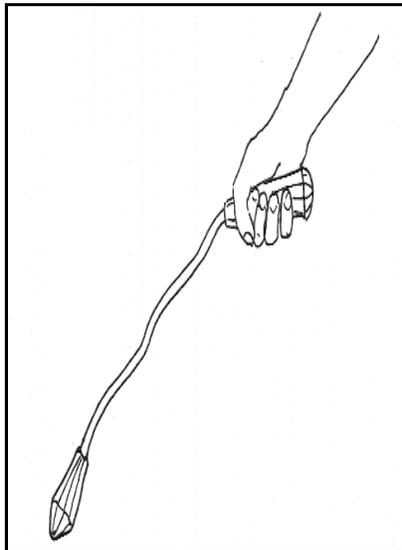
3. *With both ends in one hand.* The loop can be thrown over targets and if heavy enough can be used to strike. If one or both ends has a handle then butt strikes can be used.



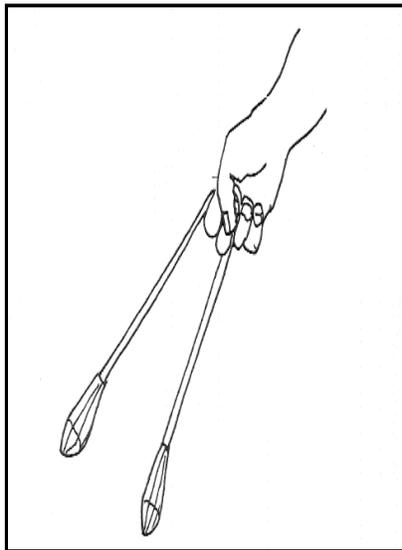
4. *With the weapon doubled and stretched between both hands.* This is a close range hold for a bull whip allowing parries, blocks, binds and butt strikes.



5. *Held in one hand with the weight (or one of them) at the free end.* The weight is available for striking or wrapping around targets.



6. *Grasped in the centre with both weights hanging free.* This is a close range version of 5.



2) The Weighted Scarve:

Weights can take many forms. Simply knotting a rope or chain at the end may increase the local mass sufficiently for the following techniques. A padlock on a bike chain will readily serve as a weight. Less obvious are the hand set of a phone, a plug on an electric flex, buckle of a belt and the mouse on a computer cable. The Thugee of India placed a coin or two in the ends of their strangling scarves (Rumals) so they could be swung more readily. Sewing magnets into a bandanna adds weight, holds it in place without tying and allows the weapon to be brought into action quickly. It also counters a foe grabbing the bandanna to use it to pull or strangle you. You can, of course, remove your belt if an attack is suspected. I've seen a youth in Israel using a belt to deter attackers. If the fit of your trousers is such that they are unlikely to stay up without the belt, you may need an alternate defensive strategy.

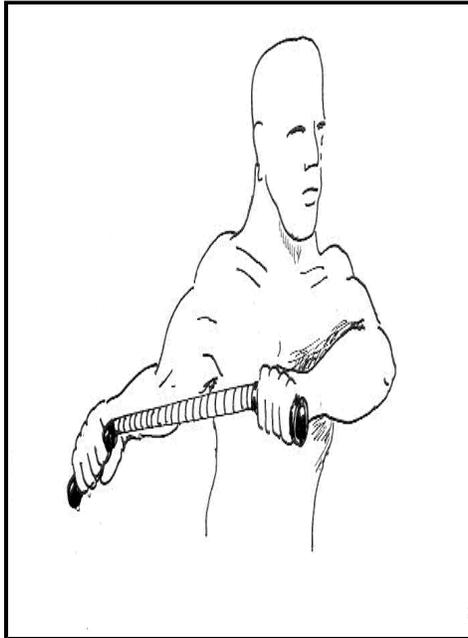
Many of the following techniques will be described as performed with the Masaki ryu version of the

manrikigusari. This has two feet of no.3 (US) size chain terminated in 3.5" handle weights. Personally I prefer a chain of 18", since this is the distance that I can comfortably hold my hands apart at shoulder width. Chain weapons can range from one to ten or more feet in length.

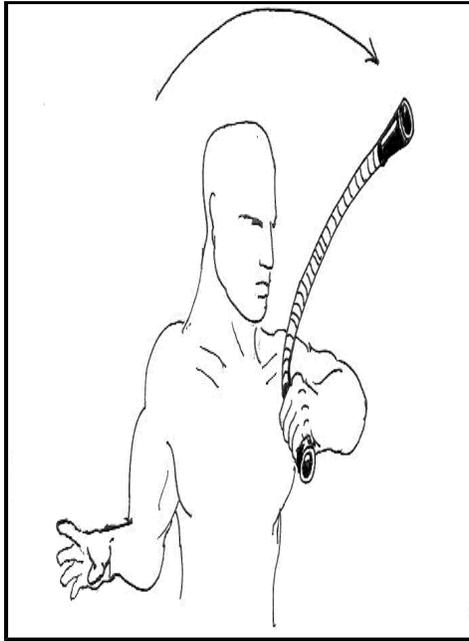
Weighted scarves can be used in the same manner as unweighted, but offer several additional options. Most notably, the end of the scarf has more momentum, allowing it to be used as a flail to strike with. The weight also allows the weapon to be swung single handed to execute wraps and binds. A classic example of this was the Thugee use of the Rumal- the end weighted with a coin was swung around the victim's neck and caught with the other hand. With a weapon such as the Marikigusari or bullwhip the weight may be a handle that provides a harder object to execute hammer strikes with.

Striking with a Weighted chain or cord

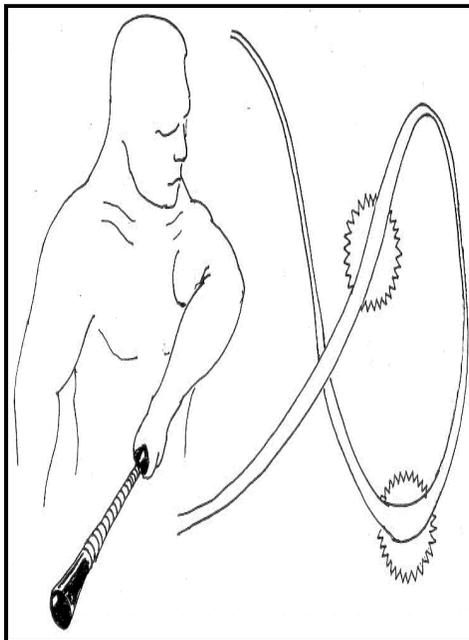
My personal experience is not to try and wield a chain like a Numchuka. If you keep it moving for any length of time you'll lose control and probably hit yourself - also a foe will gauge the length of your weapon and your timing and step in at the wrong moment. Better to make a couple of swings at the most, then regain control, ready to reach to your foe rather than your weapon.



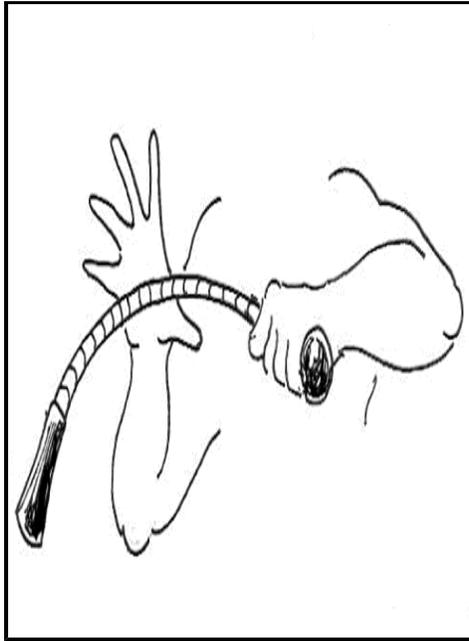
Ready, with the chain pulled taut. From this position one has the option of blocking, binding or butt striking, etc.



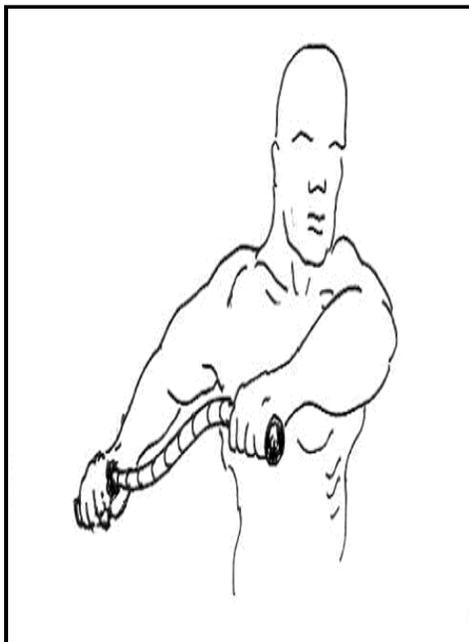
The weapon is swung, the movement coming from the wrist, rather like Chaplin twirling his cane.



There are several chances to strike as the weight swings. A figure 8 movement is shown, but circular paths are also used.



The chain is caught to resume control and the hand slid along towards the end. This catch can be turned into a sudden strike with the doubled chain.



The weapon is ready once again. From this position the user can suddenly thrust with the handle, swing the chain in a downward arc or suddenly swing the chain with the other hand. Using a longer rope or chain one can twirl part of it like a lasso, varying the length and reach. Some martial arts also make use of 5-6ft chains that are whirled about the centre like a propeller, the momentum keeping it rigid. There is a strike that can be made using a variation of the grip described as "3". The weapon is held in a circle with both ends in the palm. When the attack is made the weight (a belt buckle, for example), is released and swung upward to deliver an uppercut to , say, the chin.

So far we've only considered swinging attacks with the chain. It may surprise you to know that thrusts

can be made with a chain too.

The classic way of doing this is known as Kusumi (Hazing) by the Masaki ryu. The chain is scrunched up in the hand, one weight wrapped by the last two fingers and the other held between the first and second. The hand is punched straight at the foe, and the top weight released as the arm reaches extension. The weight flies in a straight line and hits the foe. This is often used as a surprise first attack, since the chain often can't be gathered into the hand during combat. A further advantage is that the technique is usually executed from a distance at which the opponent considers himself out of striking range. To help conceal the weapon the attack is usually made with the hand down by the side, or in front of the body with the other hand covering it. Charles Gruzanski maintains that this technique should be made as a straight punch (like a 0-zuki), and never with an underarm or overarm action like throwing a ball. A friend of mine has given me some interesting information on US agents being taught chain techniques and note that they were taught a Kusumi like technique that used an overarm action like throwing a baseball.

It's worth noting that after the weight has hit, a well timed pull on the chain will snap the weight back towards the user where it can be caught. Try catching the weight in the throwing hand with the palm upward and you may be ready to throw a second Kusumi strike. Try practising volleys of kusumi, moving around a target to work on your accuracy as well.

The second form of throw-strike is suited to longer weapons than the Masaki ryu manrikigusari. A length of chain is held in one hand and twirled around like a bolas, lasso or sling. At the correct moment the chain is released so that the weight flies at the target. The other end of the chain is retained in the other hand. Like the above technique, a timed pull on the chain will return the weight to the user. One should practice at getting the weight up to speed with as few rotations as possible. A practised slinger can often launch a stone with less than one rotation.

The third throw-strike is also for longer weapons and is even simpler. A weight is held in one hand and thrown at the target as one would throw a rock. As before, the weight can be returned to the hand with a timed snap of the wrist.

Another thrust type attack is the flick, made by pulling the weapon taut and flicking it just like one would a towel. A interesting variation of this is made with a handkerchief with a weight sewn into the end. The flick is made in the act of drawing the handkerchief from the pocket. Often the target won't expect the weight and won't make that much effort to avoid a wisp of cloth.

Using a whip in combat and weapon snatches

We'll consider long flexible whips such as bullwhips and stock whips. Shorter, more rigid whips such as crops will be covered later.

Whips are rather unusual since one uses the lighter end to hit the target. Because of the taper and flexibility of the whip, this end is travelling at great speed when it hits -supersonic in fact. This article will not try to teach you how to crack a whip -see the References for that information. Some comments on combat applications are in order though. Ideally you'll always hit your opponent at the moment the whip cracks, since this is when the whip has maximum energy to pass on. In practice this may not be possible and my feeling is that its better to hit before the crack, when the whip has a lot of velocity, than after, when it has discharged it's energy. This will still hurt -everyone who learns whip spends some of their early time hitting themselves on bad casts, so I speak from (painful) experience. To begin with, concentrate on accuracy rather than noise. A bullwhip will makes a lot of noise- which is intimidating, hurts a lot but delivers only superficial damage. It's main effect is pain, so it may not be effective on someone who has a high tolerance, such as an attacker on certain drugs. Many attackers will try to rush in to counter the advantage in reach you have. Use of the weapon pommel and of a length of whip between the two hands has already been covered. Many whips have a lower section rigid enough to be

used for single handed parries.

Like weighted weapons, the whip can be cast to wrap around the neck and limbs or weapons. Snatching a weapon out of an opponent's hands is feasible. Bear in mind, however, that you could end up with a length of sharpened steel flying right at you. Better to direct a snatched weapon towards the ground at one side. Comtech practices the snatching and catching of dummy weapons by the hilt. This seems to work, but I suggest using a wide variety of different types and weights.

The only other use of a bandanna as a weapon that I can think of is to knot the thing into a sling and throw rocks with it.

Miscellaneous ideas

When I saw Dan Inosanto teaching he threw a handkerchief with weights sew along the edge. This was intended as a distraction device.

The Masaki ryu teaches throwing of the Marikigusari. The weapon is gathered up in the hand and throw at the face at a range of less than twelve foot. This does of course disarm you and a lot of people will recite the dogma "You never throw your weapon away!". This is one of the many instances when you do throw your weapon away. Getting hit by or avoiding the manrikigusari brought the thrower enough time to draw his sword and strike. In a modern setting one can close to fighting range and get in some good strikes. As long as you can move you are never unarmed. You always have your hands, feet, knees, elbows, shoulders, head, buttocks, hips and teeth.

Likewise, should you be lucky enough to wrap both an opponent's legs together with a shorter variety of cord weapon, you'd probably have to drop the weapon to push home your advantage. If you had a long weapon you'd still have enough length to bind his upper regions with.

Incidentally, when throwing a weapon to wrap around a limb, neck or weapon, it helps if the weight passes over the standing part rather than under, so that it hangs down and binds up. Experiment with the angle of cast and impact to achieve this.

Comtech have suggested that in a fight you could break off a car aerial to hit a foe with and parry a blade. A friend of mine has pointed out that modern American car aerals have a wire running down their centre so you'd remain attached to the car. This may be different for CB antenna. In my home town aerals on parked cars are nearly always retracted so people don't break them off.

A more useful idea from Comtech is to add poppers to various items such as riding crops . These are mainly used for feinting and flicking in the opponent's face to distract them. I know of someone who has tried a popper attached to a telescopic pointer, of the type used in presentations. He'd mainly intended this pointer to be a parrying device, but the addition of the popper allows him to harass opponents, regaining the initiative. There's no reason why a popper can't be added to a more robust weapon, such as a truncheon. Poppers that are used in this way are improved if a yellow section is added - the brain tends to retain this colour so the popper is more distracting.

One weapon the popper is effective on is a Sjambok (I have the Cold Steel 44" plastic model) The Sjambok as it comes is a good parrying weapon and hits hard and fast. The taper and flexibility allow an added popper to travel quite fast- it won't crack but I've managed to cut spruce twigs with mine. The popper is mainly there for feinting but it's nice to know that if I miss with the sjambok tip the popper may still inflict some pain.

References:

This article was compiled from numerous sources, some of which are detailed below. This is not intended as a further reading list since hopefully all of your questions will have been answered on this page -if you feel I haven't been clear on something or have any other information to add, let me know.

Spike and Chain by Charles V. Gruzanski Charles Tuttle Co. Press 1968 ISBN 0804805407 Now published as "Ninja Spike and Chain" Contains most of the basic techniques for the 2 ft Manrikigusari as used by the Masaki ryu, and also a brief introduction to throwing Bo-shuriken.

"Tanikala" by Amante Mat. P. Marinas Sr. Published in World of Martial Arts magazine, Jan/Feb. 97. An account of the use of the chain in Filipino martial arts. Mentions ways of holding the chain not mentioned in Spike and Chain.

Forbidden fighting techniques of the Ninja by Ashida Kim. Citadel press 1984 ISBN 08065 0957 0. Covers a wide variety of topics, but was used for it's information on tying up a prisoner and the use of the koketsu shoge.

The Death Dealer's Manual by Bradley J. Steiner Paladin Press 1982 ISBN 0 87364 247 3. An account on the use of some of the weapons and methods that can be used by an assassin, including the garrotte.

The Whip page at the Thrower site. All the links on whips you could wish for -go to the Bullwhip FAQ to learn how to crack a whip.

Comtech Whip video. From Comtech- address on the Whip page. Possibly most interesting for its techniques for when the foe gets within cracking range.