

Medical History in Japan

Sotetsu Ishizaka's "Shinkyu Chiyo Ichigen (1)

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Introduction

Sotetsu Ishizaka (1770-1841) was a representative acupuncture physician of the late Edo period. Born in the City of Kofu in Yamanashi prefecture, his original surname was Fujiwara and his given name Naganori, his pseudonym either Engyoku or Sotetsu, and his artist's name [Usai], or else Bunna. As court physician with the title of "Hogen" (title bestowed upon doctors, etc.) he served the tenth shogun Ieharu and the eleventh shogun Ienari.

While he was emphasizing the Chinese classics, he also showed a keen interest in Western sciences and studied Western anatomy. Moreover, through Tullingh and Siebold he introduced Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion introduced to Europe.

He also wrote "(Shinkyu Setsuyaku) Explanations of Acupuncture and Moxibustion", "(Igen) Origin of Medicine", "(Shinkyu Chiyo Ichigen) Essential Knowledge about Acupuncture and Moxibustion in a Word", "(Shinkyu Meiwa) A discussion of Acupuncture and Moxibustion", "(Kokkei) The Bone Classic", "(Usai Sensei Mondo) Questions and Answers of Master Usai" and others.

Here I would like to introduce the work "Essential Knowledge of Acupuncture and Moxibustion in a Word" which Sotetsu (then 56 years old) wrote in response to a request he received during his time in Edo from the German physician Siebold (1796-1866; then 30 years old), who was in Nagasaki's Dejima during his stay from 1823 to 1828 in Japan and asked for 'detailed instructions in the practical application of acupuncture and moxibustion techniques'. The book is about the academic exchange achieved

when the author summarized the technical essentials of Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion and introduced them to Siebold, who later visited the shogunate in Edo and demonstrated acupuncture and moxibustion techniques himself.

Since this book is written in Chinese characters mixed with the Japanese Kana syllables, comprehension of the document is very difficult for modern man and thus the author of this text attempted to provide an explanatory translation of this reference material into modern language. Here I would also like to briefly introduce some technicalities about Japanese acupuncture and moxibustion employed about 180 years ago. Further, I took the liberty of omitting an introduction and epilogue.



[Figure 1] The young Siebold



[Figure 2] Siebold

* Essential Knowledge in a Word (Chiyo Ichigen)
 In February of spring 1822 (Bunsei year 5), Europeans brought this as a tribute to Edo [Edo shogunate visit]¹⁾

At that time I had the opportunity to meet a European physician. The name of the doctor was Tullingh. Through a certain medical officer he said: “There is no treatment using thin needles in the Netherlands. I would be much obliged, if you could teach me the outlines of this technique.

I answered as follows.

“Both in the East and the West there are some things that can only be understood through teaching the actual practice. Even if language is not understood, the direct teaching of the actual application of the techniques cannot give you more than a rough understanding. I will appeal to the officer to obtain permission to take you later by hand and instruct you in the actual practice of acupuncture and moxibustion.”

In response Tullingh said:

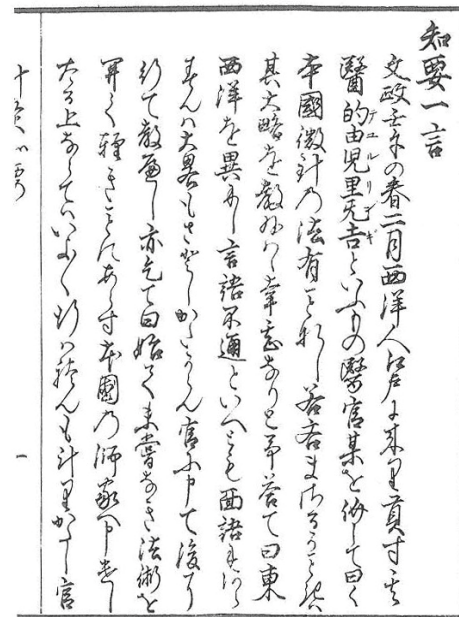
“I believe a simple procedure will not be enough for your kind disclosure of an as yet unheard of technique. I think it will be difficult to obtain permission to communicate this to the Dutch physicians. And in case the officials should grant me this permission, it will be even more difficult. If I miss this occasion I may possibly miss the opportunity to ask for instructions forever. Please, by all means, instruct me in the essentials.”

For this reason I entrusted the book (“Chiyo Ichigen”), summarizing the essentials of acupuncture and moxibustion techniques, into the care of the Dutch interpreter (at the Nagasaki magistrate’s office). Moreover, I had my disciples perform some acupuncture and moxibustion techniques directly in front of the Europeans.

1) At that time the head of the Dejima Dutch trading

post in Nagasaki went every four years to Edo for an audience with the shogun and on this occasion presented him numerous goods. This was a duty the shogunate imposed on the Dutch trading post, starting in 1609 and continued until the end of the shogunate. The Dutch people were mainly joined by the head of the Dutch trading post, his secretary and three physicians, as well as security officials and interpreters plus some additional laborers.

At the time of the shogunate visit in 1822 the head of the Dutch trading post was Jan Cock Blomhoff and Tullingh was an accompanying physician



[Figure 3] “Chiyo Ichigen”, 1826

Further, since it would be very compromising when the interpreter during his translation of the book into Dutch made mistakes in the process of the transcription, I wrote down the essentials in an easily comprehensible language.

So, I said to him the following.

“I heard that it is the specialty of the Netherlands to perform dissections in order to obtain a detailed knowledge of the interior and exterior of the human body. For the performance

of needling technique a detailed knowledge of the interior and exterior of the human body as well as its functions is indispensable, or else you cannot cure the diseases. Just vainly protecting tradition is not helpful at all.

In 1823 Siebold came together with the head of the Dutch trading post Sturler to Japan, and in 1826 accompanied him on his Edo shogunate visit as attending physician.

- The way of the filiform needle started in ancient China, living persons were measured with scales, the site of the diseases uncovered and the deceased dissected to examine the cause of the disease.

1,500 years have passed since this medicine was transmitted to Japan. The most ancient methods were at some point lost both in China and in Japan and today only the methods of the medieval times remain.

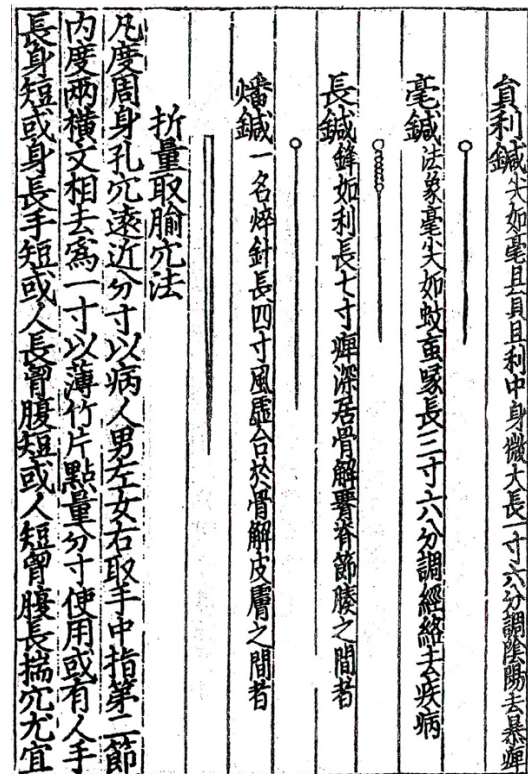
I have intensively studied the Chinese classics that were brought to Japan and therein found the ancient needling method. Going back to an ancient time in China at about 2,000 years ago, today's revival of the filiform needling technique is due to solutions of doubts through European anatomical books.

- There are many sites to insert needles into the human body, but generally speaking when the human body is affected by disease, you should think about all the sites to be needled from head to toe. If there is no disease, all needling should be prohibited.

For example, there is no place more important than the pupil, but in case of pyophthalmia it too may be needled. Thus, for this reason needling does not need to be prohibited in any region where there is disease.



[Figure 4] Nine needle chart, source: "Zhēn Jiǔ Jí Chéng" (1315) by Dù Sī Jìng of the Yuan dynasty



[Figure 5] Nine needle chart, source: "Zhēn Jiǔ Jí Chéng" (1315) by Dù Sī Jìng of the Yuan dynasty