

DANZAN HEALING

Japanese deep-tissue massage from old Hawaii.

Long before Waikiki was the vacation deal of the Pacific, discriminating travelers like President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Charlie Chaplin and Johnny Weissmuller steamed their way to O‘ahu to soak up the sun, the Mai Tai’s and to receive intense, life-changing deep tissue massage from Professor “Henry” Seishiro Okazaki.



Seishiro Okazaki emigrated to Hawai‘i from Japan in 1907 and, once there, began a life-long study of the martial and healing arts. From these arts, namely judo, young Okazaki inherited the ancient Japanese medical practice known as Seifukujutsu (*say-fuku-jitsu*). This practice bestowed upon Okazaki a traditional Asian understanding of

the body and the skills to restore it to optimal health. The restorative power of Seifukujutsu was more than theory to Okazaki, he credited it for his complete recovery from a chronic lung ailment believed by many to have been tuberculosis. By the mid-20’s, Okazaki had completed his training and established a thriving practice that garnered the attention of the local island community as well as many on the mainland.

A “local” blend of systems and ideas.

Henry Okazaki’s unique brand of healing was, like most things in Hawai‘i, a “blend” of several different cultures meticulously combined to create an incredibly effective form of physical restoration. All told, Okazaki had studied arts and ways from China, Japan, Hawai‘i, Okinawa, the Philippines and Europe. He worked tirelessly to understand and inculcate the techniques he found most potent. His emerging system would be a unique gift to the people of Hawai‘i and the world.

“Danzan” is an old Chinese phrase meaning “Sandalwood Mountain.” 19th century Chinese merchants had imported the prized wood from Hawai‘i and referred to the islands as such. In deference to a Chinese mentor, Professor Okazaki chose the name to describe his collective system of healing and martial arts. Thus creating his Danzan Ryu or “Hawai‘ian-style” martial and healing arts.



As a bodywork modality, Danzan is characterized by deep, rocking forearm and elbow flows that follow many traditional Asian body-channels. The stance, forearm work and movement pattern is reminiscent of some Lomilomi styles but Okazaki did not refer to it as such. For that matter, many of the “long-life points” that are manipulated resemble Shiatsu but again were not so labeled. The bodywork “kata,” or form, that has been passed down is, no doubt, an amalgamation of many techniques alive in Hawai’i at the turn of the century. Professor Okazaki simply referred to it as “long-life massage.”

The flow of the work is Asian in philosophy in that it moves distally from the heart and normalizes venous flow automatically. It starts in the head and moves down into the shoulders, out to the arms and hands then continues down the trunk treating the legs in a similar fashion. The client is first treated face down then face up culminating in a facial and scalp massage (*consistent with Lomilomi as well*).

The tempo of the flow is also calculated based on the need to sedate or tonify the client’s imbalance. If the client is believed to be “excessive” via stress or anxiety the tempo of the work is brought down. If the perceived condition is “depleted” via fatigue or weakness then tempo is brought up to an invigorating pace. This strategy is consistent with the Chinese model of “Wei Qi” or the defensive nature of Qi flow near the surface of the skin. As with Yin and Yang, a return to health and well-being is a function of balance.

Healing begins with “ABC.”

Root principals of Danzan healing can be summarized with “ABC.” Restore “Abundance” of life-force essence (Chi, Ki,) through correct diet, exercise and emotional wellness. Restore “Balance” to the systems of the body through hot/cold therapy, damp/dry foods and Yin/Yang herbs. And restore “Circulation” to blood, Qi and bodily fluids through complete circulatory massage and tissue breakdown. Danzan Bodywork is an exchange between both client and therapist, not so much of energy but of “Aloha;” that aspect of the work that cultivates a selfless and caring attitude that connects both participants. Incorporating the principles of Danzan technique can greatly improve an MT’s stamina, energy and overall effectiveness in bringing about change to chronic ailments.

While each client received a treatment protocol that was designed specifically for him/her, Professor Okazaki prescribed a brisk, full-body massage that was designed to integrate the client’s mind and body so that effective work could be done both diagnostically and therapeutically. Special attention was given to the manipulation to free-up tight and compressed joints believed to be “log jams” of Qi flow. The ultimate goal was to help the body “restore” itself through increased circulation and tissue breakdown proportionate to the client’s age and health. Much the same as a modern fitness trainer would design a regimen in-tune with her client’s age and current physical condition.

Modern Danzan Healing practitioners also utilize the principles of Hawai‘ian relationship techniques, namely ho‘o pono pono. This incredibly effective process helps to alleviate core emotional issues that contribute to chronic and phantom physical maladies. Although Henry Okazaki did not specialize in relationship resolution, he was a student of Hawai‘ian methods and is regarded by many of the “Kupuna” or elders of modern Hawai‘ian healing as an authentic “local” influence and teacher. The Danzan system reinforces the power and benefits of Aloha (love and reverence), Kokua (service and selflessness), and ‘Ohana (family unity).

Danzan martial and healing arts: Truth resides in effectiveness.

Professor Okazaki taught both martial arts and healing arts to his advanced students. He believed that the secrets to effectiveness in one were also the secrets to true effectiveness in the other. This idea explains the cultivation of mental, emotional and spiritual integration for the purpose of achieving a “supreme confidence.” This state of being, he believed, was necessary to succeed where others had failed. Both Danzan martial and healing art systems aim at cultivating and empowering students with an immutable sense of their own ability. This power or energy (*Shinyo in Japanese, Mana in Hawai‘ian*) made the master practitioner’s intentions and manifestations one in the same.

While the techniques and methods utilized in Danzan healing are a splicing of several traditional systems, the real essence of our art is based in a universal concept. *The human body is an expression of life force, guided by mind and rooted in spirit.* Assisting in the restoration of health involves recognition and connection in subsequent levels of being. More simply put, “Healing on one level is good. Healing on two levels is better.” The healing systems of China, Japan and Hawai‘i are complete in their own right. Merging aspects of each into a new “multi-layered” system allows the Danzan therapist to choose the most appropriate course, and level, of interaction to bring about rapid and lasting change.

Bringing it forward.

In today’s world, the average individual operates in a sea of potential turmoil. Our mental and physical requirements, diet, emotional stresses and environmental hazards all combine to challenge our ability to cope and thrive. The healing methods of the ancients, as odd today as they may seem, were systems based in the reality of effectiveness. Learning from each and teaching their lessons made Henry Okazaki both a rebel and a heretic in his own time.

Professor Henry Seishiro Okazaki passed-on in 1953. We, his descended lineage, are forever grateful and bettered by his experimentation and courage to pass on the arts and ways to anyone of any race or nationality. This “Aloha” (sharing of life) exemplifies the Hawai‘ian-style and lives on today in the teachers and practitioners that offer training to all those who seek it in the Danzan Ryu.

Kimo Williams is an experienced Danzan Ryu teacher and healing art practitioner. He offer regional workshops in Danzan healing to therapists and healers of any background. More information is available at www.danzanhealing.com.