

Medical History in Japan

Sotetsu Ishizaka's "Shinkyu Chiyo Ichigen (4)

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[Part 4 of this series]

On March 9 of the year Bunsei 8 (1825) I received through the official interpreter in Nagasaki Sakusaburo Nakayama a letter⁴⁾ from Dr. Siebold along with a present of two sword needles (hishin = pi zhen), one retention needle, and some first grade Dutch opium. The text of the letter follows below. (Since it was in a foreign language, I had the Han physician Tsuyama, Shinsai Udagawa translate it.)

To the care of Sotetsu Ishizaka, Edo acupuncturist
From: Dr. von Siebold, Dutch National Medical
Instructor, in Dejima February 1825

Acupuncture is a medical technique not known in Europe, but for some time some knowledge about acupuncture and moxibustion has spread.

Fortunately, on this occasion, I had the opportunity to look at master Ishizaka's book ("Chiyo Ichigen" – Essentials in a word).

Up to now I have been employed in Nagasaki and wanted to get in touch with master Ishizaki, but so far was not able to fulfill this wish. Now I was so fortunate as to be blessed with a chance to peruse one of his books. I wish to maintain contact with the master through letters and would be very much obliged, if I could ask him for instructions. It would be extremely beneficial for me, if that wish could be granted. With your permission, but I believe my knowledge about surgery would probably prove to be very beneficial for the master too.

I would like to ask you to please contact me in the future.

Among my students is a person called Junzo Mima, who studies very enthusiastically. He

translated your book into Dutch and explained its contents to me. In the future I would like to meet you directly and ask a few questions.

Currently I am considering to translate your book in greater detail into Dutch.

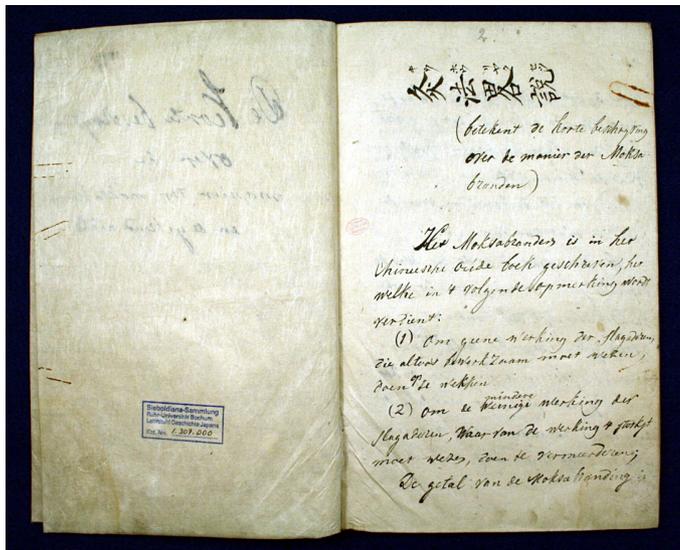
So far the content of the letter in Dutch, but I would be very happy, if you could have translated this and would read it.

4) In the archives of the library of Waseda University there is the title "Translated Writings of Siebold" translated by Junzo Mima for Sotetsu, in which it says "I am very happy about the treatise on acupuncture that was given to me, since it is explains a subject still little known in our country Europe." The 12-page text translated by Shinsai Udagawa is probably identical with the original. Currently published via the internet. http://www.wul.waseda.ac.jp/kotenseki/html/bunko08/bunko08_a0223/index.htm

There are two drafts, one of which has been once written by Junzo Mima and appears to have later been edited, so that there are some doubts regarding whether this is really Mima's own handwriting.

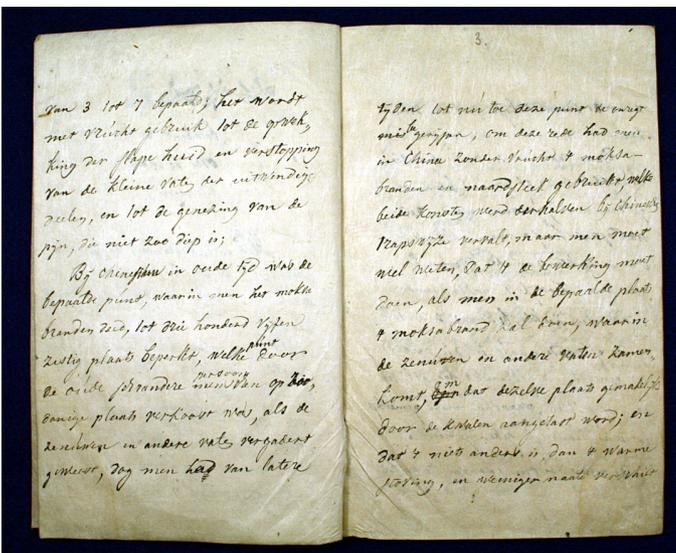
As an expression of gratitude for the masters books he send us two lancets⁵⁾, a clamp and eight momme (8 x 3.75 g = 30 g) of Dutch opium. Each of which he will take with him on his visit to Edo next. Please take care of him on that occasion.

Please take good care of yourself in this weather



[Illustration 11]

[Illustration 11] Translated by Siebold's pupil Ryosai (Seikai) Totsuka and others "Kyuhō Ryakusetu" (Brief Explanation of Moxibustion)



[Illustration 12]

[Illustration 12] Translated by Siebold's disciple Ryosai (Seikai) Totsuka and others "Kyuhō Ryakusetu" (Brief Explanation of Moxibustion)

As a response to this letter I sent a letter to the interpreter Sakusaburo Nakayama. In addition I had 7 needles ranging from gauge No. 1 to No. 7 manufactured by Genzo Kobe and sent them as a gift to Dr. Siebold.

In the spring of year Bunsei 9 (1826) Dr. Siebold accompanied the head of the Dutch trading post Mr. Sturler to Edo. During our meeting Dr. Siebold stated:

" I made some notes in "Chiyo Ichigen" and sent it to my home country.

Once I have comprehended the deeper meanings of the filiform needles, I would like to promote the spread of this book throughout the various European countries. When the technique of the filiform needling provides relief from diseases and suffering, it will be all your merit."

When I finished my commentaries to Dr. Siebold's 12 questions, he said he would like to witness an actual performance of acupuncture and moxibustion. I demonstrated by needling on one of my disciples, whereupon he requested to be needled directly himself.

Since that is what he wanted, I needled Dr. Siebold and thus conveyed also things, that are difficult to express in words.

On this occasion I feel extremely proud of being able to contribute to the spread of acupuncture and moxibustion, which I consider my calling, abroad. If acupuncture and moxibustion should be generally accepted in society, I believe the long years of studying the filiform needling techniques may provide an opportunity of opening up the passage for the once lost 2,000-year old art and teachings of acupuncture and moxibustion to Europe. I exhaustively wrote down the innermost secrets of the fine needles, not even holding back family traditions, and would like to convey this knowledge to future generations⁶⁾.

- 5) Lancet. Dutch. A kind of knife used for vaccination against smallpox and phlebotomy.
Flat, double-edged blades pointed at the tip.

- 6) Copied translations of the reference "Shifukuta Sensei Bunken Shukei" = original title: "vertaald door O. Kenkai" (published in 1935, including "Kyuhō Ryakusetu" (Brief Explanation of Moxibustion)) referring to Dr. Siebold in Japan and similar materials provide an opportunity of glances at the acupuncture and moxibustion techniques Dr. Siebold learned from Sotetsu.
- Currently on display on the digital archive website of Kyushu University.
- <http://record.museum.kyushu-u.ac.jp/siebold/>
 [Dutch translation of a treatise by one of Siebold's pupils]
- <http://record.museum.kyushu-u.ac.jp/siebold307/>
 Nr. 1.307.000
- Totsuka Ryōsai et al., [Vier Abhandlungen über Akupunktur und Kinderkrankheiten.]
- "Kyuhō Ryakusetu" (Brief Explanation of Moxibustion) translated Ryosai (Seikai) Totsuka and others

May of year Bunsei 9 (1826)

Signed court physician Hogan Sotetsu Ishizaka