CHINESE MASSAGE AND THE INTRODUCTION OF MASSAGE INTO CHINA BEFORE THE 8TH CENTURY

LI JINGWEI

China Academy of Traditional, Chinese Medicine, Dongzhinen Nei, Beijing, China.

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ABSTRACT: This article deals with history of Chinese massage and the introduction of Indian massage into China.

INTRODUCTION

Massage, as a treatment, though carries different names in health care of various nations, is perhaps one of the most age – old methods for removing fatigue and curing trauma in the health work of mankind.

There are different titles for massage in different period in China, viz: Jiaoyin, Anwu, Jiaomo, Daoyin, Zhezhi, Anjiao, Mosha, Tuina, Anmo etc. Since the pronunciation “massage” in western language is quite similar to the Mosha of the Chinese, some scholars believe that the massage of the western world might be originated from China. Although the terms mentioned above and the therapeutic modalities are varied, they all share common contents and theories. Applying no drugs, massage therapy features a series of manipulation of pressing, rubbing, pulling, pinching and rotating, exerting on certain parts of the patient, so as to ease his / her body and extremities and eventually cure the diseases. So, massage and Daoyin (Chinese setting – up and therapeutic exercises) are closely linked with the subject of prolonging life during its early period of development.

The Origin of Chinese Massage

Chinese massage has a long history which can be traced back to the primitive society. Lushi Chunqui Guyepian said : “At the beginning of Tao Tang Dynasty, due to the excessiveness and accumulation of the Yin principle, the water way was blocked up and didn’t go to the right way and thus effected the people who then suffered from stagnation of Qi (vital energy) and spasm of the tendons, pain and stiffness of the joints. Dancing was thus proposed and applied for eliminating these diseases”. This indicated that as early as the Tao Dynasty 5000 years ago, the Chinese people were aware of the fact that wet surroundings causes widely spread disease of joints, and that dancing, a form of ceremony for celebrating victories, could cure such diseases. Dancing was then developed with characteristics of Chinese massage and Daoyin by imitating the movements of birds and beasts, which were named five or six animal frolics. These experiences through the long course of history, eventually lead to the appearance of professionalized doctors specialized in massage before 1000 years B. C. Shiji (Book of history), Biographies of Bianque and Changgong, written by the famous historian.
shima Qian, recorded that “I heard that doctor Yu Fu treated the patients without using decoction and wine but acupuncture, massage, exercises and hot compress in ancient times”. This story was told by Zhong Shuzi, an attendant of prince of the Guo State, who was suspicious of doctor Bianque’s compatibility of curing the crown prince’s severe shock. It is interesting that Zhong Shuzi’s story revealed significant material for probing the details of massage 3000 years ago. Also, it indicates that there were specialists of massage in that time. Bian – que and his students Zi Yiu, Zi Bao were all distinguished representatives and experts in massage in 5th Century B. C. when they were rescuing the prince, suffered from severe shock, besides acupuncture, hot compress and decoctions, they applied massage as a treatment. Obviously, Jiaoyin and Anwu are the ancient names for massage in its semantic sense.

At the end of 19th century, a lot of oracle inscriptions (characters carved on beast’s bone or tortoise’s shell to keep as records of events) were unearthed from a ruins of the ruling center of the Yin Dynasty some 3000 years ago with rich contents on knowledge of human anatomy, diseases of human body and treatment. These provide much valuable materials for researchers. Among others, the characters and of oracle bone inscription show that “the method of applying massage for treatment of diseases of the body and abdomen had already appeared in the Yin Dynasty (17 – 11th Cent. B. C.)”. Anyhow, experiences handed down, either verbally according to scholars of literally by records 3000 years before, all corroborate that massage in China has a remote origin.

In 1973, fourteen kinds of medical work were unearthed from Ma wangdui Han tomb in Henan province by archeologists. Among them, the Illustrations of Daoyin and fifty-two prescriptions for diseases provide even more valuable materials for history of development of massage. Although these works were buried as funeral objects in 168 B. C. and might be written not very far before buried. By comparing its contents, character and technical terms with Nei Jing (the Internal Classic), scholars believe that these books were edited earlier than Neijin. The fifty two prescription for disease recorded both the treating experience and theory of fifty two kinds of disease out of which, 20 pieces deal with 7 kinds of disease treated by massage, including pressing and rubbing the part of sacrum for curing urodialysis; massage with application of ointment and other medicines on the skin for curing scar and dermal itch with satisfactory results.

Neijin laid down the theoretical foundations of traditional Chinese medicine and is respected as a canon by medical professional of successive dynasties. Although Neijing isn’t monograph for treatment and medical technique, nor a monograph for massage, yet, the skill and instruments of massage are distinctively emphasized, for example: concerning the origin of massage, Neijing claims that the people living in the plain of central China where the surroundings is damp and rich in natural products, with a diversity of edible foods so that they are lack in labour and weak in joints, and apt to suffer from rheumatic arthritis. Massage and Daoyin are indicated for these diseases. Hence the technique of massage and Daoyin are produced from the plain of central China. The indications of massage pointed by Neijin are obstruction of channels, numbness of extremities and rheumatic arthritis. For instruments of massage, the round needle with a cylindrical body and oval tip is mentioned in Neijin. When round needle is applied on the body, the...
injury of skin and muscle can be avoided. Massage mentioned in Neijing shows no differences with that of ancient legends indeed. What Neijing describes has been the summarization of the medical experience of massage since ancient time.

Now, let us read some books on massage written by authors other than medical professional from which we can get to know the situation of massage from the contemporary intellectuals. Meng zi stated that when Meng zi (372 – 289 B. C.) visited King Hui of the Liang State, he said “he couldn’t work on massage for aged man, he could do it, but he didn’t like to do”. The paragraph signifies that professional aspiration of the youth at that period. Also, the record proves further that professional doctor of massage already came into being as early as 2000 years ago.

Xingqi Yupei Ming is a piece of epigraphy carved on a jade – decorations. According to the research by archologists, the epigraph was carved before 380 B. C. and had 45 Chinese characters, which described the method and technique of breath – exercise and Daoyin for keeping health, preventing and treating disease. The epigraphy is explained as one kind of “Xing qi” (flowing of vital energy) literatures by Guo Moruo, while another author Shen Shou claimed it as a monograph of physical exercise therapy. The contents of massage mentioned in xingqi Yupei Ming, The Illustration of Daoyin, Fifty two Prescriptions for diseases and Meng zi, Huai Nan Zi were all written approximately at the same period and closely linked in its meaning. They indicated that technique of massage had reached a high level in treating disease and applied widely for medical use. Of course, the literatures mentioned above are not monograph of massage, however there were monographs of massage in that time, this refers to Huangdi Qibo Anmo which was divided into ten volumes as recorded in Han Shu. Unfortunately it was lost and its content could no longer be known.

### Slowing down of development of massage

The conclusion that Chinese massage was at a low ebb during several hundred years around the Christian era, may not be so correct. However, judging from the available materials, no other conclusion can be drawn. During these times, Traditional Chinese medicine was developing fast and many famous doctors appeared in the field of medicine. Unfortunately, nothing about monograph of massage can be found. However, the condition of massage therapy can be interpreted through case records in some historical works. There was a medical case recorded by Hua Tuo, which said, a patient suffered from dizziness for several years unable to keep his head erect with his visual function lost, his clothes were then loosened and Huatuo hung him by the feet with his head 1 – 2 cm above the ground, and his body was cleaned with wet cloth, then rubbed with medical extract, covered with quilt. Profuse sweating occurred, he was then offered a drink and medical powder composed of semen lepidic sen descurainiae and dog’s blood. He recovered at once. Doctor Zhang Zhongjing (2nd A. D.) emphasized that if one preserves Zhen Qi (the vital energy) in the body and avoid pathogenic wind, one can avoid suffering from disease; if pathogenic factors attack someone’s channels and he feels ill in limbs and body, he must apply Daoyin and breath exercise, or acupuncture and massage to stop the pathogenic factors go along the channels before obstruction of the nine body orifices occurred. Early application of massage is an advanced treatment, but no concrete technique and steps were left down
by Zhang Zhongjing, only when he discussed to rescue the patient who died of hanging himself, he mentioned pressing and rubbing chest and limbs of the patient. Judging the great achievements made by Hua Tuo and Zhang Zhongjing, their works on massage therapy seems quite unimportant.

The outstanding doctor Ge Hong and Tao Hongjing are also well-known for their knowledge in seeking longevity and alchemy over the century. Although they wrote many books, they did not write any monograph on massage, only mentioned, here and there among the treatments of their books, such as pressing and rubbing with paste, drug or bolus in Gehong’s book Zhouhou Beiji Fang. The technique is similar to those applied by Zhang Zhongjing and ancient doctors. Ge Hong also mentioned some monograph of massage followed Neijing in his book Baopuzi Neipian.Xialan including Canan of Massage (one volume) and Canon of Daoyin (ten volumes), that were lost also. Tao Hongjing highly appraised massage theoretically. He emphasized that if one only know how to use medicine for preventing disease without knowing the application of massage and Daoyin, he will fail in getting good result. Yet, he neither described massage theoretically nor systematized ancient experience. It should be pointed out that, in view of the emphasis on massage made by Tao and Ge, it signified that the slow development in a period of several hundreds of years will soon come to an end.

To sum up, though Indian Buddhism exerted great influence at that time, however, massage and Daoyin, breath exercises still preserved pronounced colour of scholars of Huang Lao and Taoism that bear native Chinese smell. Accompanied with the spread of Buddhism, Indian medicine showed very little influence on Chinese medicine, so did Indian massage.

Bodhidharma (? – 528), well – known as the 28th grandfather of Indian school of Chan Buddhism and the Father of Chinese school of Chan, arrived Guangzhou, China in 479 A. D. by sea. Route. Then, he went to Shaoling temple, Shongsan country, Henan province. He “sits on ground and faces to wall, keeps silent all day long”, called “the seeing wall” by the people. His teaching of throwing away all the feelings such as love, hate and sexual passion has an extensive impact. The old story saying that Yi Jin Jing was written by Bodhidharma and Yi Zhi Chan (one technique of massage), taught by Bodhidharma were not true because Bodhidharma didn’t help people using massage and there was not any record about his teaching of massage when he lived in China. Some scholars claimed that even if the Yi Zhi Chan came from India, it was not taught by Bodhidharma for it was introduced into China several centuries after Bodhidharma. His successors, attributed some book for Bodhidharma’s name, which just likes Neijing carries the title Huangdi and Yinghai Jingwei the title Sun Simiao. This style of study is not seldom seen in ancient China. Bodhidharma had effected on development of Chinese Buddhism but not linked with Indian medicine and massage introduced into China. It is a strong proof when Chao Yuanfang and other doctors were organized by Sui government to collect medical books from national library and folk doctors for editing Zhubing Yuanhe Lun in 7th Century A. D.

**Prosperous Chinese Massage and the Introduction of Indian Massage in to China**

During the 7th and 8th century A. D., traditional Chinese massage developed
prosperously and fast, meanwhile Indian massage was introduced and incorporated into the sea of Chinese massage. Thus, Chinese massage became more colourful and flourished.

Education of massage: Schooling of traditional Chinese medicine was established in 6th century and developed speedily in 7th century. The medical university – Tai Yi Shu organized by Tang Government had set strict demands in educational system, teaching material, examination and teachers. It had more than 300 staff, including teachers, students, workers and other faculty of persons. Massage was one of the four departments in the university. At the beginning of 7th Century, the government of Sui Dynasty gave much support to the education of massage. The department of massage included 20 doctors of massage, 120 masseurs and 100 students. When the Tang government replaced Sui government, it followed the policy of Sui government, but it cut down the numbers of department of massage, only kept one doctor of massage, four masseurs, thirty students of massage, and added sixteen practitioners of massage. This reduction might had something to do with the ending of war and experience learned from the over throwing of Sui Dynasty.

Besides the required course of basic theory such as Neijing, Maijing for diagnosis; Bengcao Jing for pharmacy; Jia Yi Jing for acupuncture; Xiao Pin Fang for prescriptions, students of massage should study methods and skill of massage, Daoyin, breath exercise as main courses in department of massage, also they should grasp the idea of “The pivot may not be corroded because it keeps moving while flowing water is not decayed because it keeps running”, so one must keep joints moving actively and blood flows smoothly.

Doctor of massage is the main teacher, while massagers and practitioners are the doctor’s assistants.

Institutions were set up for education of massage. The institution of Sui and Tang Dynasties indicated clearly that doctor of massage teachers the students of massage to learn skill of removing – resting and Daojin which can treat eight sorts of disease, including wind, cold, summer heat, wet, hunger, full, overworked and leisure. If there were diseases of the limbs and organs caused by stasis and obstructions, it can be relieved and dispersed from body and the pathogenic factor can’t invade the body; while for traum and fracture, it will apply the method of bone setting. We can see no trace of Indian massage influencing the educational institutions of massage and set lessons.

The speedy massage development can also be seen in its extensive application in health care in imperial family. The Sui government trained many massers that had a close relation with emperor Yangguang who sought ease and comfort, and was indulging in wine and sexual life. In the hospital of Imperial care – the Shang Yao Ju had more than one hundred masseurs with master physicians and doctors for imperial family’s care, but later on the number of masseurs were considerably reduced and remained very few in imperial family of the Tang Dynasty.

The flourishing of massage can also be seen from the attitude of famour doctors. Masseurs had a low position in contemporary society and generally, people were averse to this profession, and massage were belittled by other medical professionals. General folk masseurs were not well educated and lack of extensively and profound knowledge, they had difficulty
in summing up the experience and its theory, that was an important factor for the lack of massage works. However, by the 7th Century, such an atmosphere was changed. The fact that Chao Yuanfang and other doctors gave much stress to massage was but few of the examples. Later, the well known doctor Sun Simiao (581 – 682) gave even more pages to massage. By summarizing the experiences of keeping good health of the predecessors, he recorded not only traditional massage from Chinese Lao Zi but also that of Tian Zhu State from India. He made a great contribution on the preservation and development of Indian massage. The full text of massage from Tian Zhu as recorded by Sun Shimiao may be quoted as follows:

Massage of Tianzhu state is a method of Brahma.

Hold and rub hands as if he is washing his hands.

Cross the hands and more towards chest and to depart from chest repeatedly.

Hold hands to press left and right leg alternately.

Press the thigh heavily with the hands and turn the body towards left and right alternately.

Pull the hands as if one is opening a bow with force equals to live Dan and alternates the hand left and right.

Hold fist and extend forward.

Pestle with left and right alternately.

Push with left and right fist alternately.

Sit with the body reining towards left and right alternately.

Hold head with hands and turn to left and right alternately.

Bend body with two hands press the ground, then put up hands three times.

Strike back with left and right first alternately.

Sit with one’s leg stretched and kick left and right foot in rotation.

Put hands on ground and turn head to look backward like a tiger’s watching.

Stand up and bend body towards back three times.

Hold hands as a circle, step on hands with left and right foot alternately.

Stand up with one leg support the body weight, the other leg move forward and backward alternately without touching the ground. Then, perform on the other leg.

Sit with leg stretched. Then, hold the left and right foot with two hands towards the knee and press by hands.

If an old person performs these eighteen postures three times daily for months, most of his diseases will be relieved and his steps will become lively as a galloping horse, his eyes can see much clearer, he can eat much and doesn’t feel tired after work. Then he will achieve longevity.

Although we didn’t know the author of massage of Tian Zhu State and its date of writing, the date of its introduction into China, yet it actually should have much influence on Chinese massage. Now, we
have difficulty to recognize which skill is actually introduced from India. Yet, it is an active appraisal in itself that massage of Tianzhu State was recorded in *Qianjing Yao fang* by Sun Simiao, a doctor whose name should go down in history.

So much for spreading the effect of Indian massage in China for it is difficult to find out other sources on this topic. According to *Zhubing Yuanhe Lun*, one of the important books in Chinese medical history describing pathogeny, pathology and symptoms and signs without clinical diagnosis and treatment, it was recorded that various types of massages and skills were useful to the treatment of diseases. Although it is obviously influenced by Indian medical theory such as four element (earth, water, wind and fire) and 404 kinds of diseases, yet, nothing in massage can be recognized with an Indian origin. To take another example, many books were collected by the Sui government, even there were over ten kinds (more than 1000 volumes) of Indian medical books collected and recorded in *Suishu Jingji Zhi*, and there was no monograph on massage. One great medical prescriptions book...(752 A. D.) mentioned massage plentifully. Again, nothing of Indian tract or origin of massage can be found. We cannot find the existence of Indian massage around Sun Simiao’s age. Therefore, it is clear that the effect of this branch of Indian was limited in 7th Century A. D. To probe this problem, though the Chinese are good at absorbing foreign culture and assimilate the essence into that of its own culture; however, Chinese medicine was one of the most advanced medicines at that time, the introduction of Indian massage aroused no attention to the most of the contemporary famous doctors.

The period of the 7th – 8th Century was the prosperous period of Chinese massage, in which a lot of achievement was obtained and its content was getting rich with the passage of time. There were frequent cultural exchanges between China and foreign countries. The Chinese people not only absorbed the knowledge of Indian massage, but also passed this education of Chinese massage and skill into Japan, and thus, in turn, promoted the development of Japanese massage.

Massage is the most age – old subject, which should be promoted and developed for the urgent need of highly effective health care as the problem of the ageing brought about by the development of human society becomes more distinct.