

We are very thankful to **GABRIELLA POLI** to use her article to support the Congress-community with insights, inputs and thoughts about Shiatsu.

Check: **www.gabriellapoli.com** for more from Gabriella.

## WHAT ARE THE MERIDIANS AND WHY ARE THEY A USEFUL TOOL IN SHIATSU

(G. Poli)

*From "Shiatsu e Médecine Orientale" di Shizuto Masunaga*

The Meridians I refer to in this abstract and that I obviously use in my Shiatsu are the Masunaga Meridians. As we all know, Masunaga created a new style of Shiatsu that he called "Keiraku Shiatsu" which means "Meridian Shiatsu". Meridians represent, therefore, a fundamental aspect of his style. But more to it, Masunaga has introduced a new concept of Meridian: his Meridians have a yin and a yang nature, a more contracted and a more expanded aspect. The yin aspect is represented by their structure, i.e. channels that have a specific location in our body; the yang aspect is represented by their function, i.e. a movement and an expression of our life.

To be coherent with his new concept of a Meridian, Masunaga devised a new Meridian Chart so that each function could be present in every part of the body.

**I quote from Zen Imagery Exercises:**

"...I am now convinced that the principle of Meridians is far more fundamental and universal than applied in acupuncture. This conclusion also became the basis for my discovery that all twelve Meridians exist in each limb. In order to make more clear and accessible this concept of Meridian/function, of Meridian representing also a movement of our life, Masunaga used as a metaphor a unicellular organism: the amoeba. The term "amoeba" comes from Greek and means "change", due to the continuous change in shape of this organism.

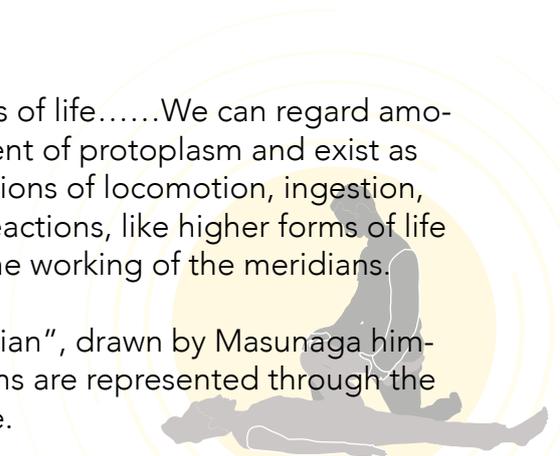
**Quote from the Italian Treccani Encyclopedic Dictionary:**

"...A characteristic of the cytoplasm of the amoeba is that it does not have a skeleton and it creates pseudopodia thus continuously changing shape ...The creation of the pseudopodia causes the movement of the body and allows the amoeba to intake food. Under unfavourable living conditions, amoebas stop producing pseudopodia, assume a spheric shape and enwrap themselves into a resistant membrane assuming the state of cysts...They reproduce normally by fission.

**Quote from Zen Imagery Exercises:**

....The circulation of Ki is something which takes place in all forms of life.....We can regard amoebas as also having meridians, since amoebas live by the movement of protoplasm and exist as independent living entities. Amoebas perform the basic life functions of locomotion, ingestion, elimination and reproduction and are also capable of defensive reactions, like higher forms of life such as human beings. All these basic life functions depend on the working of the meridians.

Here below you will find a diagram, called "Construction of Meridian", drawn by Masunaga himself, in which the six vital functions connected with the 12 Meridians are represented through the movements of the amoeba and the different shapes it can assume.



It is extremely interesting to observe the drawing of each amoeba/vital function and how Masunaga was able to represent the essence of the movement of the function in such a simple, clear way.

In the first three movements the amoebas/functions have a relation with the outside and show how we get the energy we need from the external environment: through the exchange of our Ki with the universal Ki, via our breath (Lung/Large Intestine); through the intake of nourishment to satisfy our needs and our desires (Stomach and Spleen); and through the assimilation of this nourishment into our centre and its conversion in blood and action (Heart and Small Intestine).

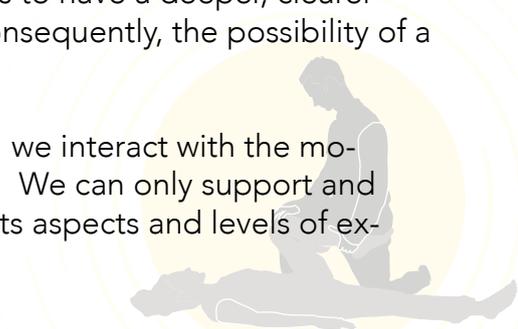
In the second three movements, the amoebas/functions show, through their different shapes, how we use the energy received from the external environment to regulate all our organs and bring balance (the perfect circle) and vitality to our system (Bladder and Kidney); how we circulate this energy to protect ourselves (Heart Constrictor and Triple Heater); and how we store and distribute this energy to accomplish our plans (Gallbladder and Liver).

It is interesting to notice how this new vision of Meridians is so coherent with the law of the Five Elements, where each energetic quality, each phase of transformation: Wood, Fire, Earth, Metal and Water, manifests both as contracted Ki (organ, tissue, sense organ, secretion, etc.) and as expanded Ki (shen, emotion, sense, expression, etc.)

These functions, being manifestations of our life, express at all levels: physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. Furthermore, as each cell of our organism contains all the information of our genetic code, likewise each Meridian/function contains all the information of all the other functions. It is therefore a "one" system, a "one" Ki that "specializes".

Given this wide and all encompassing concept of Meridians, it becomes evident that they represent a basic, fundamental and indispensable tool of our Shiatsu, due to their versatility and to the different possibilities they offer us to get in contact with the energetic system of the receiver:

- They offer a clear, simple and coherent structure of the energetic system of the receiver, a "map" that guides us in contacting and interacting with the "human being's territory" in its entirety and oneness.
- The energetic structure represented by the Meridians/functions of the Masunaga Shiatsu makes up an original and totally autonomous system where theory, energetic evaluation and practical application are coherent and each one reflects and supports the others.
- When we lean on the Meridians, we contact an expression of the receiver's life manifesting in his body/mind/spirit. We can therefore "simultaneously" get into resonance and interact with the receiver's energy both in its contracted expression: bones, muscles, organs, tissues, etc. and in its expanded expression: emotions, thoughts, belief systems, spirituality.
- In our contact with the functions, we can perceive where, in which part of the system, their expression is stronger, and which is their dominant level. This allows us to have a deeper, clearer and wider understanding of the receiver's energetic pattern and, consequently, the possibility of a more specifically aimed approach.
- When we work Meridians as functions there can be no judgement: we interact with the movement of our receiver's life, and life it is not for us to judge or to fix. We can only support and stimulate the natural movement of Ki to awake "life" to live fully all its aspects and levels of expression.



To conclude, as already mentioned, when we contact the Meridians' energy of our receiver, we contact his life through the expression of his vital functions at all levels including the "spiritual level". Through our touch, therefore, we may offer our receiver the possibility to experience and feel in contact with the most expanded expression of his Ki, we may offer him the possibility to get in contact with the Universal Ki, with his Origin and his Source. Thus the Meridian becomes the connection between the finite and the infinite, the immanent and the transcendent.

