

MISONO Isai (1557-1616)

“Tapping Acupuncture Insertion Technique” is one of the original of Japanese acupuncture insertion techniques. MISONO Isai, said to be the restorer of this method, was a representative acupuncturist of the Japan acupuncture and moxibustion world in the latter of the Muromachi period. His name was Tsunenaka, commonly known as Gengo, but he came to be called by his pseudonym Isai. His ancestors included TADA-GENGI in Settsu. In 1582 Isai moved to Kyoto from Settsu, where allegedly he studied abdominal diagnosis and tapping acupuncture insertion technique from the zen monk Mubun.

He originated the idea of gold and silver needles and established the original Isai style tapping acupuncture insertion technique. He became a Doctor of acupuncture and served the Ōgimachi and Goyōzei emperors. Later he cured Shogun TOKUGAWA Hidetada, ever advancing his medical fame. His circle of friends expanded and it is said he also had relations with HOSOKAWA Sansai, TAKUAN Zenji and MANASE Gensaku.

Figure 1

Portrait of MISONO Isai

(From "Ika-shōzō-shū" ("医家肖像集"),

The Collection of Kyō-u-sho-oku library of

Takeda Science Foundation)



Astonishing the world with the Tapping Acupuncture Insertion Technique

Tapping acupuncture insertion technique is a Japanese original technique produced by tapping the head of the needle to carry the vibration from the abdominal area to the afflicted area. The tapered needle is held between the 2nd and 3rd fingers of the hand placed on the abdomen then inserted by tapping it with a wooden mallet.

Isai established and disseminated this technique. Many renowned successors came after Isai. FUJIKI Motonari (SURUGA school), NAKAZUKA Tōzai, ASAYAMA Kosai (ASAYAMA school), OKUDA Ihaku (MUBUN school), MORI Yoshinari (Chūwa) all contributed to the dissemination of tapping acupuncture insertion technique throughout the country and made it a representative acupuncture technique of the early Edo era.

Figure 2

Instruments for tapping acupuncture insertion technique

The Collection of Kyoto Prefectural Library and Archives



Abdominal Diagnosis and Treatment in Tapping Acupuncture Insertion Technique

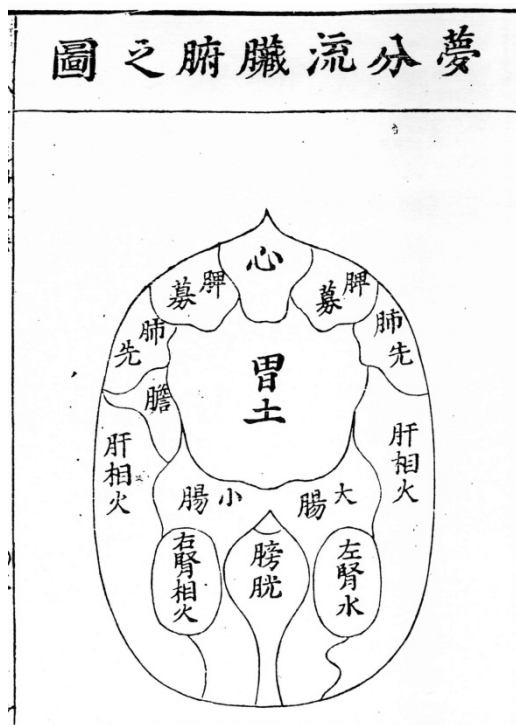
Isai reportedly authored the 3 volumes of “Ika-chinpō” (“医家珍宝”), the 2 volumes of “Shinkyū-hiketsū” (“鍼灸秘訣”), the 1 volume of “Shinkyū-zenron” (“鍼灸全論”) and the 6 volumes of “Shinka-hiden” (“神華秘伝”), but all have been lost. Works in which the Isai style tapping acupuncture insertion technique is mentioned today are “Shindō-hiketsu-shū” (“鍼道秘訣集”) of the OKUDA school (publication in 1685) and “Mubun-Shinpō-Shō” (“無分鍼法鈔”) of the ASAYAMA school (transcribed in 1792).

Characteristics include: 1. Considered very important for abdominal diagnosis to observe the rise and fall of “Dōki” within the Jinkan area to determine life or death prognosis; 2. maintaining a healthy stomach as the source of acquired qi to ward off evil qi; 3. relieving increased resistance and tenderness of the epigastric region at “Hinoho” (脾募), “Haisaki” (肺先) and “Kansōka” (肝相火); 4. maintaining balance between excess and deficiency of abdominal strength in the upper and lower abdominal areas; 5. techniques contain “Hihiki-no-hari” (火曳の鍼), “Kachibiki-no-hari” (勝曳の鍼), “Makebiki-no-hari” (負曳の鍼), “Aihiki-no-hari” (相引の鍼) and “Sanzuru-hari” (散ずる鍼).

Figure 3

Abdominal diagnosis chart

“Shindō-hiketsu-shū” (“鍼道秘訣集”)



Materials Introducing Tapping Acupuncture Insertion Technique to the World

Isai died in 1616 at the age of 60. He was buried at Minami-ōsugi on Hieizan, however the location of his grave is unknown. The family tomb from the second generation Tsunemasa is in Igei-in of Takamine-kōetsu-teramachi in Kita Ward in Kyoto.

As tapping acupuncture insertion technique spread, it seems it was applied not only in the abdominal area but also on other areas such as shoulders, back and upper and lower extremities. However with the introduction of the guide tube acupuncture insertion method

of the SUGIYAMA school, absorbing many of its characteristics, the use of tapping acupuncture insertion technique declined.

Figure 4

Photo of MISONO family grave

Reprinted from “Kyoto Medical History”

(“京都の医学史”)



京都鷹ヶ峰遣迎院にある御蘭家の墓所 遣迎院は寺町
広小路にあったが、昭和29年、鷹ヶ峰に移転。墓所は
昭和45年、釈迦谷に設定された。中央に御蘭家の墓を
新たに設け、周囲に代々の古い墓を集めている。

**OURA Jikan,
Iyashinomichi Kyokai**