Shin So Shiatsu
Healing the Deeper Meridian Systems
Second Edition
Tetsuro Saito
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Heartfelt thanks to:

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- Tadashi Irie Sensei, who taught me the Finger Test Method upon which this entire body of meridian research has relied.

- My respected colleagues Hideo Yoshimoto M.D., Taku Yokoyama, and Yoshiko Sugioka who generously shared their valuable research with me.

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Finally, I must also acknowledge the ancient masters who developed the rich and fascinating system of Oriental medicine in which my work is rooted.
Foreword

A New World with Shin So Shiatsu
by Dr. Hideo Yoshimoto

Tetsuro Saito has written a tremendously significant book, one with the potential to overturn centuries of “common sense” in Eastern medicine.

Written for the purpose of training shiatsu therapy graduates, it is the fruit of Mr. Saito’s sincere life-long work as a shiatsu therapist and researcher. The result is astonishing and will change many of Eastern medicine’s fixed concepts. For instance, the Saito Meridian Charts show the Large Intestine Meridian not only on the arms, but also on the legs. Therefore, if the patient’s problem is deep, it could reach to the bottom of the foot, namely to Yusen (KD 1).

I was amazed when I first looked at the Saito Charts. I found it hard to believe that the Large Intestine Meridian extended to the legs. But by using the Finger Test Method, I realized this to be true. The Saito Charts have opened up a whole new world for me, and improved the results of my treatments.

By touching patients’ bodies and through his never-ending research, Mr. Saito has developed and refined his sensitivity. While reading this book, I realized with astonishment that his Eastern medical experience had reached a depth far beyond that of acupuncture and moxabustion practitioners such as myself.

I first met and became good friends with Tetsuro through our mutual interest in the Finger Test Method, and it is such a pleasure to know he has accumulated the results of his research on this subject and made it available to us. This book offers all practitioners of Eastern medicine a new goal: that of attaining better results, and indeed, of devising a whole new way of practicing acupuncture and moxabustion based on the Saito Charts.

Just as Mr. Saito has gone beyond Zen Shiatsu, I sincerely hope this book can lead readers to a deeper realization of shiatsu and Eastern Medicine in general. May it help us all to become bright beacons for those who are suffering.

Hideo Yoshimoto, M.D., is highly regarded for his published research in both Eastern and Western medical approaches. He is a surgeon, acupuncture, and medical herbalist. A prominent member of the Irie Finger Test Group, he lives in Saga Prefecture, Japan.
Shiatsu — A Higher Form of Communication
by Akinobu Kishi

I first met Tetsuro Saito at the inaugural Meridian Shiatsu Conference in Berlin in the year 2000. Although we both graduated from the Nippon Shiatsu School (I in 1971, Mr. Saito three years earlier) we had never met before.

We had also both been members of Shizuto Masunaga’s Iokai Institute — Mr. Saito while living in Canada, and myself in Europe — and had devoted much energy to study and practice since the early 1970s. During this time, Mr. Saito was also busy promoting shiatsu in his adopted home through many activities, including hosting several visits by Masunaga Sensei.

Though our paths had never crossed in the 30 years since our graduation, our first encounter was a truly enjoyable event. I felt like I was meeting an old friend.

Our friendship has deepened since then, at shiatsu conferences in Italy and Austria where we were both honoured as senior Japanese instructors, and in Canada where I have been privileged to conduct workshops as Mr. Saito’s guest.

The Japanese art of shiatsu is well known nowadays, with conferences around the world facilitated by a new generation of non-Japanese practitioners. I am deeply moved when I reflect on how far our field has come, and how Japanese therapists like ourselves are being called upon to share our knowledge.

My deepest respect goes to Tetsuro Saito, who has worked with continuous and sincere devotion to develop and teach his Shin So Shiatsu system in the West, where the challenges of studying and practicing shiatsu can be monumental.

Shiatsu therapists today must develop not only a great depth of skill but also their own individual approaches. The Seiki-Soho system, which I have taught since 1980, and Tetsuro Saito’s Shin So Shiatsu system are both responses to this demand.

But there is more. To bring ki into balance is to realize the unity of body and mind. It is also to understand the body’s energetic flows and guide them into harmony with the flow from the Source. This is only possible through polishing our sensitivity of mind and body, which is, I believe, the true goal of shiatsu training.
I also believe that giving and receiving a shiatsu treatment is a higher form of communication. I look forward to the day when shiatsu therapy is understood as more than the integration of sensation, technique, and knowledge, and is embraced as a whole new field, in which we explore each other’s resonance.

With this hope, I offer my words in support of Tetsuro Saito and his new book.

Kyoto, Japan
Early spring 2006,
the air fragrant with plum blossoms,
Akinobu Kishi

After graduating from the Japan Shiatsu School in 1971, Akinobu Kishi became Shizuto Masunaga’s assistant. With roots in shiatsu, Shintoism, and traditional Japanese arts, he has developed his own Seiki-Soho approach and works with students from around the world.
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Oriental medicine is one of the world’s oldest and most widely known medical systems, despite having been acknowledged in the West for less than five decades. Its foundation, the meridian system, observed and studied for at least 2,000 years, has the potential to become one of the future’s most promising avenues of healing.

What we know of Oriental medicine today, however, is only a fraction of what was once understood. Much has been lost to the tides of history and we have been left with only a basic working knowledge of the ancient and complex diagnostic system we now refer to as Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). TCM is nonetheless a profoundly effective system, rich in clues that can help us recover much of what has been forgotten or omitted, and in clues that can guide us toward completely new discoveries.

The main obstacle in advancing our knowledge of the body’s energy matrix is that few practitioners innately possess the sensitivity required to accurately and confidently sense the flow of energy, or ki, within the human body.

It is to this task that I have devoted my life as a therapist and researcher: to finding and developing an approach that enables dedicated practitioners to perceive and work precisely with meridian flow.

At the heart of this book is the Finger Test Method, which has given me, and a growing community of others, the ability to read the body’s energetic patterns. The story of how I came upon this simple technique, the discoveries it has led me to, and its evolution into the system of diagnosis and treatment I call Shin So, or “deeper level” Shiatsu, unfolds in the chapters to follow.
This is more than a story about my research. It’s the story about the path I stepped onto, and the many teachers, researchers, and practitioners whose own lifelong quests built that path. The greatest gift is the gift of knowledge. My deepest gratitude goes to the sages whose classical writings we are still exploring, to Shizuto Masunaga and Tokujiru Namikoshi, the fathers of shiatsu as we know it today. And to the acupuncturist Dr. Tadashi Irie who developed the Finger Test Method and generously shared it with me, and supported me in my research.

It was thanks to Dr. Irie’s pioneering work that I began the task of tracing and mapping the flow of the 12 Regular Meridians. As I became more adept with the technique, I went on to uncover the complex interrelationships between these “main” meridians and the deeper Extra, Divergent, Ocean, and Cosmic systems.

Over the years, this work has proven both challenging and exhilarating. I have often felt as if I was on a jungle expedition in search of hidden treasure. Many times, I have been lost and forced back to the starting point. Many times, I have experienced the elation of uncovering something completely new and potentially very useful, only to learn my “discovery” had already been chronicled by the ancient masters. At other times, I have been most fortunate that invaluable insights and guidance have come to me via my dreams.

The greatest highlights of this undulating journey have been in bringing new approaches to my patients. The joy I feel in finding ways to help them is more than enough to make me forget wrong turns and relentless searching. Yet even here, there have been failures and disappointments. I have come to appreciate this as the nature of research.

I have used the Finger Test Method faithfully in my own practice for nearly two decades now, and it continues to refine and expand my meridian research. It has proven invaluable, reliable, and, perhaps most importantly, transmissible. Many of my students throughout North America and Europe, shiatsu practitioners for many years, had given up on ever being able to locate meridians precisely, relying on charts and some degree of intuition. But after attending just their first Shin So Shiatsu workshop, they were very excited to find themselves accurately tracing these pathways.
While I have written this book primarily for shiatsu therapists, acupuncturists and other practitioners with a basic theoretical and working background in meridian therapy, it is my wish that it offer insight and inspiration to anyone drawn to working with the meridians as a diagnostic and treatment tool. Newcomers to the field will find it useful to explore existing works introducing shiatsu, which are cited in the bibliography at the end of the book.

**What is Shin So Shiatsu?**

Shin So Shiatsu enables any practitioner to sense and precisely trace the multitude of meridian pathways in the human body, to identify the levels at which energy imbalances occur, and treat those imbalances. We don’t memorize where meridians and treatment points are; we feel where they are.

Shin So Shiatsu is what shiatsu becomes when we are able to sense energy and work with it in very precise ways. It is what evolved naturally from my three decades of research and practice with Masunaga’s legacy, Dr. Irie’s Finger Test Method, and a system of sound diagnosis all incorporated into a detailed, practical, and accurate method of diagnosing and treating patients.

Shin So Shiatsu (深层指压) translates directly into English as “deeper level shiatsu.” On a most literal level, this refers to its embrace of the deeper levels of the energy matrix. In other words, Shin So Shiatsu addresses not only the 12 Regular Meridians that most meridian-based shiatsu styles focus on, it also actively engages the less-known, extremely important Extra, Divergent, Ocean, and Cosmic meridian systems.

More than this, Shin So adds a deeper level to our personal exploration of shiatsu. It urges us to work from our tandens and our spirits. It gives our practices, and our lives, a sense of purpose and progress. It brings to our workday the excitement of being on an adventure; the feeling that, finally, we’re on to something — that same “something” that drew us to shiatsu in the first place.
How Does Shin So Shiatsu Work?

We can see the interplay of energy systems within the human body as a microcosm of the world around us (this is illustrated in figure 8-4 on page 132).

Rain falls to Earth, filling intricate networks of rivers and streams. These waterways flow through vast and varied terrains to reach, as their final destination, the ocean. Immeasurable volumes of water flow seaward continuously, and yet, thanks to the powerful energy of the sun and the process of evaporation, we are not inundated. This evaporation creates more clouds and more rain, which again, falls to Earth.

This cycle repeats itself within the human body. Our bodies are like the Earth. The energy that fills the cosmos and is absorbed into us is like the rain. This cosmic energy accumulates and flows throughout our bodies via the Regular Meridian system. From time to time, in order to regulate the energy volume, major tributaries — the Extra and Divergent Meridians — will siphon off some of this ocean-bound flow. The flow finally enters the Oceans System, and from there is re-absorbed into the Tai Kyoku (Cosmic) System. Meanwhile, our bodies absorb fresh Cosmic Energy.

Such adjustments in energy levels are very specific responses to the body’s needs. Disturbances from either within our bodies, or without, will elicit a cascade of reactions — engaging first the Regular Meridians, then the Extra Meridians, and, when the disturbance is strong enough or persistent enough, the Divergent Meridians, and even the Ocean and Cosmic energy systems.

In striving to regain homeostasis and reduce the strain being placed upon it, this complicated multi-meridians system will “ask” for assistance. This is where Shin So Shiatsu enters the scene. Our approach is to identify the deepest level at which this effort is taking place, eliminate the disturbance, support the meridian system in question, and restore balance to it.

Our diagnosis of a patient may reveal, for example, that only their Regular Meridian system is engaged in such a regulatory response. We say, in other words, the Regular Meridian system is “out of balance.” We may proceed to find that this imbalance has engaged the Regular
Meridians as they manifest in their third degree, i.e. the deepest level within this system. We identify precisely which of these third-degree meridians are most affected: which one is the most kyo and which one is the most jitsu. By treating and re-balancing just these two meridians, the remaining 10 will also fall into balance. We do not need to treat all 12 Regular Meridians one by one.

In another situation, we may find that body's effort to fend off disease has penetrated beyond the Regular Meridians to affect the Extra and Divergent Meridian systems. What do we do?

We treat the Divergent Meridians first. And remarkably, in doing this, balance will be restored to both the Extra and Regular Meridian systems even though they do not directly receive treatment.

In this case, if we were to address only the Regular Meridians and not the Divergent Meridians, we might be able to achieve balance — but only in the Regular Meridians. And the dis-ease, still rooted in the deeper system, would quickly push the Regular Meridian system out of balance again. Although we might see an improvement in the patient's condition, it would only be temporary, and the individual would soon be seeking help again.

Practitioners of Shizuto Masunaga's Zen Shiatsu approach have been trained to work only with the Regular Meridians. I have come to realize this is not enough: in addressing the deeper meridian systems, our treatments will be more effective than we could ever imagine. Masunaga Sensei devoted his life to building the foundations of meridian shiatsu. To honour his efforts, it is time to take his work this step further.

**Why Practice Shin So Shiatsu?**

Shiatsu therapists have traditionally relied on touch — palpation of the hara or back — to diagnose meridian imbalances. Shin So Shiatsu uses the Finger Test Method to obtain very specific information from a vast array of reflex zones and meridians throughout the body.

There are important advantages to using this method. Firstly, diagnostic speed and accuracy can be quickly achieved. Years of special training are needed to master the more traditional palpation skills,
and few ever attain a level that will make this a reliable method for them. Working with the finger test actually facilitates development of better palpation skills.

Secondly, the Shin So approach has a built-in system for confirming diagnoses. This has been a huge challenge with the palpation method, where practitioners, unless gifted with exceptional sensitivity, are rarely able to corroborate one another’s results. I have seen many therapists lose confidence and eventually abandon diagnosis altogether because of this uncertainty. Confirmation helps clarify and strengthen our treatments.

Thirdly, the finger test allows Shin So Shiatsu therapists to pinpoint structural and alignment problems, locate the source of joint or muscle pain, and diagnose other conditions.

Fourthly, in the very dynamic ki-meridian system, we can feel fluctuations as they occur. We can feel pathways becoming more or less unbalanced. At the end of a Shin So treatment, we will know whether the patient’s meridian system has been balanced or still needs work.

The finger test is a powerful tool for diagnosing, confirming and reassessing imbalances, but even more importantly, it increases the depth and manner of our communication with the ki-meridian system, giving us direct access to energy dimensions that until now have been out of our reach.

Other Benefits of the Shin So Shiatsu System

- The key elements of Shin So Shiatsu can be integrated into any shiatsu style, as well as acupuncture and other forms of therapy. I consider shiatsu an art: each therapist is an individual, each treatment unique. Shin So Shiatsu encourages and facilitates this.

- The practice of Shin So Shiatsu cultivates in us a greater sense of presence and self awareness and helps bring our own energy into better balance. Our treatments become more efficient, less labour intensive. After a day of Shin So treatments, we feel refreshed and inspired.
• Shin So Shiatsu can be integrated into our daily lives. With the finger test, we can test our own and our children’s energetic receptivity to certain foods; we can determine how close we can sit to the television or computer before we begin to absorb too much surface ja ki. In the event that we do absorb it, we can also clear it away.

• The community of Shin So practitioners is growing worldwide. For information sharing and training opportunities, see page 156.

What is in this Book?

This book contains the theoretical and practical information you will need to become proficient in the art of Shin So Shiatsu. Carry it with you everywhere: to your Shin So Shiatsu workshops, your treatment space, the summer cottage, and breakfast table.

In Chapter 1 you will find a review of the Regular Meridian system with which you are likely most familiar. You will see in plain terms how this seemingly one-dimensional grid, as presented on contemporary TCM charts, has its own “deeper levels.”

This more detailed view of the Regular Meridians is part of that ancient body of Oriental medical theory lost to us for a time. This recovered knowledge provides a context for exciting new findings, such as those described in Chapter 2, linking meridians to energy circles and meridian belt zones.

Chapter 3 puts you in the driver’s seat with specific instructions for performing the Finger Test Method and sound imaging. You will practice tracing meridians, energy circles, and meridian belt zones. Chapter 4 provides you with some general rules of the road — basic principles of Shin So Shiatsu — before you receive detailed instructions for the Shin So diagnosis and treatment of the Regular, Extra, Divergent, Ocean, and Tai Kyoku (Cosmic) systems in Chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

All of this is accompanied by the Shin So Shiatsu Practitioner’s Reference Manual, which contains your navigational aids: the finger test sensors, meridian charts, and sound images that you will need to practice Shin So Shiatsu. While you will find it helpful to gradually memorize
the sensors and sound images, the meridian charts are there simply to reassure you that you are on track. There is no other way to learn than by doing. Don’t hesitate to flip the Reference Manual open and refer to it during a treatment: your patients won’t mind.

**How Does One Learn Shin So Shiatsu?**

The basic techniques of Shin So Shiatsu can be learned quickly, and as soon as you are introduced to them you will be able to feel meridian energy. While learning the system, students benefit profoundly by being able to “tune in” to the energy of an experienced teacher. The teacher also helps them interpret what they are feeling on an energetic level.

Shin So Shiatsu is taught as a post-graduate course for shiatsu practitioners (or when appropriate, those experienced in other forms of bodywork or energy work). It is usually offered in a series of five or more intensive three- or four-day workshops each scheduled five to six months apart. Between workshops, review days help keep students in tune with their new practice. For more information, see page 156.

**The Future of Shiatsu Therapy**

The three decades of research described in this book have opened up new avenues for diagnosis and treatment. Major outcomes include:

- A complete charting of the flow patterns for the Regular, Extra, and Divergent meridians, and thorough descriptions of the Ocean and Cosmic energy systems;

- A more complete understanding of the relationships between each of these systems and the development of methods to determine just when, where, and how, one system engages with another;

- New charts to facilitate diagnosis and treatment;

- The development of new treatment protocols for each system.
It is my hope that these developments will offer therapists better tools to help their patients deal with more serious levels of imbalance, as well as encourage and inspire others to carry out more research in this field. For many years, members of our profession have struggled to understand more deeply the implications of energetic imbalances in the body. I believe that through this research we can accomplish this and develop even more effective, more powerful treatments.
Regular Meridians Revisited

in the fog
for a friend coming out of the fog
I keep waiting

- Seisensui Ogiwara -
In this chapter, you will learn:

- How our understanding of meridians is changing.
- How the TCM meridian chart represents a simplified view of energy pathways.
- How each Regular Meridian actually has three routes.
The Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) chart of meridians and acupuncture points has become a symbol of Oriental medicine. It is an invaluable tool for practitioners visualizing and working with the patterns of energy flow throughout the human body. However, it is rarely acknowledged that this energy road map is a simplified version of a far more complex web of routes. Some information has been left out deliberately for practical reasons as we will discuss; some information has been forgotten over time or abandoned in the wake of cultural and political evolution and revolution; and much information awaits discovery.

While the TCM chart outlines essential points along the 12 Regular or main meridians and includes the Conception and Governing vessels, it ultimately leaves out far more than it includes. It does not address, for example, a multitude of anomalies in the points as they appear along the meridians, or irregularities in the meridians themselves as they transit the body from head to foot.

The TCM chart reveals nothing at all of the relationships between the Regular Meridians and other major meridian systems not on the chart — the Extra, Divergent, Ocean, and Cosmic systems. And while the detail presented on the standard TCM chart may be adequate for many acupuncturists, shiatsu therapists and other practitioners who focus upon the body's subtle energy systems would benefit greatly from a more precise knowledge of this much vaster meridian network. This could take Oriental medicine's focus well beyond the current emphasis on treatment with needles, and in doing so, greatly enhance the potential of our work.
The TCM Acupuncture Chart: An Efficient Shorthand

The TCM acupuncture chart we are familiar with today is based upon Katsupaku Jin’s revisionary Juyon Kei Raku Hatsuki (an Elucidation of Fourteen Meridians), published in 1341. He is better known to the Chinese as Hua Shou, and his treatise, as Shi-si Jing Hui. Still an essential guide for understanding the energy flow of the human body, the chart illustrates specific acupuncture points along fixed pathways. It presents us with what appears to be a series of distinct, threadlike lines running vertically throughout the body: these represent the Regular Meridians — six channels on the arms and six on the legs — as well as two Extra Meridians on the torso. Especially in the energetically complex areas of the head and around the ankles, the illustrated pathways depart abruptly from their linear tendency to zigzag or circle in tight loops. I had often wondered how these awkward lines could be a true rendering of “natural” energy pathways.

It turns out I have not been alone in questioning the veracity or usefulness of these skinny, erratic lines. A growing chorus in the field of meridian research argues that energy actually travels via a relatively wide band comprised of three parallel channels flowing throughout the body. What was known? What waits to be discovered? Putting it all together falls to us.
The Twelve Meridians: Three Levels of Imbalance

The classics acknowledge what the TCM chart does not and cannot show. Each of the 12 Regular Meridians can manifest at a first, second, or third level of imbalance, with the latter reflecting the deepest or most chronic level of illness. Further, at each of these levels, the meridian will shift its position: in other words, it will flow along a slightly different pathway.

First-level Imbalance: 平脈
Hei-myaku (Normal State)

As long as we are alive, no matter how healthy we feel, we will always experience some degree of energetic disharmony. Our body's various systems are always exerting themselves to maintain homeostasis, and this effort is reflected in the meridian system. So, even when our body is relatively "well balanced," we can still detect signs of compensation in the meridians. In shiatsu, energetic disharmony is described in terms of kyo and jitsu, where kyo represents a deficient, quieted, or slowed quality of energy, and jitsu reflects a relatively excessive or quickened quality.

The hei-myaku state represents the first level of imbalance, yet it is also what we would describe as the most normal energy state. This means that a subtle disharmony exists even though there may be no symptoms or signs of disease. We would, ideally, find a "natural imbalance" in which both the Stomach and Kidney meridians are kyo, and the Liver and Large Intestine meridians are jitsu. This particular pattern seems to reflect the deeply significant role of these four meridians in absorbing, creating, and refining ki in the body (see Chapter 4). While in the hei-myaku state, these meridians (and the remaining eight Regular Meridians) will maintain their normal, first-degree flow patterns.

Second-level Imbalance: 是動病
Ze-do-byo (Meridian Disease)

When greater demands are made on the meridian system — for example, if it tries to fight off a pathogen, accommodate mental or emotional stress, or correct some bodily weakness — then its level of imbalance deepens. In this case, the meridians mainly charged with correcting this imbalance will start to flow in their second-degree pathways. The imbalance has "spilled over" into the second degree,

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TCM</th>
<th>Shin So Shiatsu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hei-myaku</td>
<td>a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>平脈</td>
<td>First-degree imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Normal, balanced</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ze-do-byo</td>
<td>Second-degree imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>是動病</td>
<td>c</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meridian disease</td>
<td>Third-degree imbalance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sho-sei-byo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>所生病</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organ disease</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1-2 The three levels of Regular Meridian imbalance as denoted in the TCM and Shin So Shiatsu systems respectively
a condition known as ze-do-byo, or “meridian disease.” The imbalance may not necessarily be deep enough to affect our zang-fu organs, yet we will certainly feel some symptoms.

We can liken the different pathways of a single meridian to wires with different capacities for handling electricity. When an imbalance is more than the first-degree pathways can handle, it spills over into second degree, engaging the higher-capacity pathways of the second-degree flow. This is not an exact metaphor: we cannot say at this time that meridians in second degree handle a “greater current” or “higher vibration” than first-degree channels. However, it is clear that the activation of second-degree pathways represents an increased level of activity on the part of the meridian system — a stronger effort to restore harmonious functioning to the organism.

When the meridian system is in the ze-do-byo state, we will find one second-degree meridian to be kyo, and one to be jitsu. The other 10 meridians however, will maintain their first-degree flow pattern.

Third-level Imbalance: 所生病 Sho-sei-byo (Organ Disease)

This is the deepest level of disharmony within the Regular Meridian system. When an imbalance requires more energy to be brought to bear on it than the second-degree channels can accommodate, the imbalance will “spill over” into the third-degree pathways. Again this will manifest in one third-degree meridian exhibiting a kyo state, and another a jitsu state: this imbalance is more clearly apparent than in the first two levels.

Patients with a sho-sei-byo imbalance still may not present a clinically detectable organ illness: this depends upon the nature of the imbalance and the individual. Yet this is seen as a deeper level of disharmony, one closer to directly involving the internal organs, and thus described as “organ disease.”

What the Classics Say

The classics of Oriental medicine distinguish symptoms that might be experienced at these three levels. For example, a patient with the Kidney Meridian at the ze-do-byo (meridian-disease) level, may experience poor appetite, darker face color, bad cough with blood, eye problems, an unclear mind, and fear. At the sho-sei-byo (organ-disease) level, symptoms might progress to include heat sensations in the mouth, swelling, dryness, sore throat, diarrhea, hot sensations on the bottom of the feet, and cold sensations on the lower leg.

Although many of these tri-level symptoms have been documented, their integration into meridian-based treatments has been limited by our inability as therapists to appreciate exactly what the meridians are doing. What my research has been able to do is show is a clear correlation between this body of theoretical knowledge and the behavior of meridians in the body.

Toward a More Complete Picture

The TCM chart presents portions of the meridians, largely as they appear in their first-degree, or normal state. A few segments of the chart reflect what I have identified as second- or third-degree flows, but these are not specified as such. In other words, the TCM chart is a conven-
ient shorthand for a much more complex energy matrix. Moving toward a more comprehensive view of the body’s energy flow, we must look to more contemporary research.

**Shizuto Masunaga: A Great Leap Forward**

Shizuto Masunaga’s controversial Shiatsu Meridian Chart, published in the 1960s, was a major departure from the TCM chart which was until then gospel to Japanese and Chinese therapists working with energy. I had the good fortune to study with Masunaga at the Japan Shiatsu College in Tokyo between 1966 and 1968.

Masunaga was born in Hiroshima Prefecture in 1925, to a family of shiatsu practitioners. He studied psychology at Kyoto University, then stepped into the field of shiatsu to become one of the most gifted therapists of his day. For 10 years he taught psychology at the Japan Shiatsu College under Tokujiro Namikoshi, while continuing his own studies under Dr. Fusa-jiro Kato, a highly respected psychiatric doctor and pioneer in the field of occupational therapy. He then founded the Iokai Center to teach his own evolving shiatsu approach.

Masunaga’s studies in psychology had a deep impact on his approach to shiatsu. He recognized both the physical and psychological components of energy imbalances, and explored these connections in his published work. He brought many other innovations to shiatsu, including supplementation and sedation via the use of two hands, the categorizing of meridian imbalances in terms of kyo and jitsu (broadly: “deficient” and “excess”), and a protocol of meridian imagery exercises. Yet it is his expanded network of meridians, illustrated in his chart, which has been his most significant and controversial legacy.

Masunaga possessed three qualities that made him a genius in the field of meridian research and treatment. He had

Figure 1-3 Shizuto Masunaga in Toronto, Canada in 1980. Ted Saito is immediately to his right.
an insatiable appetite for the classics of Oriental medicine and, right up to the end of his life, cherished every minute he could spend with them. Masunaga’s mastery of this literature nourished his passion for clinical research. In this, he set himself apart from his peers who were mainly concerned with transferring the existing system of acupuncture points and meridians into shiatsu practice.

He wrote: “For a long time I was trying to find a pattern in the systemic responses of my patients. Just when I thought I had it, I was astounded to find that it already existed in ancient China in the form of meridians. However, the more I researched meridians, the more I came to realize that the classical meridian approach was a convenient shorthand for acupuncture treatment.”

It was Masunaga’s third and perhaps most unusual capacity that empowered his relentless hands-on exploration of ki and meridians, and shiatsu’s influence upon them. Masunaga possessed what we call meijin-gei in Japanese, “master’s skill,” the rare ability to sense ki as it flows through the meridians. He could feel the complex relationships between meridians, and was able to diagnose the condition of the whole body from the hara. I once asked Masunaga’s wife, Keiko Masunaga, how he did this — whether she recalled him developing his sensitivity through any particular techniques such as meditation or qi gong. She recalled none.

Masunaga’s work crystallized into his own Zen Shiatsu system. His chart — with its 12 meridians running the full length of the body and unique hara (abdominal) diagnostic system — was an instant sensation. I remember many heated debates over whether or not Masunaga’s “new” routes existed. Yet, despite initial skepticism, Masunaga’s chart has remained central to a popular and enduring meridian-based shiatsu approach.

Between 1975 and 1980, Masunaga made regular visits to Canada to teach workshops at The Shiatsu Centre I had just established in Toronto. Shiatsu was as new and exotic as acupuncture to North Americans, and a handful of energetic young practitioners, also new to the West, were engaged in the monumental task of building its reputation. We had little to offer Masunaga in payment for his visits or even his travel expenses, but he continued to journey halfway around the globe to support his students and share what he knew.

What I heard most from Masunaga during those times was the importance of developing a high level of diagnostic skill. He felt this was what distinguished a professional from an unprofessional therapist. Without a strong foundation in Oriental medical theory and a good working knowledge of the meridian system, he explained, a therapist could not properly diagnose or provide effective treatment. “It is not important how many hours one has studied,” he once told me, “or even how many years one has practiced. It is the manner of study enabling strong diagnostic ability that matters.” Beyond this, he believed students must be trained to sense, communicate with, and diagnose through the meridians.

My deep appreciation for Masunaga Sensei and the depth of his insights fuels my commitment to continue with the work he began but was unable to finish before his untimely death in 1981.
Figure 1-4a Masunaga’s meridian chart was published in the 1960s: only now are some of its mysteries being resolved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meridian Name</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meridian Name</th>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lung</td>
<td>LN</td>
<td>Large Intestine</td>
<td>LI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spleen</td>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Stomach</td>
<td>ST</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart</td>
<td>HT</td>
<td>Small Intestine</td>
<td>SI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kidney</td>
<td>KD</td>
<td>Bladder</td>
<td>BL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heart Constrictor</td>
<td>HC</td>
<td>Triple Heater</td>
<td>TH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liver</td>
<td>LV</td>
<td>Gallbladder</td>
<td>GB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governor</td>
<td>GV</td>
<td>Conception</td>
<td>CV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1-4b Abbreviation of meridian names
Beyond Zen Shiatsu: Saito Regular Meridians

While Masunaga’s controversial system represented what I believed to be a much more complete picture of the human energy matrix than the TCM chart, it remained unproven and unexplained in the years following his death. With Dr. Tadashi Irie’s Finger Test Method (see Chapter 3) and its potential for locating energy pathways, I took on the task of exploring and charting the Regular Meridians for myself. It became readily apparent that not just one, but three distinctive pathways existed for each of the 12 Regular Meridians. This supported what I had read in the classics, and led me to the astonishing discovery, mentioned above, that meridian pathways will shift in a very particular pattern depending on the level of imbalance within the energy system.

I was able to draw detailed charts for each of the three levels. When I compared my findings with Masunaga’s, I realized that for the most part he had drawn the Regular Meridians as they would appear at the third, or deepest, level of disharmony. In a few small instances, his rendition overlaps with what I would consider to be the second level of disharmony.

Figure 1-5a shows us how closely Masunaga’s pathway for the Large Intestine Meridian compares to that meridian in third-degree as I have charted it (figure 1-5d and 1-5e). Figures 1-5b and 1-5c illustrate first- and second-degree flows for the Large Intestine Meridian.

Why had Masunaga charted only the third level? I recalled him saying that, despite his sensitivity, it had not been easy to map the energy flow for the entire body. Knowingly or unknowingly, perhaps, he chose models with more serious health problems, whose more imbalanced meridian flows were easier for him to sense. Perhaps also, he knew that if the more serious third level was addressed, the other two levels would regulate automatically, and thus his priority would have been to present the third level in chart form to his students.
Figure 1-5b Saito Large Intestine Meridian: first-degree flow

Figure 1-5d Saito Large Intestine Meridian: third-degree flow

Figure 1-5c Saito Large Intestine Meridian: second-degree flow

Figure 1-5e Saito Large Intestine Meridian: third-degree flow
Regular Meridians Up Close

As earlier mentioned, TCM meridians appear as single, narrow lines of energy running throughout the body. My research has confirmed not only that three pathways exist for each meridian (corresponding to the three levels of imbalance), but also that each of these three pathways exists as three parallel lines — where each line represents an area of higher energy density and the spaces between these lines represent areas of much lower density. This concurs with findings published by Dr. Rokuro Fujita and Tsutomu Kishi, Dr. Ac. (An Introduction to Meridianology, So Gen-Sha, Osaka, Japan, 1980).

Figure 1-6a and 1-6b illustrate these varying energy densities relative to the total meridian width. Points a, b, and c represent the higher density areas, easily detected with the Finger Test Method.

Figure 1-7 illustrates the three lines of the Stomach Meridian on the lateral aspect of the leg.

My research also supports Fujita and Kishi in their observation that acupuncture points are situated along all three of these parallel lines, as shown in figure 1-8.

The energy density, or diameter, of acupuncture points also varies: some points overlap onto other lines, as shown in figure 1-9.

Figure 1-10 illustrates how acupuncture points might appear along the three parallel lines of any given meridian.

We can see how cleaning up what seem to be superfluous lines on the meridian pathway results in the TCM chart’s distinctive point-to-point sketch of the body’s energy flow. To create this leaner and easy-to-read chart, two lines have been
eliminated. But, since many important and effective acupuncture points are situated on the eliminated lines, a single-lined illustration would result in the unnatural looking flow illustrated in figure 1-11.

Drawing a line that connects these acupuncture points creates the zigzags and loops characteristic of the TCM chart. This is most apparent for the Gallbladder, Small Intestine, Stomach, and Triple Heater meridians, as illustrated in figure 1-12.

Figure 1-13 shows the Kidney Meridian as it appears on the TCM chart and as it appears with three parallel lines of energy flow. The TCM chart’s Kidney Meridian loops below the ankle, but in our bodies, it flows more naturally, as a stream would.

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**Figure 1-10**

![Meridian Width and Acupuncture Point](image)

**Figure 1-11**

![TCM Meridian and Acupuncture Point](image)

**Figure 1-12**

These four TCM meridians follow particularly erratic routes.

**Figure 1-13a**

![TCM Kidney Meridian](image)

**Figure 1-13b**

Saito Kidney Meridian
An Overview of TCM Simplifications

While each of the 12 meridians run the body's full length, the TCM chart presents only portions of the external pathways, so it appears that only six meridians flow on the upper body and six on the lower body.

- Only the exterior portions of the meridians, and not their internal branches, are illustrated on the TCM chart.

- While the energy of each meridian flows in three parallel lines, the TCM chart illustrates only one line, but incorporates onto that key points from the other two lines.

- While there are three levels of energy flow — and hence distinct lines of flow for each level — the TCM chart shows us mostly the first level and primarily points associated with the first level. In a few instances, however, acupuncture points for all three levels of imbalance have been incorporated onto one line, adding to the appearance of a zigzagged pathway. A good example of this is the distribution of the Gallbladder Meridian on the side of the head, as in figure 1-14.

  While the ancients likely understood that a complexity of points lay along a multi-dimensional course, the TCM chart leaves us with a very two-dimensional view. Here are a few more examples:

  - We know yin energy normally ascends, but information missing on the TCM chart leads to the impression that Spleen energy descends from SP 20 to SP 21.
• The TCM chart does not show how the Spleen Meridian connects to the Spleen Bo Point (Front Mu Point) at LV 13. My research shows that in the case of a third-degree imbalance, the Spleen Meridian connects to LV 13.

• The Small Intestine and Stomach meridians are far more complex than the TCM chart suggests, as seen in figures 1-15 and 1-16.

Where They Flow:
The Regular Meridians in General

We can make the following generalizations about the flow patterns for the Regular Meridians in the human body:

• All 12 Regular Meridians flow throughout the whole body.

• Regardless of the degree of imbalance, all six yang Regular meridians begin at GV 20 and at the fingertips, and end at KD 1. All six yin Regular meridians begin at KD 1 and end at GV 20 as well as the fingertips.

• All 12 Regular Meridians flow through the eyes.

• All six yin meridians pass through the genital region.

Yin Regular Meridians in First and Second Degree

From KD 1, the yin meridians run up and inside the leg. From the inner thigh, below the genitals, the energy branches into two divisions. One branch overlaps the Conception Vessel and flows along this meridian to
the chest, then branches to the arms and runs to the fingertips where the meridians end. The second branch flows from the abdomen, to the chest, neck, and face, finishing at the top of the head at GV 20.

The pathway of this first branch differs slightly in men and women. In males, the first branch flows into the scrotum, then into the root of the penis, looping down the posterior and then up the anterior side of the penis before following the Conception Vessel up the abdomen. In women, this flow will go to the clitoris and then travels via the Conception Vessel to the navel, and up via the Penetrating Meridian.

**Yang Regular Meridians in First and Second Degree**

Energy from the yin meridians transfers to the yang meridians at GV 20 and the fingertips where the yin meridians end. The yang energy from the fingertips runs along the posterior aspect of the arm to the shoulder, where it meets with the yang energy that has descended through the face, neck, and shoulder from GV 20. These two branches join, and descend as one energy flow through the chest, abdomen, leg and foot, ending at KD 1. The one exception is the Bladder Meridian, which manifests a flow along the dorsal side of the body, but only in its second-degree flow, not in first degree. No yang meridian transits the back of the body in first degree.

**Yin Regular Meridians in Third Degree**

The pathways for the yin meridians in first or second degree are very similar, appearing only on the body’s ventral aspect,
not the dorsal. When the imbalance advances to the third degree, however, the energy flow appears at both ventral and dorsal aspects of the body.

Again, all yin meridians begin at KD 1 and flow up the inner thigh, but from here the flow branches into three directions as follows:

- One branch begins near the genital region and follows a pattern similar to the yin Regular Meridians in first- and second-degree states. That is to say, one branch runs with the Conception Vessel (in men; with the Conception Vessel and then Penetrating Vessel in women) before splitting to run into the arms, while another runs up the torso to end at GV 20.

- One branch flows up the leg medially and into GV 1, then flows diagonally up the back and around the chest to reconnect with the branch running up the ventral part of the torso.

- A third branch runs parallel to the spine from GV 1 to GV 20.

In observing the third-degree flow for yin meridians, several interesting details emerge, some of which help us to make more sense of the TCM chart, while others help us to understand issues which puzzled those who studied Masunaga’s early chart. For example:

- In the course of my research, questions have arisen regarding Bo points or Mu points. For example, as I trace the Large Intestine Meridian in third degree, I can sense the Large Intestine Meridian Bo Point in its classical location at ST 25.
Strangely however, while TCM theory puts the Kidney Bo Point on the Gallbladder Meridian at GB 25, I have been unable to sense any Kidney Meridian energy there. I have found that when the Kidney Meridian reaches the third degree of imbalance, KD 16 begins to vibrate, activating the third-degree hara diagnostic zone.

- It is also important to note that both the Kidney and Lung meridians in the third degree flow along the posterior, not the medial side of the upper leg. Looking at Masunaga’s chart, we see how similar his trajectories are for these meridians. Figure 1-19 illustrates the general flow of the yin Regular Meridians in third degree.

**Yang Regular Meridians in Third Degree**

- All of the yang meridians begin at GV 20 as well as the fingertips, where the yin meridians end. From the top of the head at GV 20, the energy branches in two directions.

- The first branch, beginning at GV 20, follows the anterior aspect of the face, through the eye, neck, chest, and abdomen, travelling to the leg and foot, ending at KD 1. The portion of the meridian beginning at the fingertips follows the posterior aspect of the arm to the shoulder.

- A second branch, from GV 20, descends the posterior of the head to the neck and shoulder. At the shoulder, it connects with the yang energies rising from the fingertips, and as one flow, travels...
down the back, to the hip and leg. This flow travels around the buttocks and upper thigh to connect with the former branch, beginning at GV 20, that runs down the anterior aspect of the body. These two flows reconnect at a particular point (depending on the meridian) along the antero-lateral aspect of the thigh and lower leg, and travel together along the lower leg to end at KD 1. See figure 1-20.

Once we understand how third-degree energy flow manifests in distinct pathways on the back, it becomes clearer why this part of the body tends to “speak out more” in cases of serious or chronic illness. It is only when an imbalance reaches the third or “organ-disease” level, that the Regular Meridians manifest here. Hence, this becomes an essential area for rebalancing the meridians.

This phenomenon also sheds more light on the importance accorded the Bladder Meridian in acupuncture. Many significant points exits along this pathway, notably the back Transporting Points (Shu Points), which are considered to be directly related to organ function.

Yet this is clearly another simplification from the TCM chart. The Bladder Meridian is not the only Regular Meridian to transit the back of the body: all of the Regular Meridians do so when they reach a third-degree state of imbalance.
New Phenomena
Energy Circles and Meridian Belt Zones

seaside temple...
among the wood chips
irises

- Issa Kobayashi -
In this chapter, you will learn:

• How the meridian system is more than a series of linear pathways.
• How energy circles take many forms.
• How meridian belt zones help us locate meridian lines.
Chapter 2

New Phenomena
Energy Circles and Meridian Belt Zones

Using the Finger Test Method, I was able to develop a more extensive knowledge of the Regular Meridians than I had dreamed possible. But this was just the tip of the iceberg. As my meridian tracing skills increased, so did my sensitivity to other forms of energy.

I continued to explore lingering questions about Shizuto Masunaga’s groundbreaking work, particularly his charts of the hara and back diagnostic zones. Although they had been in wide use since the early 1970s, they had not been fully explained or further developed. There were also his meridian stretch positions, faithfully adopted by a generation of therapists, although no one had satisfactorily clarified their relationship to the meridians.

As my research progressed, I found explanations for these puzzles in two unusual energetic phenomena. The first, energy circles — detectable circles of energy located anywhere on the surface of the body — provided me with a larger context for Masunaga’s hara diagnostic zones. The second, meridian belt zones — bands of energy covering the entire body from head to toe — provided a context not only for Masunaga’s back diagnostic zones, but also for his meridian stretch positions. Both play central roles in Shin So diagnosis and treatment.
Meridian Diagnostic Zones are Energy Circles

Anyone who has practiced Zen Shiatsu is familiar with Masunaga’s chart of unusual hara diagnostic zones: a sea of elongated, sometimes overlapping “islands” covering the entire belly from sternum to pubis. It is here, in the abdomen, that the condition of the meridians is reflected. Hara diagnosis, so central to Zen Shiatsu, is somewhat similar to acupuncture’s pulse assessment. Although, as I have mentioned, new students and well-seasoned therapists alike are challenged by the difficulties of mastering hara diagnosis by palpation.

My research, using the finger test to locate and map the Regular Meridians, led me quite naturally to a re-examination of Masunaga’s meridian diagnostic zones on the hara. My own findings confirmed many aspects of Masunaga’s chart, but I also uncovered some significant and helpful differences.

Three levels of Imbalance

Just as meridian locations shift with the degree of energy imbalance, so do hara diagnostic zones. Figure 2-1 shows us Masunaga’s hara diagnostic chart; figures 2-2a, 2-2b, and 2-2c show the Saito hara diagnostic zones as they appear at all three levels of imbalance.

A closer look at the Masunaga and Saito abdominal charts turned up interesting correspondences. For instance, the Bladder and Kidney diagnostic zones on the Masunaga chart appear as U-shaped curves on the lower abdomen below the navel. On my charts, the same meridian zones appear more circular, and smaller. But when my tri-level charts are overlapped — so that we can see all three degrees of imbalance for the Bladder or Kidney zones in one image (see figures 2-3a and 2-3b) — Masunaga’s overall pattern re-emerges (figure 2-3c). Whether or not he distinguished them, Masunaga was sensing all three levels as they curved under the navel area.

Masunaga’s Large Intestine zone corresponds to my second-degree diagnostic zone for the Large Intestine. At this point, I cannot explain why he presented this particular view, nor can I explain our divergent views of the Small Intestine zone. Further research will no doubt shed more light on this.

I have found that most of the diagnostic zones for the yin organs that run along the lower costal area (LV, HT, HC, LN) shift upward from the hara to the mid- and upper chest as the level of imbalance increases. Conversely, the diagnostic zones for the yang organs shift down. Although there is no reference to these shifts on Masunaga’s chart, I believe they reflect concepts of meridian- and organ-level disease understood by the ancients.

Figure 2-1 Masunaga’s hara diagnostic chart
Figure 2-2a First-degree Regular Meridian imbalance (Saito diagnostic zones)

Figure 2-2b Second-degree Regular Meridian imbalance (Saito diagnostic zones)

Figure 2-2c Third-degree Regular Meridian imbalance (Saito diagnostic zones)

Figure 2-3a Saito Kidney Meridian zones

Figure 2-3b Saito Bladder Meridian zones

Figure 2-3c Masunaga’s Bladder and Kidney diagnostic zones