

Book Review from NAJOM Volume 20 Number 58 July 2013

A Long Road: An Acupuncture Travelogue vol. 1

By Edward Obaidey, Rare Apricot Press, 2011 Paperback, 216 pages

Reviewed by Jeffrey Dann

It's a rare experience to read a professional book that is more than a text and that deepens the spirit and practice of acupuncture. Eddy Obaidey Sensei has written a unique book, an important book, a personal book and I strongly recommend it for all.

Obaidey himself is a rare bird, embedded from the ground up in the difficult cultural milieu of Japanese professional medical culture. As a resident gaijin, Eddy belongs in the special roster of foreigners who make Japan their home and become representative icons of their cultural or professional path. No he's not a Lafcadio Hearn, but he keeps his British wit and acerbic personal style in an authentic fusion of East and West.

After a long sojourn in this world of Japanese acupuncture, Ed Sensei clearly has a lot to say. He unpacks his 20 plus years in Japan of studying with various teachers going through the formal Japanese school system. Attached in a true deshi style, he has been a long-time disciple and translator of Ikeda Masakazu Sensei's books and the two of them have conducted much international training. Ed Sensei also maintains a busy clinic in Tokyo and has helped train scores of foreign students. It is encouraging to see Obaidey step out on his own and begin to teach more internationally as he has done in Hawaii, Canada, and elsewhere.

So he does have a lot to say and this wonderful book is just the first of a trilogy: Volume II is now out.

It would be a great mistake just to think of Obaidey as a strict disciple of Ikeda Sensei's TJM. Ikeda Sensei himself, in the preface to this book, says that, in his translations, Eddy adds 50 percent to the lecture. And Eddy in a later part of the book, while speaking to an "understandant" (he prefers that term to student) says that "I say what I say, Ikeda Sensei says what he says. If you practice the same as me, I know something must be wrong, if I practice the same as Ikeda Sensei, he knows something is wrong."

Eddy wants us to be a hari shi (acupuncturist) with the correct universal vision of our medicine rather than one who "practices acupuncture," that is one who just sticks needles into people's problems. "Be a strategist instead of learning strategies." Eddy rails somewhat against specialized scientific approaches to acupuncture, because it comes from the reductionist Western medical model that keeps focusing on the particulars and losing the whole. He prefers to cultivate the generalist state of mind that is open to all the

signals and messages of the body/mind. And it is here that he evokes a strong-grounded presence, really feeling thru palpation, and then presence with the needle that is the art of the medicine.

The book is unique in many ways. Eddy gives perhaps the clearest meaning of Meridian Therapy in the context of the classics and its impact on clinical thought. His rooting in the classics with his translations directly relate to the dynamism of clinical practicality.

His emphasis on palpation and the importance of the intelligent oshide stands out. And while he's clear that the "needle is not just a tool," he gives an outstanding description of needle manufacture and the spirit of the artisan craftsman "needle maker."

His chapter on Needles has the very best explanations that I have seen in English of the nine classic needles and his clinical understanding of them
He also has the very best descriptions of how to think about the variations of superficial stimulation and shallow needling. Besides clear references to classic texts he clarifies the relationship of the surface defensive Wei qi to the underlying, but also shallow, nutritive ying qi.

Finally, Eddy's chapter on Moxibustion is also very special. Here he breaks down the varied ways of doing moxa and their clinical uses. Meanwhile he educates about the moxa plant and processing and then unpacks more information about Sawada Ken and the Tai Kyoku treatment strategy.

Eddy Obaidey Sensei's book raises many issues and I would encourage readers to engage in correspondence on this valuable book as a forum in following issues of NAJOM.

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