

A Genius on the Shoulders of Giants

A scholar, thinker, moderniser, innovator and creator of systems

About fifteen years ago I became aware of hearing people claiming to represent the “true” Masunaga style. There were even attempts to represent Masunaga's “system” as a complete one with no need of additional theory or technique. The slogan arose spontaneously from within me: “deconstruct Masunaga”.

Clues to his influences:

The Mubun hara diagnosis chart shows many similarities with the one Masunaga put together; use of the dictum “treatment is diagnosis and diagnosis is treatment” was already common among traditionally oriented Japanese acupuncturists; extensive quotes from the Yellow Emperor's canon of internal medicine underline key elements in his revitalising of shiatsu via the roots of traditional oriental medicine.



A man of his time:

Masunaga lived in a time of rejuvenation, revitalisation and even reconstruction of traditional Japanese culture following devastation and humiliation during WW II. The key common element was reinvention of Japanese methods with modern (western) touches. Other innovators at this time include Ueshiba (aikido), Osawa (macrobiotics), Nakatani (ryodoraku acupuncture) as well as thinkers and creators within keiraku acupuncture (Denmei et al), toyo hari acupuncture (Fukushima et al), Noguchi taiso, Shintaido and Sotai. It is more than likely that some or all of these movers and movements were well known to Masunaga.

What was he reacting against?

In particular: his own teacher, Namikoshi and the mechanistic approach espoused at the school where he had taught. In general: western materialism and cultural domination.

What did he include?

Central concept of qi flow, yin and yang, 12 meridians, kyo and jitsu as diagnostic indicators, hara diagnosis.

What did he exclude?

Among other things: six divisions, 5 elements, 5 shen (shen, hun, po, yi, zhi), certain traditional zang-fu organ functions, jiaqi, 8 extraordinary vessels, 6 extraordinary organs, and facial diagnosis.

What did he invent, re-invent or regenerate?

Natural pressure and form, back zones, extended meridians (some adopted from traditional internal branches), equality between yin and yang meridians, elevated importance of kyo meridian (previously established in Nan Jing and commonly used in keiraku acupuncture as well as Ji Gen Ryu shiatsu), diagnostic input from psychology.

What did he copy and incorporate?

Makka ho stretching exercises and various yoga asana.

The Elaboration of a System in 4 steps

1. Total sum of available knowledge on health and disease

2. Creation of workable, shorthand system for healing

What to include?

Simple items
Favourite items
Popular items
Compatible items
Available items
Effective items

What to exclude?

The rest, including:
5 elements
6 divisions
Shen, hun, yi, po, zhi
3 treasures: jing, qi, shen
8 extraordinary vessels etc.

3. System completed/life lived



4. Legacy and inheritance

Solidification &
preservation

Sasaki K.
Kimura

Interpretation &
development

Suzuki
Endo

Selection &
adaptation

Ohashi
Sasaki P.

Reaction &
Rejection

Kishi