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THE EVOLUTION OF SHIATSU TOUCH

(Cliff Andrews)

I was lying on a futon in a room at Grimstone Manor in Devon over twenty 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. At the time 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 at that time I had much to learn. It is amazing now to reflect on how our conception of the Enegetic Field has changed over the last twenty years, and how much more we are able to understand how our experiences are possible after the publication of books like "Energy Medicine – the Scientific Basis" by James Oschman.

During the eighties, in a series of yearly residentials 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 in the UK. 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 within the lineage that I had been apprenticed into.

The Physical Touch

The most basic way we can experience touch in Shiatsu is on the local 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 was not presented as part of the system in the early Namikoshi textbooks. Techniques often 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 touch.

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, Ki and the meridian system 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 a wider experience of Ki that takes us away from local physical perception.

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.

Kishi's solution

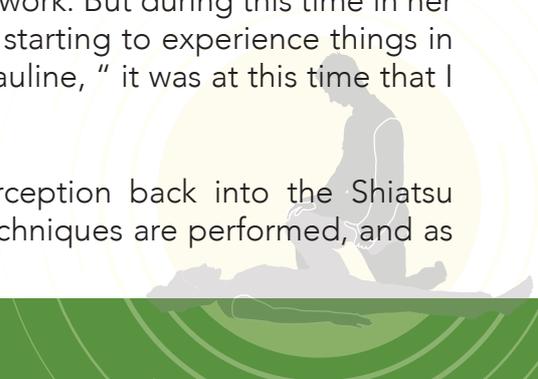
I am in a workshop with Akinobu Kishi in 1983 - he sits motionless, he centres himself, you can see him gathering his energy. He places his hands together in the prayer position and then sweeps them above the body of the receiver. He is drawn to one point, contacts the body, and with a sharp exhalation 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 at that time? 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 or the expanded awareness of the Ki field, I believe, because this is where one of the answers 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 in Europe and the USA. The limits of the Masunaga system were being explored, with some developments transforming Shiatsu touch 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 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.

Whole Body Scanning and the Kyo Jitsu Reaction in the field

By the mid-90s I had gone as far as I could at that time with my developments in connecting with the energetic field. Pauline had by then, following Kishi, moved beyond Kyo and Jitsu by developing a "monadic" way of working on one primary meridian. However I was convinced that the whole Kyo Jitsu story had not been fully explored. So I decided to return to palpating the Hara on the body, I had been using mainly off-body palpation since my apprenticeship. However the previous decade and a half of developments in Shiatsu touch had transformed my experience of the Hara. I started to experiment with experiencing the meridians in the whole body from the Hara using a technique called Meridian scanning.

After a few years of practice I made an astounding discovery that changed my conception of Kyo and Jitsu completely. I found that it is possible to feel the movement of the Kyo and Jitsu reaction directly in the whole energetic field from the Hara. This transformed the process of treatment as it made it possible to feel directly the energetic movements involved in the reaction of the Kyo and Jitsu meridians, helping us to understand symptom manifestations, the effects of tsubos, as well as how to pace and focus our treatments.

Around the same time I also discovered a technique to directly experience the Vibrational levels of the Meridians, to feel if they were more active on the physical, emotional, mental or spiritual levels. This technique I called Vibrational frequency scanning. So now it was possible not only to feel the energetic effect of the Kyo Jitsu reaction in the whole body, but also experience on what dominant level, or levels the reaction was occurring.

I now felt that I had reached a natural completion of the Kyo Jitsu project, none of these discoveries would have been possible without the work of Masunaga, Kishi and Pauline Sasaki. It has been very rewarding to see these new discoveries spread throughout Europe and the USA, and to be taught by a new generation of teachers, techniques that I would not have dreamt of being possible twenty years ago are now fast becoming part of normal Shiatsu practice. There has been an evolutionary transformation of Shiatsu touch.

This is an expanded and updated version of an article of the same name previously published in the Shiatsu Society UK News

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