

As World War II progressed, the practice of wearing the *senninbari* lost favor. There were a number of reasons for this. Numerous Japanese veterans have stated that the belts created a sanitation problem because the knots would eventually wear holes through to the outside material of the belt, allowing lice and other vermin to nest in between the layers of cloth. Others have voiced similar memories, and this fact seems fairly widespread. To solve this problem, some women began to make flat, un-interrupted stitches rather than raised, individual knots. Another difficulty was that the wartime economy suffered shortages of material. As those shortages grew worse, it was more important to use the available resources to keep the soldiers at the front clothed or for more necessary items.

Since the actual making of stitch articles for the protection of members of the Japanese armed forces was a cultural fad and seems to have dated from around the turn-of-the-twentieth century, the question arises as to whether Americans of Japanese ancestry who served in the United States armed forces might have had belts or stitch items made for them prior to being placed in harm's way.



A group of Japanese soldiers take a break following victory somewhere in China. The image is dated November 3, 1937. The man standing in the center wears a *senninbari* wrapped around his waist.

Postcards were given to the soldiers in comfort bags in order to get them to write home. Many carried caricature themed artwork on the fronts. This particular card shows a smiling Japanese soldier, *senninbari* wrapped around his waist, receiving first aid while a battle rages nearby. The caption says "It is a slight wound. I will return to the front as soon as it heals." The medic says "That's the spirit! It is minor, like a flea bite."



Japanese soldiers stationed across East Asia had to endure terribly cold winters. The *haramaki/senninbari* helped to keep the *ki* area of the body warm during those times.

