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## Foreword

### *Japanese Knack and the Cultural Background*

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Japan's forests cover approximately 70% of the Japanese landmass, an unusually high ratio among the developed nations. Perhaps because forests have been so much a part of the social and historical environment, animism is deeply rooted in the Japanese consciousness. We see this expressed in the traditional Japanese religion of Shintoism. According to Shinto beliefs, there are a myriad of "kami" (deities, spirits, and other supernatural creatures) that inhabit the world. Those kami are said to live within large trees, rocks, and mountains, so that nature itself becomes the focus of religious faith. Because Shinto is polytheistic, the arrival of Buddhism in the sixth century led to the syncretism of Buddhism and Shinto, with both belief structures coexisting, and over time the distinctions between the two gradually became more blurred.

Buddhism originated in India, and arrived in Japan via China and the Korean peninsula, but no differentiation was made in Japan among the deities from these different cultures. Today some people say that the Seven Gods of Fortune (often called the Seven Lucky Gods in English) are Japanese Kami. However, the only one that is truly Japanese is Ebisu, the god of fishers and merchants. Most Japanese do not know that the other six are actually Chinese deities. Perhaps this is yet another example of the Japanese knack for being influenced by other countries and converting the effects of that influence into something unique to Japan.

If we look at the development of Kampo and acupuncture therapy in Japan, we see the same knack at work. Both Kampo and acupuncture came to Japan from China by way of the Korean peninsula at about the same time as Buddhism. However, these therapeutic methodologies did not really begin to develop independently in Japan until the Edo period (from the 17th to the 19th centuries). After World War II, the General Headquarters (GHQ) of the occupying forces tried to prohibit acupuncture. Partly because the current of the times was pushing Japanese society toward westernization, traditional Japanese medicine met with some hard times at that point. However, the Japanese knack showed up again, advocating for harmony between modern Western medicine and traditional medical therapy.

It will still take quite some time before Kampo and acupuncture are thoroughly rooted in modern Japanese society. However, encouraged by the support of organizations like this journal and your readers, we will continue to move forward.

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