

Medical History in Japan

Todo Yoshimasu and His Medicine (1)

Hiomichi Yasui

Japan Institute of TCM Research

In KAIM Vol. 2 No. 2, we looked at the medicine of Dosan Manase (1507-1594), and I described some clinical cases. Dosan took the latest available medical technology from Ming China and arranged it in ways suited to Japanese life and society, in the process creating a structure that closely resembles modern-day Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). In the mid-18th century Todo Yoshimasu advocated a very different and unique medical system, and Dosan's system fell from favor. The differences between Japanese Kampo medicine and the traditional forms of medicine in China and Korea are primarily due to the changes that were implemented at that time by Todo Yoshimasu, who effectively constructed the basis for modern Kampo medicine in Japan. I would like to introduce his medical perspective in two parts.

1. Biography

Todo Yoshimasu was born the son of a physician in the city of Hiroshima, which in later years would become famous as Ground Zero for an atomic bomb at the end of World War II. He descended from a prestigious samurai family. However, in the 17th Century after a long and devastating civil war, the Japanese nation entered into the generally peaceful Tokugawa period. Since there was less demand for warriors at that point, his family followed the advice of the old Japanese proverb, "If you cannot be a good ruler, then be a good doctor." Todo himself began the study of medicine at the age of 19. The Yoshimasu family traditionally practiced surgery, but Todo Yoshimasu involved himself in the study of internal medicine.

He questioned the medical theories based on

yin-yang five phase metaphysics, and in his 30s he put together a unique system of medicine based on the *Shang Han Lun (On Cold Damage)* and the *Jin Gui Yao Lue (Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber)*. In 1738 at the relatively young age of 38, he expressed the aspiration of "curing the physicians of the world" (in other words, to bring his own system to other physicians so that they could cure their patients more effectively). To do this, he set off for Kyoto, which was then the cultural capital of Japan. At first, things did not go according to his expectations, and he was hard-pressed to survive. He made dolls, fired clay pots, and in general led a hand-to-mouth existence. Presently, however, he began to be recommended by the Emperor's head physician, Toyo Yamawaki, and the name of Todo Yoshimasu began to be widely known. His medical work flourished, and he attracted a large number of students.

In 1759, one of his students published a collection of Todo Yoshimasu's medical treatises under the title "Idan" (roughly translated as "medical diagnostics"), and this publication became quite influential. Todo also collected each of the formulations described in the chapters on the 220 formulations in the *Shang Han Lun* and *Jin Gui Yao Lue*, added his own opinions, and published the resulting manuscript under the title *Ruijuho* to present the standards for "Koho" or traditional methods of treating patients. In addition, he collected information on the indications for various herbal drug formulations and published a manuscript called *Yakucho*, in which he described analogous pharmacologic effects for the individual drug substances contained in those prescriptions.

At the end of his life, Todo was happily surrounded by his children and grandchildren. He died of a stroke on September 25, 1773, at 72 years of age. His medical writings, in addition to the three-volume set of *Ruijuho*, *Hokyoku*, and *Yakucho*,

also included titles such as *Hoki, Ijiwakumon* (medical questions and answers), *Kenjuoku*, and *Koshoigen* (a collection of medical expressions from the ancient texts).

2. Medical Views

Todo Yoshimasu's biography, his medical views, and the process by which he formulated those views have been widely discussed [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12]. We can see the main points of his medical theory in "Idan 医断", compiled by his disciple, Tsuruta and in his "Iji Wakumon 医事或問", written in question and answer style. Here I am going to summarize some important points, which can be found in these books.

(1) The theory that all diseases are caused by one poison, and Kampo sho relativity

Todo's medical theory was based on two points: "All disease comes from a single poison," and "Never speak of what you cannot see with your eyes." [13] Because he was unable to see with his own eyes what occurred within the body, he refused to say anything about that. Since he could not analyze the mechanisms of etiologic pathogenesis, he refused to accept the theories of traditional medicine.

He also held that disease was caused by toxins developing within the body, and that those toxins came from food, drink, and other external sources. He considered the important question to be not how the toxins were formed, but rather how to heal the person by removing the toxins from the body.

The location of the toxin is confirmed by "fukushin" (abdominal diagnosis), and the patient is treated with a prescription that accurately targets the patient's symptoms. This method is called "Kampo shou relativity."

(2) Criticism of yin-yang five phase metaphysics and "zofu riron" (literally "entrails theory")

Yoshimasu refused to include the traditionally accepted concept of original vital energy¹⁵⁾ into his concept of diseases. He believed that the original vital energy was given by the heaven, and although it waxed and waned according to time's flow, Qi¹⁶⁾ itself did not suffer disease.

Yoshimasu also criticized the theories of Yin and Yang and the five phases, the basic principles of the Manase School. His point was that, as Yin and Yang was the Qi of heaven and earth, it was wrong to apply the concept of yin and yang to a human body. As a clinical physician, he did not accept the theories of Zhu Danxi 朱丹溪, and Zhang Jing-yue 張景岳, And he ignored the theory of five phases, as well as the concept of the Rotating Qi. He also did not accept the concept of viscera and channels.

(3) Etiology and pathogenesis

As we have seen above, his medical principle was "relating symptoms to medication," based on a complete understanding of the indication of prescription. For that reason, he did not question the causes of diseases. The important thing for him was to know in which part of the body there was poison, and not to research the cause of disease. He thought that this type of research could not help in clinical treatment.

Todo Yoshimasu did not rule out the existence of pathogenic mechanisms, but instead held that theories about these mechanisms were only hypotheses, and that they were unnecessary for treatment. According to his position, the most central tenets of Chinese traditional medicine were actually unnecessary.

(4) Diagnostics

For Todo, the purpose of diagnosis was to determine the location where the poison was present, and the method upon which he placed his greatest emphasis for such diagnosis was fukushin.

He attached importance to the abdominal diagnosis, based on his idea that the “Abdomen is the origin of life and also of all diseases.”

Fukushin was not at all theoretical, but had a specific rationale for clinically based confident diagnosis. Looking through his numerous case reports, the reader realizes the extreme importance he attached to abdominal shou.

He did not think much of the pulse diagnosis. He thought that pulses differed from one person to another. If he could know the usual pulse condition of a patient, he could then know how it differed when a patient was ill. But it was very rare, 10-20% possibility in general, that certain qualities of the pulse, such as floating or deep³⁾, slow or rapid⁴⁾, slippery or uneven⁵⁾, could be diagnosed. Yoshimasu also thought little of Qi of the five parenchymatous viscera.

(5) Drugs (herbal medications)

As for medications, he had ideas far different from the contemporary theories. Concerning descriptions in “Shen-Nung Ben-Zao-Jing”¹⁹⁾ and chose ideas which agreed with the principle of Zhang Zhong-jing 張仲景²⁰⁾ With his concept of medicine as poison, and with his principle of treatment, in which poison could be eliminated only by poison, he did not accept the idea of moderating the efficacy of medicine.

He wrote the book, “Yakucho 藥徵” about the efficacy of medicines. A prototype of the book seemed to exist in 1740. In 1771 it was completed.

Throughout his writings, Todo criticized conventional pharmacology based on the *Shen Nong Ben Cao Jing*, a Chinese book on agriculture and medicinal plants, and insisted that the *Shang Han Lun (On Cold Damage)* should be used instead.

In the book, he said that ginseng cured stuffiness and rigidity of the epigastric region²²⁾, and did not replenish the original vital energy. For that purpose, ginseng produced in China was not effective, only the Japanese one should be used.

(6) Dosimetry

Todo made extensive use of formulations from the *Shang Han Lun (On Cold Damage)*. In the *Ruijuho*, he compiled lists of the individual prescriptions in the *Shang Han Lun* and the *Jin Gui Yao Lue (Synopsis of Prescriptions of the Golden Chamber)*, and he used those prescriptions in ways that were unrelated to their context within the *Shang Han Lun*.

Yoashimasu's frequent use of Zhang Zhong-jing 張仲景 prescriptions was based on his belief that they were used and effective in the old times. He used not only the prescriptions of Zhang Zhong-jing, but also other prescriptions, if they were effective.

His attitude toward “Shang Han Lun” was very different from others of the Koho School. Yoshimasu put his emphasis on grasping the indication of prescription, and tried to ignore the contexts which were related to “Shang Han Lun”. Concerning the theory of six pairs of channels²⁷⁾, he said he used it only as a way of classification, that the more important thing was Sho (a symptom-complex).

His attitudes were also expressed in his compilation, “Ruiju Ho 類聚方”. In the book, for each prescription he described extracts from the texts of “Shang Han Lun”, “Jin Gui Yao Lue”, and the indication of each prescription in a style that closely related symptoms to medications. Some phrases, put in square brackets, meant that he had not investigated them himself, and perhaps, he thought of those as being in the category of “should not”. For Yoshimasu, concepts such as Yin and Yang, Tai-Yang-Bing³⁰⁾, Yang-Ming-Bing were not necessary.

(7) Treatment

His treatments were made of various combinations of prescriptions from “Shang Han Lun”, and strong laxatives such as croton seed²³⁾, kansui root²⁴⁾, rhubarb²⁵⁾ etc pills which contained mercury, as well as. The basic idea behind his

treatment was the elimination of poison.

Yoshimasu had 4 therapeutic methods of treatment: diaphoresis, emesis, purgation and mediation¹⁾ which he used according to the region which was poisoned. And he thought that in the medical arts, only a method of attack existed, a method of replenishment did not exist. He emphasized that attacking poison meant everything. It was Ming-Xuan 瞑眩, a medical reaction which one felt when attacked by medicine.

Concerning the concept of deficiency and excess he also had a unique idea. Citing “the excess (symptom-complex) results when the invading pathogens is exuberant, exhaustion of vital essence brings on insufficiency (symptom-complex from “Huan-Di Nei-Jing” he said that what attacked excess was poisonous medicine, and what nourished deficiency were foods such as rice or meat. He maintained his theory that diseases were caused by poison, so treatment should be geared toward driving poison away from in the body by medicine which was itself poison.

(8) Views on life and death

Yoshimasu had a unique concept of life and death. He said that as a physician he always tried his best to cure diseases, but that had nothing to do with the patient's life and death. Only destiny could decide that. What he meant was that when he administered his treatments based on his methods, he could nothing but await the judgment of destiny.

This issue elicited strong reactions within the Japanese medical establishment in the 18th Century, and became a major area of controversy at the time. In his *Ijiwakumon*, Todo spent many pages explaining his position, which was that his treatment was based on a kind of protocol. Today we might consider it "textbook-standard treatment." He believed that if people were treated according to the appropriate protocol, and they were not healed, that

was their fate. However, others said that they did not understand Todo's protocols.

3. Medical Theories and TCM

According to traditional Chinese medicine, diagnosis clarifies the condition's etiology and pathogenesis, and this is an inseparable part of treatment. In contrast, Kampo medicine in Japan provided treatment in direct response to symptoms, and doctors put etiology and pathogenesis into a "black box" that they did not try to explain. Todo Yoshimasu started the tradition that the most important tenets of traditional Chinese medicine were the very points that should be deemphasized.

The new Meiji government, which took control of Japan in 1868, adopted a German medical model, and Kampo medicine ceased to be in the mainstream of Japanese medical practice. However, Kampo continued to be popular among the common people, and even experienced a certain level of revival. Since that process of revival was based on Yoshimasu's theories, modern Kampo medicine in Japan closely resembles his teachings. However, there are some differences. For example, although the "black-boxing" of etiology and pathogenesis remains unchanged, modern methods differ from Yoshimasu's in that they utilize a number of etiological categories. However, modern practitioners continue to avoid analyzing etiology and pathogenesis during the diagnostic process, just as Yoshimasu taught.

By any measure, Todo Yoshimasu exercised tremendous influence on Japanese Kampo medicine. Yoshimasu's denial of the central tenet of Chinese TCM, a position that has been continued in Japanese Kampo medicine, makes it difficult for the two traditions to have a conversation about theoretical points that they hold in common. Clearly Yoshimasu's tradition continues to live on in Japan today.

References

- 1) Yoshimasu N. Todo Sensei Gyojoki (Conduct Report on Dr. Todo), *Collected works of Todo*, 551-558 Shibunkaku Co., Ltd., 1918
- 2) Kure S. Dr. Todo Yoshimasu, *Collected Works of Todo*, 1-138, Shibunkaku Co., Ltd., 1918
- 3) Oka S. *Biography of Todo Yoshimasu*, Joranshawa, Vol. 35
- 4) Otsuka K. Todo Yoshimasu, *Kinsei Kampo Igakusho Shusei (Collection of Modern Kampo Medical Texts)* 10, 7-38, Meicho Shuppan, 1979
- 5) Yasui H. Todo Yoshimasu and his medical art, *Kinsei Kampo Chiken Senshu* 6, Meicho Shuppan, 1985
- 6) Tateno M, Oyama M. Todo Yoshimasu and Taoist Philosophy, *Journal of the Japan Society of Medical History*, No. 4, Vol. 47 P 855-857, 2001
- 7) Tateno M. *A study of "Kosho Igen" by Todo Yoshimasu*, Kyuko Shoin, 2004
- 8) Huang Huang, 徐靈胎 (Joreitai) and Todo Yoshimasu, *Journal of the Japan Society of Medical History* No. 2, Vol. 47, 229-260, 2001
- 9) Wada M. Todo Yoshimasu, a revolutionary, extraordinary physician, *Journal of Kampo Medicine*, special issue commemorating 100th edition, **.** 1963
- 10) Yamamoto I. Todo Yoshimasu and his medical methods, *Toui Zatsuroku (1)*, 19-33 Ryogen, 1983
- 11) Yamamoto I. Speaking of Todo Yoshimasu, *Toui Zatsuroku (3)*, 1-57, Ryogen, 1983
- 12) Yamamoto I. On Japanese Kampo and the Koho School, *Toui Zatsuroku (2)*, 1-104, Ryogen, 1981
- 13) Otsuka K. Medicine in the First Half of Modern Times, *Modern Scientific Thought (2nd volume), Nihon Shiso Taikei (A Compendium of Japanese Thought)* 535, Iwanami Shoten, 1979