

# ACUPUNCTURE, CAUTERY AND MASSAGE IN JAPAN

By U. A. Casal

Acupuncture, Cautery and Massage—these were the three great recourses not only of the practitioners of medical sciences in the Far East, but resorted to indiscriminately at the individual's discretion, from time immemorial until within recollection of the present generation. Even nowadays they are employed freely enough, especially in rural districts; and, it must be admitted, with satisfactory results in many instances. All three are based on the reaction of muscles and blood-circulation: in the first two methods due to an acute shock followed by only slight soreness, in the last one because of a "softening up" of stiffness in the tissue. In the former respect, our habit of applying leeches or "cups" for letting blood had in part the same basis; the Orientals fancied these latter procedures less, although they knew them both and did apply them in more serious cases of "bad blood."

ACUPUNCTURE—in Japanese *hari-ryôji*, needle-surgery—is said to be a distinctive Chinese discovery: how old, only the inventive god can possibly remember. "History" recounts how in the reign of Emperor Huang Ti, in the 27th or 26th century before our era, the famous doctor—or veterinary—Ma Shê Huang already cured a sick dragon by needle-puncturing him on the throat, and giving him a draught of liquorice. The earliest "needles" may well have been sharp fish-bones; but prehistorical ones of silex have been found in China. The art came to Japan before the dawn of her true history; definitely established is the existence, at Nara, of a medical college before A.D. 700, in which professors taught internal medicine, surgery, pharmacology (including botany), and acupuncture, together with the even more occult science of healing sickness by charms. Its knowledge may have come over from Korea in A.D. 645, for which year the *Nihongi* has the following mysterious story:

"Summer, 4th month, 1st day.—The Koryô student-priests said that their fellow-student Kura-tsukuri no Tokushi had made friends with a tiger, and had learned from him his arts, such as

to make a barren mountain change into a green mountain, or to cause yellow earth to become clear water, and all manner of wonderful arts too many to enumerate. Moreover the tiger bestowed on him his needle, saying: 'Be watchful! be watchful, and let no one know! Treated with this, there is no disease which may not be cured.' Truly, as the tiger had said, there was no disease which was not cured when treated by it. Tokushi always kept the needle concealed in a pillar. Afterwards the tiger broke the pillar and ran away, taking the needle with him. The Land of Koryö, hearing that Tokushi wished to return, put him to death by poison." Rather rambling, but it is suggested that the "needle" was one used for acupuncture, early ones having possibly also been made from the stiff whisker's bristle of a tiger (of which there were many in Korea).

Acupuncture was and is mainly used in the case of rheumatic and neuralgic pains, of headaches and convulsions, lethargies and colics, or similar "sluggish" complaints; it is intended to wake up the body's functions, as we do with other stimulants. Quaint is a reference to "the Needle" in the *Histoire et Description générale du Japon*, compiled by the Jesuit Charlevoix from available material and published in 1736, which asserts that this needle is a veritable specific for an extraordinary kind of colic, "very common in Japan and known as *senki*," which actually is lumbago. This illness, he understood, was mainly caused "*par le sacki, quand cette Bierre est bûë froide*," wherefore the careful people never drink *sake* unless it be first warmed up . . . . But the needle-treatment is expected to also cure such complaints as neurasthenia, melancholia, digestive disorders of all kinds, asthma, hoarseness, suppuration of the ear, or a hundred-and-one other varieties, including both too high and too low blood-pressure . . . . Every illness, according to the Chinese theory, bases on a visceral disorder: a lack or overproduction of its "emanation," or a faulty circulation of it. At any rate there is a disturbance of equilibrium, one organ is lazy, works badly. And as you prick the rump of a lazy ox to make him pull, so you prick the organ's recalcitrant nerves to make it go. There was also the less learned belief that most bodily disturbances were caused by *kaze*, (bad) winds, and to let out this wind several tiny holes had to be made with the needles . . . .

It was, however, recognized at an early date that the "direct method" of drastically attacking the organ itself contained extraordinary risks; so the indirect method, based on "affinities,"

was evolved. The procedure consists in pricking certain parts of the body, which occultly and according to an elaborate "scientific chart" correspond to the affected organ. The relations, and the chart, are occult indeed: as an example, stomach trouble is cured by needling the foot, while asthma demands a perforation of the hand . . . The needles themselves are of steel, silver or even gold, the kind of metal itself being superstitiously presumed to have pertaining effects. "Strong" metals, being *yang*, are tonic, invigorating, and good for sickness classified as *yin*; "weak" *yin* metals are sedative, relaxing, therefore good in cases of over-excitement, acute *yang* complaints. The form, construction and number of needles varies for sundry purposes: generally they are well over an inch long, and about of the thickness of a strong sewing-needle with finer and carser ones; they are produced and tempered by skilled craftsmen, and "styles" introduced by different "schools" are but minor changes.

The blunt end of the needle is inserted into a wooden handle. With the point poised over the spot to be punctured, the handle, lightly held between index and thumb of the needle-doctor's left hand, is given a sharp tap with a small mallet, just for a start. The needle is then pushed down with a gentle twist for one half to over one inch, and left for anything from a few moments to several minutes—in severe cases, it is said, even for hours. After gradually withdrawing it, the spot around the puncture is slightly rubbed for a while, and the patient can then rest or go about as he prefers. It is asserted (but I would not assume a guarantee) that when acupuncture is properly performed, not a droplet of blood will appear. Nor does it give the least pain. There may be up to some twenty punctures made at one sitting, or the performance may be repeated on successive days. The sacred, very "active" or "positive" (*yang*) number of nine was usually considered most favourable.

The abdomen appears to be the preferred operative theatre, but Chinese surgery enumerates 367 fleshy places where the needles can be inserted to a satisfactory depth, without injuring vital organs or the main blood-vessels. The bony parts, nerves and veins are of course carefully avoided. The body itself is divided longitudinally by twelve "meridians" on right and left, corresponding to the principal organs. The basis of this science is of course not anatomic but mystic, and related to the *yin* and *yang* principles of the universe, the feminine and masculine, dark and bright, negative and positive forces which permeate

everything. Within these "meridians," the bodily energies circulate according to other mystic principles. Sundry further cutaneous "districts" into which the human body is subdivided, are occultly important, but appear to be practically arbitrary. Each district bears a name, and again corresponds to some organ or its "emanation." Direct operations are reserved for extreme cases, and classed on a par with the prescription of poison: both either cure or kill.

Attempts have not been wanting to introduce acupuncture into Europe, ever since Titsingh brought home a treatise on the Japanese method.<sup>1</sup> Some French scientists, and later on also some German ones, seem to have taken a theoretical interest in this method, but as an applied science it was quite unsuccessful. However, earlier in our own century the French explorer Soulié de Morant once more investigated acupuncture in China, and submitted elaborate reports; and since then a new effort to find some scientific explanation for the unquestionable success of the treatment in Asia may be seen in Europe as well as in America.<sup>2</sup>

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1) Isaac Titsingh was Director of the Dutch Trading Company ("Factory") at Deshima from 1779 to 1780 and from 1781 to 1784. He left several works on Japan,

2) I quote the following report from Chicago, dated the 23rd May 1947 (AP), and which appeared in American newspapers:—

"Needlepoint Banishes Aches — Doctors Janet Travell and Audire Bobs, of Cornell Medical College, said medical science has confirmed a 2,000-year-old Chinese treatment for relief of pain in sprains—the simple insertion of a needle at the site of the sprain.—In a prepared report to the Federation of American Societies for experimental biology, they said they could not explain why pain was relieved by the needling procedure.—But they offered this theory: the persistent pain following sprain, is due to pressure exerted by the fluid which has accumulated within ligament structures, and the abolition of pain is due to the mechanic release of this pressure when the needle is inserted."

Which must sound pretty heretical to oriental ears . . . in spite of the observed positive results!

French doctors seem to have taken up acupuncture mainly since the end of World War II, and German doctors have followed suit. In spite of opposition by the medical profession, congresses are held and acupuncture success ascribed to a "neurobiological" therapy. The new "neuropathology" agrees that the cells themselves of the organ are not the "seat" of the organ's illness, but only "obey" certain excitations of the nervous system. The corresponding nerves must therefore be attacked to cure the organ. It is all a question of "impulses", nervous

It is said that the professional acupuncturists, many of whom were blind, were organized into a cohesive group early in the Tokugawa period by a noted blind scholar of the time, Sugiyama Kengyô. They gradually grew into an important guild. The "science" itself, as we noted, even in Japan goes back many centuries.

No doubt the origin of the ancient art of acupuncture is closely connected, if not identical, with the equally ancient art of tattooing. The subject of tattooing (known to the Ainu, and prehistorically to other tribes of Japan) is too vast to be here gone into; but we may note that many races consider tattooing as medicinal.

CAUTERIZATION was employed by us only as a burning-out of wounds to prevent festering or the spread of poison: the oriental style is different, and has become known to us as "Moxa," a corruption of the Japanese *mokusa*, or *mogusa*, contracted from *moe-kusa*, the "burning herb." The herb burnt is the *yomogi*, our mugwort or wormwood.

Cautery with a red-hot iron appears to have been known, but was hardly ever used medically. Since olden days the *mokusa* treatment has been considered, in China and Japan, as an almost universal panacea, and while the sharp sting of the burn acts as an irritant which in some diseases may be beneficial by stimulating the blood-circulation and nerve system, much of its efficacy is undoubtedly due to the very old and world-wide belief in a sort of sanctity of this plant. We ourselves call it "Artemisia", as belonging to the Goddess of Progeny, of Life and Death; and we find that *Ho Hsien Ku*, the Chinese *Artemis*, is an eternally young woman clad in mugwort. All over the world the respective varieties of wort figure as medicinal ingredients. The aboriginal Ainu of Japan, whose oldest and most holy herb it is, still use it to scare the devils of disease, who dislike its smell and flavour. The same belief underlies the

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derangements, reactions, equalizations. . . . (For a rather extensive report see the *Welt am Sonntag*, Hamburg, of August 16th, 1953). I have also found the titles of two studies in German (whose contents are unknown to me), one on "Akupunktur und Nervensystem" by Walter Lang, 1957, and one on "Die Praxis der chinesischen Akupunkturlehre" by Ernst Paul Busse, 1958.)

However, we are not here concerned with the medical aspect of acupuncture, whatever its actual results may be.

bunches of mugwort hung up by Chinese and Japanese during the festival of the fifth moon, which originally was a day of exorcism. Among the Central-European peasantry we equally still find chaplets made of mugwort worn at the summer-solstice festival, as a sure preventive for sore eyes, and similar conceptions have obtained among other races. Well-dried *yomogi*, as a "magic and pure substance", is since antiquity used by the Shintô ritualist as tinder for his sacrificial fire, whether produced by drill of flint. . . .

For the cautery—which China is said to have learnt from the Brahmans of India in the 6th or 5th century B.C.—the dried leaves, preferably young ones, are rubbed and beaten till the hard parts separate and nothing remains but the wool. The coarser wool is (was) used for common tinder, the finer quality for cautery; for the latter purpose it is rolled into a tiny cone, which is placed on the proper part of the body, and lighted at the apex (usually with the help of a glowing incense stick), when it will burn rapidly, searing the skin to such an extent that it leaves a quite noticeable scar, not unlike a vaccination mark. Often the blister may break and discharge, but it will rarely cause prolonged discomfort. It seems that it was customary—although I do not think that this is still done—to burn two or three minute "preliminary" cones in succession, so as to prepare the skin for the true *kyûji*; these preliminaries were known as the *kawakiri*, skin-cutting. . . .

Such a "shock cure" could evidently be obtained by any other incandescent medium, but possibly the *yomogi* offers the most regular combustion, and the "holiness" of it undoubtedly helped.—It is firmly believed that the best *mokusa* comes from Mount Ibuki in Central Japan; this mountain was since remotest antiquity noted in the pharmacopoeia for its wealth of medicinal plants, and for this reason will frequently be found referred to in ancient poetry.

The first *mokusa*, or *kyûji*, treatment will often enough be given to a baby a few days after its birth, on the top of the head. To prevent too serious a burn, wet paper is placed under the small pellet. The burn gives the infant vitality, and thus becomes especially urgent with weakly ones. But it also "marks" the child against evil spirits—the demons, exactly, who sap its health and try to snatch its soul, a risk particularly great in the case of sons. Since girls are not so important, the moxa procedure may be omitted in their case. . . .

As the child grows, moxa is applied not only against all sorts of diseases, but especially also against its "temper". Crying children, obstreperous or disobedient ones, are slightly burnt on back, arm or leg, partly as punishment, more "rationally" as a counter-irritant to their "disturbed" psychical state. The threat of *o-kyû* often enough is a sufficient deterrent, and inducement to behave. But as a large cone of moxa may indeed inflict a severe and lasting pain, it was at times employed on malefactors, the next heavier sentence being branding with a glowing iron which indelibly stamped a large ideogram on arm, hand, or even face.

In feudal days there were sometimes "competitions" among stalwart youths to see who could raise enough courage to support the severe moxa burns. It is said that some of these "heroes" submitted to "mountans" two or three inches in height and diameter applied to arm or leg, and which must in truth have been quite an ordeal.

The medical prescriptions as to where the herb has to be applied are highly complicated, and again based on occult inter-relations of "externals" and "internals". Hundreds of diseases can be "cured", especially also pleuresy, toothache, gout, rheumatism, and disorders which, like colic and paroxysm, "are rapid in their operation". . . . But often moxa is applied not as a cure but as a preventive, and of old many people had this done regularly every six months or so. Particularly favourable was the second day of the second month, known as *futsuka kyû* or *futsuka yaito*, which, knowing the best spot, one could apply oneself. In more serious cases, however, as always, the physician must know the exact pertaining spot on the epidermis, with its underlying muscles. According to the moxa theoreticians, there are 657 vital spots distributed over the human body . . . quite a few more than the needle-doctors make use of. While the moxa is most commonly applied to the shoulders, some spot along the spine, the arm, or just below the knee, the entire body may be operated on, only the face being left alone. Sometimes, indeed, pellets are burnt in several spots at the same time, to create the necessary "intersectional current". As a wrong application will bring wrong results, this mysteriousness of correlations is of course duly exploited by the "professors". Some of the busier masters, after their diagnosis, simply mark the correct spot on the patient's epidemis with a dab of ink, leaving it to an assistant to do the actual burning! These ink-marks are known by the

name of *kyû-ten*, and one speaks of "setting up" the moxa, *o-kyû wo sueru*.

Not to be overlooked, also, is the "fact" that the moxibustion (as some foreigners call it) depends for its success on the day chosen for its application. As always, days and hours are propitious or nefarious for what one is going to undertake. Almanacs warn people of the consequences resulting from the influence of wrong periods in such treatment, and it is therefore of the greatest importance to first consult this counsellor.

A number of Buddhist temples have acquired a particular renown as places for the *yaito* or *o-kyû*, the honourable cautery, and people resort to them either when afflicted or simply as a matter of precaution. No doubt this proficiency is due to the fact that of old—as is still done in China—Buddhist priests were given a mystic number of moxa burns on their scalp when ordained into the Order. The custom and elaborate ceremony is said to be based on a legend that the Bodhisattva *Bhaisajya-râja* burnt his own body in honour of Buddha. (In Japan he became *Yakushi Nyôrai*, the Buddha of Healing.) Although Gautama Buddha condemned all self-immolation, it was later commended as the highest form of devotion to burn one's finger, toe, or limb at the shrine of the *Tathâgata*: more meritorious even than to give up a kingdom. . . .

Apart from assuring the bonze's perserverance, and reminding him of his vows and devotion, the permanent scars were possibly just as much a precautional marking undertaken by the Order to prevent an occasional defection. Very probably the first application of the herb by Buddhist priests was as a sort of worldliness-expelling magic: the sharp sting made the graduating acolyte "acutely aware" of his new life. In Korea, the Buddhist priest, upon taking the vows, also undergoes the ceremony of "receiving the fire," when the tinder is burnt on his arm, as a sort of initiation. "If vows are broken, the torture is repeated on each occasion," as a sort of reminder. "In this manner, ecclesiastical discipline is maintained." Attractive nuns, it is asserted, of old sometimes scarred their face by means of moxa. . . .<sup>3</sup>

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3) Fire was regarded by the ancients of more Western countries "as a purgative so powerful that properly applied it could burn away all that was mortal of a man, leaving only the divine and immortal spirit behind. Hence we read of goddesses who essayed to confer immortality on the infant sons of kings" by secretly burning them in fire at night.

The good sense of the Japanese seems to have made the priests give up such practices at some later date; but their business acumen plus acquired knowledge turned their mind to cauterization's medicinal exploitation. It is well known that the bonzes themselves are much addicted to cauterization treatment.

And yet we may perhaps discover the remnants of a more general fire-burning practice, of some pagan origin, in the custom still current in parts of North-Eastern Japan of ceremonially using moxa for the first time each year on the 20th day of the first month, which is even now known as the *yaitozome*, the Moxa-Beginning. A pottery plate is laid on one's head, and the "wool" burnt on it. This method not only avoids serious burns, but, I think, proves the act's symbolico-magical meaning. In some of the same districts moxa is also placed upon the lintel of the entrance gate, and burnt. Undoubtedly this confirms that the burning shall "mark" people and home in such a manner as to scare away all evil—an idea possibly associated with the "reek of burning" which is abhorred by many divinities, including the Shintô ones.

Tradition—probably fostered by the money-loving priesthood—attributes the development of the moxa technique in Japan to the ubiquitous Kôbô Daishi, a Buddhist Saint of the 9th century. He was quite a mystic, but what he did or said is still considered the acme of wisdom.<sup>3a</sup> Like so many other things, in the year 806 he brought the science of moxibustion from China, where he had studied, and where, as we saw, it had already been practised for over a thousand years. Kôbô Daishi used fire in other ways too, mainly for the *Goma* ritual, when cedar wood is

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Of course they were always discovered in the act, the act misunderstood, and the goddess disconcerted. Therefore there were never immortal kings . . . (Cf. J. G. Frazer, *Adonis*.) Such stories are told of *Isis* and the king of Byblus, of *Demeter* at Eleusis, of *Thetis* and her mortal husband, *Peleus*. Possibly the Buddhist moxa burning had a similar purificatory and immortalizing basis. As fire purifies all things, releasing them from the bonds of matter, so, too, "it releases us from the bondage of corruption, it likens us to the gods, it makes us meet for their friendship, and it converts our material nature into an immaterial one," says Iamblichus, the philosopher of A.D. 300. . . . In many ancient religions an image of the God of Fertility (or of Spring, which is the same) was burnt in a religious ceremony, so as to cause his resurrection in a "purified", re-vitalized form.

3a) See also Casal: "The Saintly Kôbô Daishi in Popular Lore", *Folklore Studies* Vol. XVIII (1959).

burnt during the recitation of mantric formulas and prayers for the remission of sins and the expulsion of evil.

A burn on the shoulder-blade or the back will always do one good, and when performed at a temple with due observance of ceremonies it will save one from sickness present or to come. Groups of villagers will therefore band together for such a pilgrimage; in their Sunday-best and gaily chattering they will trudge to the temple, and there, first of all, perform the ritual purification of body and soul by pouring water from the hallowed tank over their hands. Tinkling their bells to call the god's attention and rolling their rosaries, they offer their prayer and reverence, and a minute obolus. Whereupon they call on the *bôzu*, proffering their request, and will most probably be treated to a cup of tea and some cakes before the operation begins. To make the latter more efficacious, the moxa is fired with a slender, burning incense-stick . . . It would of course be ungrateful to give expression to pain—but appreciative *ho !-s* and *ha !-s* are quite in order. . . . The *kimono*-sleeves and back are drawn up again—it was not necessary to disrobe very much—and the group then once more visits the altar to tender thanks, with chanting and prayers and the rubbing of beads, after which a picnic in the open or in one of the guest-rooms, with innocuous tea stimulating a decorous merry-making, will conclude the session. A walk in the temple-grounds, the feeding of sacred carp and pigeons, perhaps the clanging of the huge bronze-bell—and home they go again, secure in their fresh protection and glad of such satisfactory outing.

The fact that orthodox Shintô objects to *mokusa* burning for the simple reason that any kind of wound, the "stench of blood" of mythologic tales, is ritually impure, evidently has not worried the Japanese for a long time past. Yet even within recent historical times it was prescribed that a man who had been cauterized must abstain from worship at a *Kami* shrine for seven days following, and the operator for three days!<sup>4</sup>

Nervous disorders, fatigue, irregularities of the digestive functions, rheumatism and neuralgia, insomnia and so forth, are the diseases mostly cured by cautery. It is interesting to note

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4) *Leviticus xxii*, 17:—"Whosoever he be . . . that hath any blemish, let him not approach to offer the bread of his God"; and 22:—" . . . he shall not go into the vail, nor come nigh unto the altar, because he hath a blemish; that he profane not my sanctuaries . . ."

that the Dutch Company, which traded at Nagasaki in those days, introduced the moxa treatment in Europe during the 17th century. The famous English statesman and essayist, Sir William Temple, in his *Miscellania* of 1697 describes it as a cure for gout; but it evidently did not appeal. A renewed effort in this direction was made by the same Dutch Factory's director, Isaac Titsingh who had explained acupuncture, and who became well known for his studies of things Japanese; but he, too, must have been unsuccessful, because to this day the moxa cautery remains an exclusively Far Eastern medical treatment.<sup>5</sup>

To what extent the use of moxa burning went in Japan is well illustrated by an old *senryû*, a humoristic verse, which pretends that

*Asama yori*  
*Hiroku keburu wa*  
*Ibuki-yama—*

“More widely smoking than Asama (even) is Mount Ibuki,”—where, as we noted, the best and most plentiful mugwort grew.<sup>6</sup>

Moxa burning is indeed so powerful that a tiresome visitor may be induced to leave by the “magic” of burning a pellet on the back of his clogs! His feet will then soon “itch to go.” In the same manner, a thief can be caught by burning moxa on his footprints: the pain will work even at a distance, and make it impossible for him to run away. . . .

But long ago, also, the *Ason*, Fujiwara no Sanekata (who died in A.D. 908), already wrote a poem which has remained famous to our day,<sup>7</sup>

*Kaku to dani*  
*E ya wa ibuki no*

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5) In the British Museum, I read, there is a manuscript by Isaac Titsingh dealing with both acupuncture and searing: *Inlyding tot de beschryving van het naalde steeken en moxa branden, in verscheide ziekten &c.*

Sir Rutherford Alcock, in 1863 (*The Capital of the Tycoon*) mentions that “Although occasionally resorted to by our (British) surgeons, and with good effect it is said, in some obscure neuralgic and paralytic cases, it (moxa searing) has never been in great vogue with us.”

6) Asama is the largest active volcano of Japan.

7) The fiftythird in the well-known anthology, *Hyakunin Isshû*. “*Ason*” was a high court-title.

*Sashi mo gusa*  
*Sashimo shiraji na*  
*Moyuru omoio—*

which, in spite of some double meanings (*ibuki* itself may be linked to *iburu*, to smoke), may be translated as:

Though burning like the moxa of Mount Ibuki  
 How could I ever tell of my tormented feelings?—  
 So never shall my lady know. . . .

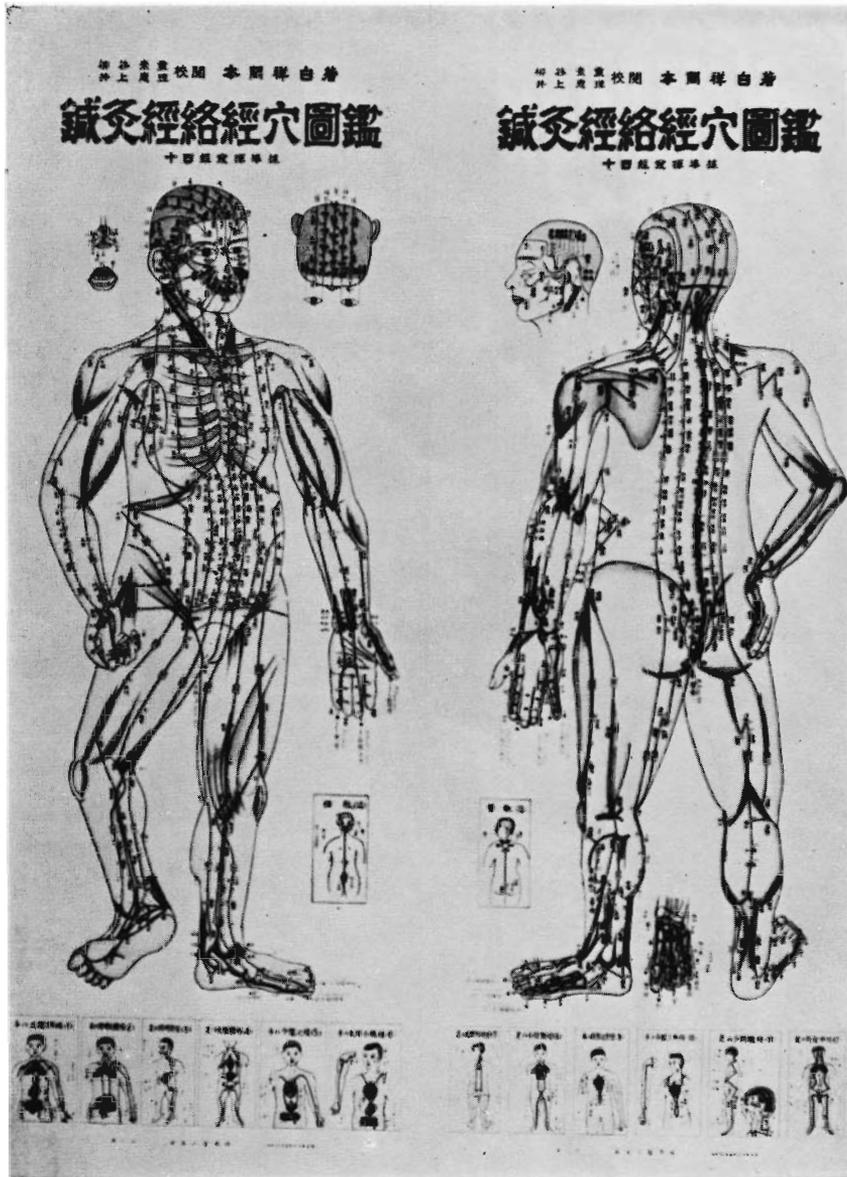
Japanese scientists nowadays show some interest in both acupuncture and moxibustion as curative treatments of illness, and two professors, after long research studies,<sup>8</sup> are reported to have come to the conclusion that there are distinct physical reasons for their successful application. A newspaper item of January 1960 has it that they found that "electrical resistance" in the indicated areas was much lower than in other parts of the body, the samples of skin taken being "half dead and watery and in no way actually healthy." They were "also found to be connected to blood vessels." The skin's sickly condition was believed "due to poor blood circulation caused by nervous tension under the skin which in turn was caused by a disorder in the internal organs," etc. Which sounds very nice but hardly upsets what was said a thousand years and more ago.

From a contemporary newspaper report (January 1960) it would nevertheless appear that the Japanese Law has become somewhat skeptical in regard to the proper use of the two main therapeutics, needle and moxa treatment. In a court case involving a practitioner, the Supreme Court confirmed the verdict of a Summary Court and the regional High Court that these "semi-medical practices" must be limited to those with a Government licence, and either should be allowed only "when it has been established that it is harmless." That, I am afraid, will have little influence on current use; the decision will only be of importance in cases of actual malpractice. . . .

MASSAGE, *amma-ryôji*, the third stand-by of the sick Oriental, is made use of far more frequently than *hari-ryôji* and *yaito*, and often enough without the help of an expert, as a

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8) Dr. Hidetsurumaru Ishikawa, physiologist at the Kyoto University, and his son, Dr. Tachio Ishikawa, pathologist of Kanazawa University. Their studies are said to have extended over twenty years.



Two Physician's Charts, Front and Back, indicating the spots to be treated and their relation to the body's nervous and muscular afflictions.

The heading over the figure reads: *Kankyu keiraku keikutsu zukan*, or about: "Chart showing the best applications of needles and moxa."

The scrolls measure about 15 × 42 inches.



QUARRELLING COOLIES

after a Drawing by Hokusai  
reproduced in E. J. Reel: Japan (Vol. 1)  
London 1880

The central figure shows four distinct Moxa spots  
on his back.

friendly service. While the two preceding "cures" obtain results by similar bodily reflexes, massage works on a different basis. With us too its has been recognized that a methodical kneading and pulling of the muscles and joints provokes therapeutic benefits. It stimulates the blood-circulation, prevents flabbiness, dissolves stiffness, and what not. Even animals, by natural instinct, know that to rub, press or lick any part of the body in which uneasiness is felt will give relief. But while sporadically known in ancient Europe, massage as therapy—"medical rubbing" as the English called it—was only re-introduced in about A.D. 1600, and did not acquire vogue among our medicos until the end of last century.

Primitive races have always known this means of relaxing tired muscles and exercising them at the same time, especially after their return from hunt or battle. Indian professional masseurs were employed by Alexander the Great in 327 B.C. Like the Hindus, the Chinese soon found out that it was nevertheless not immaterial how the body should be manipulated, that wrong treatment could not only be useless but even harmful, and since antiquity they made corresponding studies. Massage, *amma-ryôji* "medical treatment"—not simply frictioning, *masatsu*, but real kneading and even hitting *à la* chiropraxis—has been specialized in ever since, in China and Japan, both for refreshment and for a corrective treatment of sundry illnesses, again mostly due to "congestion". In about A.D. 200 the Taoist Pu Chu-kuan, who also advocated gymnastics, gave this perfectly sound advice: "In the evening, lying in bed and before falling asleep, you should massage the body and the four limbs with both hands. The movement must go upward: that is also the way the blood is circulating."—By about A.D. 707, we know, the Medical College at Nara already referred to gave regular courses in shampooing, and had further included such curricula as pediatrics, ophthalmology and otology, and dental surgery. We see that both massage and acupuncture were in class company.

Later on, however, it is said that the Chinese manner of frictioning the body was modified and improved in Japan, until in about the year 1320 a certain Akashi Kan-ichi established the technique still followed. For some reason massage subsequently lost much of its popularity, until revived under the early Tokugawa. Since this period, then, custom limited the profession of *amma* to the blind. During these feudal times, and till about A.D. 1870, the masseurs formed one immense guild, under two

Provosts who ruled from Kyoto and Yedo (Tokyo) respectively. Although they were classed as "mendicants"—together with sorcerers, minstrels, show-people and what not—the *amma* enjoyed appreciable privileges. After hard training, they had to pass examinations before being licensed to practice, and according to their proficiency they were ranged into several grades, each of which comported further tests and the payment of considerable fees. That in spite of these expenditures, and the ridiculously low charges made, the *amma* were nevertheless well-to-do, as a class, speaks for the very general addiction of the Japanese people to their services.

Indeed, most masseurs were so affluent that they had a secondary thriving business as money-lenders. Small amounts here and there, to a shop-keeper or artisan temporarily pinched, brought in as much as twenty per cent interest in a month! Their reputation as cut-throats was as bad as that as healers was good: yet the small people had to go to them for loans when the neighhours could not help.

From early morning the blind shampooer was on the road, noisily stamping a be-ringed iron staff and blowing a peculiar, double-barrelled whistle, his trade signals. His main business was of course in the evening, when people had time to relax. He also had a chant advertising his fee: I remember that, about forty-five years ago, for the usual itinerant *amma* this was the equivalent of some 8 to 10 cents for almost an hour's work—*kami-shimo*, as he called out: "from top to bottom", the entire body, including *ampuku*, abdominal massage for pregnant women. . . . The usual tip of another penny or two was added, and a cup of tea served when he took a well-merited ten minutes' rest in the end. The higher ranks were a little more expensive, but their main income was derived from teaching. Nowadays the itinerant *amma-san* is practically a thing of the past: instead of *amma* he performs *massaji* and has his "office", poor as it may be, or is called into the home by telephone or messenger, and his charges are according. He also no longer abides by the rule to have his head shaved as bald as an egg, probably in imitation of a Buddhist *bôzu*'s—perhaps, however, also simply as a precaution against picking up vermin, and carrying them from one house to the other. . . .

The *amma* is less of a "doctor" than the needle-man or the moxa-burner, but his *clientèle* is far larger and more constant. Every good inn had a masseur for the guests, and at the hot

springs, the *onsen*, they were most numerous. The Japanese predilection for massage, and the old idea of reserving its exercise to the blind, has effectually prevented this formerly very numerous class of unfortunates from becoming shiftless beggars, or a burden to family and community. On the contrary, the blind shampooer was a good earner, and able to support a family like anybody else.

What we no doubt can agree with is that during all these centuries the application of needles, moxa and massage, whatever the occult explanations may have been, has helped the Orientals in keeping healthy bodies, in spite of hard labour, indifferent care, and fanciful medicaments.