

## **The Evolution of Touch in Shiatsu**

### **(Cliff Andrews)**

I was lying on a futon in a room at Grimstone Manor in Devon fifteen years ago, receiving a Shiatsu from my teacher Pauline Sasaki, and I didn't understand what was happening to me. I could feel the deep, focused pressure of her thumbs as she worked, but there was something else, something unexpected. I was experiencing changes on other levels, a feeling of movement in the space inside and outside my body.

I was used to two-handed Masunaga technique, feeling change locally and between the working and mother hand, but this was quite different. I couldn't understand how the pressure of her thumbs could be creating all these unusual sensations. I realised that Pauline had transformed Shiatsu touch, and that I had much to learn.

During the eighties, in a series of yearly residencies at Lam Rim in Wales, Pauline successfully systematised and taught the Masunaga "Zen Shiatsu" method. These were hugely influential workshops, almost every one of the students there went on to become senior teachers or heads of schools. If you have studied the Masunaga system in the UK it is almost certain that the information you received originated from these inspirational meetings.

When I returned to Europe after my apprenticeship in the USA in 1986 Pauline and I would meet up at least twice a year to co-teach workshops in Europe or in the USA. The sparks would fly as we struggled to put our combined experiences into an understandable and teachable form. In the last few years I have been working to put these breakthroughs into some kind of order. I figured it must be possible to put them into an historical perspective, a logical development of Shiatsu theory and technique, an evolution of Shiatsu touch.

### **The Physical Touch**

The most basic way we can experience touch in Shiatsu is on the physical level. By focusing on the sensation beneath our hand we can tune into skin, muscle and bone, and the amount of energy in a specific place. We can apply techniques that give us feedback from the local area where we are working.

The Namikoshi system is based on Western anatomy and physiology. For historical and political reasons the Meridian system is not presented as part of the system. Techniques mainly use one hand, with the other hand used to brace the giver against the floor. Shizuto Masunaga taught at

the Namikoshi school for ten years and his studies of TCM and Ki, combined with his extensive clinical experience of Shiatsu, led him to revolutionise Shiatsu.



### **Masunaga Revolution**

Shizuto Masunaga was probably the world's most influential Shiatsu Master. Masunaga made a discovery that set the stage for all the subsequent developments in Shiatsu: 'how we use our own energy determines how we experience the energy of the receiver.'

The two point pressure experiment (See Zen Shiatsu p.49) allows us to experience Shiatsu as more than a local physical sensation. Suddenly we are not just feeling the physical anatomy, the bones and muscles, or the quantity of energy in a particular place. By relaxing and bringing our focus into our own Hara our experience changes – we feel the connection between our two hands. It is in this feeling of connection that we experience the Meridian pathways.

The feeling of connection or movement of energy between the hands in Masunaga technique

becomes the dominant experience, and the feeling of energy in a specific place becomes secondary. The two handed technique of connection, Kyo and Jitsu, tonification and sedation, placed Yin and Yang and Ki firmly back into the core of the Shiatsu experience.



### The Kyo Jitsu Paradox

You palpate Bladder Jitsu in the Hara, and Large Intestine feels the emptiest meridian, with Heart and Small Intestine feeling the next emptiest. You hold the Bladder area and check two or three Kyos, the Heart meridian is the one that reacts with the Bladder – you feel the Bladder Jitsu “blip” and then disperse. So the diagnosis is Bladder Jitsu and Heart Kyo.

This is basic Masunaga technique, but have you ever really questioned why we use this method to choose the Kyo? Why isn't the reacting Kyo always the most empty meridian? This is the Kyo Jitsu paradox. Its solution leads us into a wider experience of the nature of Ki, it is the doorway to other dimensions.

Surely if tonifying means filling up energy, and sedation means emptying energy, and our aim is to rebalance the

energy of the receiver, we would always get the most change from the “fullest” and “emptiest” meridians? If the reacting Kyo meridian is not the emptiest meridian on a physical level then there must be some other non-physical quality about the Kyo meridian that makes it “react” with the Jitsu. Focusing on the non-physical aspects of Ki naturally leads us out from the physical body into the etheric field.



**Berührung ist Begegnung**  
**Shiatsu-Ausbildungen Austria**  
**Dr. Eduard Tripp**

A-1120 Wien, Schönbrunner-Schloss-Str. 21/8  
Tel: +43 (676) 61 74 970  
tripp@shiatsu-austria.at, www.shiatsu-austria.at

### **Kishi's solution**

Shinmei Kishi sits motionless, he centres himself, you can see him gathering his energy. He places his hands together in the prayer position and then sweeps them above the body of the receiver. He is drawn to one point, contacts the body, and with a sharp exhalation sweeps his hand away. The treatment is over. A dramatic and unforgettable experience, but what is going on, why is he working in this way?

Kishi was Masunaga's first "disciple" and the one chosen to take on his work in Shiatsu, so why did he abandon the Shiatsu form? Kishi solved the Kyo Jitsu paradox by shifting his focus, he moved away from the physical body and the duality of Kyo and Jitsu by treating the whole energy field as one. He moved into the etheric field because this is where the answer to the Kyo Jitsu paradox lies.

### **Pauline Sasaki and the Quantum Shiatsu™ revolution**

The nineties were a time of breathtaking change in the development of Shiatsu. The limits of the Masunaga system were being pushed, transforming Shiatsu to allow access to the wider energetic field.

Pauline Sasaki was probably the world's leading Zen Shiatsu teacher in the 1970s and 1980s. She had translated the book Zen Shiatsu and studied with Masunaga extensively in the USA and Japan. She was becoming famous all over Europe for her systematic and profound understanding of his work. But during this time in her practice she was reaching the limits of Masunaga's system. "I was starting to experience things in my Shiatsu that no one could explain or help me with" recounts Pauline, "it was at this time that I searched out Kishi and apprenticed myself to him."

Pauline's mission was to integrate Kishi's high-level energy perception back into the Shiatsu technique. To achieve this she had to re-invent the way Shiatsu techniques are performed, and as a result she evolved a new style of Shiatsu. The challenge of Quantum Shiatsu™ technique is to maintain the connection with the information in the etheric field, or the non-physical aspects of the Ki, while at the same time using the body weight to apply Shiatsu techniques.

In a way similar to Masunaga's transformation of Shiatsu through the use of the Hara to feel connections in the body, Pauline further developed the system by using the spine, or microcosmic orbit of CV and GV, as the new centre for the giver. The technique of expanding your energy field by opening the spine and expanding peripheral vision while bringing body weight forward allows access to the wider energetic field - even as that relaxed body weight is





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tripp@shiatsu-austria.at, www.shiatsu-austria.at

used to apply perpendicular penetration to the receiver's physical body. Pauline has thus revolutionised Shiatsu again and opened a new chapter in the evolution of Shiatsu touch.

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© Cliff Andrews is co-founder of the Shiatsu College in Norwich (GB) and direktor of the shiatsucentre.net, cliff@shiatsucentre.net, phone: +44 (1) 603 632555 (published in Schweizer Shiatsu Journal Nr. 1, August 2004)