



HE VALUE OF PAIN: Tay on the benefit of this in foot reflexology

The feet of the matter

"I'm always happy to lend my feet for a good cause — that of foot reflexology. My feet were massaged twice over in a hotel suite in Awana, Genting Highlands, recently, and I because I expressed curiosity over some wooden implements — one in the shape of a golf taking flight, and another which looked like a small brown spade.

I was at the Asian Foot Reflexologists Seminar at Awana, where about 60 participants from Taiwan, Japan, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia had thithered to exchange views and techniques in this traditional Chinese health skill.

The massaging session had taken place at night, after the seminar, where more than 10 Taiwanese — and a Japanese — decided to go to practice.

First, Chen Shiao May and Lee Shiu Chin rubbed one of my feet each and showed their expertise. It was interesting to note each had different technique, inflicting different degrees of pain as they cleared the problematic zones on my feet with their tools, not using any tools.

Chen, an indigenous Taiwanese from Suhsung, and a mother of three, seemed stally devoted to and innovative about her art.

Qi to shape up the stomach

The most interesting part of the Chinese reflexologists seminar was the demonstration of various skills by foot reflexologists, chiropractic correction of the pelvis and spine, and qigong massage on the face and stomach.

Hou The King, from Taiwan, who's been doing tui na massage (of the body) since he was 16, is a foot reflexologist as well as a chiropractor, having had 35 years' experience in the last.

"I'm interested in bone structure," he said. "Every vertebrae is interrelated to the body. The dorsal vertebrae affects the heart and liver while the lumbar affects stomach, big and small intestines, bladder, sacrum, coccyx and reproductive organs. You have to be steady, sharp and accurate with the treatment."

When Hou looks at a patient, he roughly knows his problem. Hou pinpointed a participant who had a problem with his neck.

"It's the sixth and seventh cervical vertebrae and the third and fourth lumbar vertebra," he said.

When Asian foot reflexologists met for a seminar recently, science, I-Ching principles and the harnessing of qi for a massage came together in an unusual amalgamation. **EU HOOI KHAW** was there.

"If your shoulder aches, she does your shoulder reflex zone, and the corresponding zone in the pelvis together," noted an appreciative Geraldine Tay, head of the Rwo Shur Health Institute in Malaysia and Singapore.

Tay is an experienced foot reflexologist, having practised it for more than 20 years and holds courses regularly for those interested in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore.

She, together with Michael Chen, President of the Chinese Foot Reflexologists Association in Taiwan, organised this seminar. Gracing the occasion was Swiss priest Father Josef Eugster, credited with starting it all and giving a face to foot reflexology in Taiwan.

I had watched Hsu Mei Huei, another Taiwanese reflexologist, in action during the seminar, and now she was showing me what could be done with her bag of tools.

First, she clipped my big toe on the right side with a metal ring linked to a leather strap. Boy, did it hurt! That was to stimulate my pituitary gland while she worked on my left foot. Hsu was purposeful and super efficient; I



THIS IS HOW IT'S DONE: Hsu massages a participant's foot with a wooden tool after putting a clip on his other foot

could feel the blood rising in my face as she massaged with different wooden tools.

"Your shoulder muscle is very stiff," she said, as she asked me to turn over on the bed and using her hands massaged the acupressure point relating to it on the back of my legs.

She had also watched when I was having the first massage and said with dead accuracy: "Your chest is congested." Indeed, I was suffering from flu then.

Needless to say, I felt very good after these two massage sessions and slept very well that night.

The enthusiasm of these reflexologists was hard to curb: they were working on each other's feet in the suite, showing different techniques and skills, although all stemmed from the same source.

In her talk at the seminar, Tay touched on three things: that reflex zones are three-dimensional, the value of pain and the auspicious Tao of Foot. The last is because she is an authority on Tao studies, encompassing I-Ching, fengshui, Chinese medicine and appearance analysis.

"As you practise foot reflexology, you will sense that you have to go deeper into certain parts," she said. Reflex zones are three-dimensional, and they have scientific basis. Certain organs are anatomically deeper.

"Our feet is a miniature of the whole body." On the value of pain, she said that Westerners think Asian foot reflexology is painful.

"Are Asians addicted to pain? Do you think that they will stand the pain with no benefits?"

"Neurologists say that 99 per cent of the reflexes transmitted is constrained by the central nervous system. When we massage our feet, a message is sent to the central and peripheral nervous system. The stimuli applied to activate the cells belonging to the organ become more active.

"Only with a certain minimum pressure will there be a reaction by the central nervous system. There will not be pain for nothing."

Father Josef Eugster emphasised the holistic approach of foot reflexology. He began by saying that the skill was lost in the Far East because of foot binding, and the fact that it

was impolite to touch people's feet.

"Since I am a priest and a foreigner, it was easier for me to teach.

"Foot reflexology doesn't have to be very painful. The highest art is to find the level of pain endurance of the person. It's a little painful, but it's a good pain; it helps the whole body," he said.

He explained the holistic approach by showing how if you have a problem with the eyes, you not only massage their reflex zone on the feet, but also the liver and gall bladder. For heart problems, you need also to do the small intestines and thudodum.

Eugster, who has also taught foot reflexology in the United States and South Korea, embraces the Chinese five elements of fire, metal, earth, wood and water in his practice of it.

"Each element has two organs linked to it. Fire, which is red, is heart and small intestines; wood (green) is gall bladder and liver; water (black) is bladder and kidneys; metal (white) is large intestines and lungs; while earth (yellow) is stomach and spleen.

"If your child doesn't want to eat, then open up the stomach by working on both the spleen and stomach reflex zones.

"The mother of fire is wood, and wood can help fire to improve and change," said Eugster.

"For instance, in cancer of the liver, you have to work on the kidneys to get the toxins out. If you stimulate the liver, the toxins will get into the system."

Eugster also showed how various implements could be used to disperse deposits on reflex zones on the feet, and how by dividing the foot into five parts, you could massage it more effectively.

Michael Chen touched on the application of foot diagnosis and how to approach the patient, taking into account environment, diet, emotion, etc.

He also touched on clinical checking and medical reports with reference to contemporary medicine, infusing a modern medical slant into a traditional health skill.

He talked about how to do an analgesic diagnosis and using different ways to improve blood circulation, and the direction of the massaging.

"Every reflex zone has a story, relating to an organ," he said.



EUGSTER: On massaging the feet according to the five elements

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