

The Six Divisions

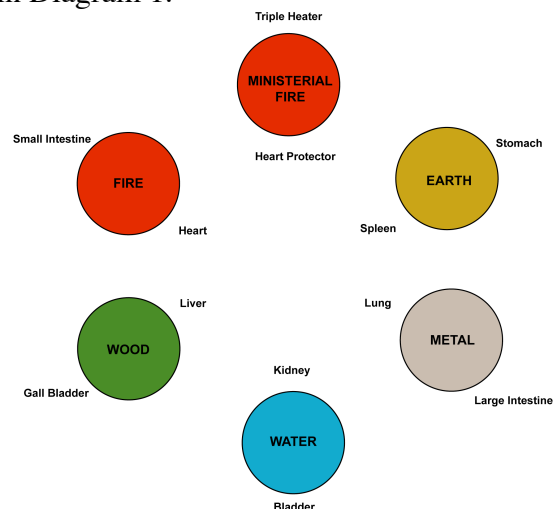
The structure of this book is like a spiral. From this point on, we will be explaining the theory, concepts and techniques of Movement Shiatsu in detail. Each chapter will deal with a different aspect of the work, but you will notice the same themes appearing almost every time. These themes are closely related to a categorisation of energies, traditional to Chinese Medicine, called the Six Divisions. The present chapter introduces this way of grouping energy functions.

Introduction

The energy functions described in traditional Chinese medicine are associated and embodied in pathways or ‘meridians’ on and inside the body. As we shall explain in Chapter 9, Movement Shiatsu views these pathways as connection pathways that the nervous system uses in the development of movement in infants. Each meridian runs into the arms or the legs but not both. For instance, the Lung meridian ends in the hand and the Spleen meridian begins in the foot but neither, traditionally, run in both arm and leg. Shizuto Masunaga extended the meridian system so that each meridian runs in all the limbs, expressing the opinion that holistic energy functions should be accessible everywhere.

However useful his extensions have been, they miss a point that was very important in ancient Chinese thought: “Arms reach to Heaven and Legs stand on the Earth”. [REF] We move our arms to express ourselves and to manipulate the outer world. They are particularly human limbs, since most other animals use their fore-limbs primarily for getting around. Since we have evolved into a vertical posture, the arms have become free to evolve fine manipulative and expressive movements.

The meridians can be classified into five groups, sometimes called the Five Elements which describe an underlying similarity in function between members of the group. This grouping is illustrated in Diagram 1.



The Fire and Metal meridians express energy functions which relate to the outer world and to our emotions and consciousness. So it makes sense that they should run in the arms.

The legs, on the other hand, are more related to supporting the body and to moving it. It is clear then that the Earth meridians, expressing the nourishment and support of the organism and the Water & Wood meridians, expressing the power of primal energy to move us and direct us, should run in the legs.

So the division of the meridians into the arms and the legs have a deep meaning which is specific to the relationship between energy and human anatomy. The Fire and Metal meridians are related to the Mind and to Heaven. The Earth, Wood and Water meridians are related to the Body and to the Earth Element. We now examine in detail how the functional structure of the limbs reflects the energy functions of the meridians running through them.

The Legs Relate to the Ground

The knee, tibia, talus and the first two toes have evolved to support the body and to push against the ground. The first and second toes articulate through the talus to the tibia.

DIAGRAMS OF THE LOWER LEG AND FOOT

The tibia is a strong straight bone through which force can be applied, so it connects to the ground and supports the body. The Earth meridians, energetically related to support and grounding run through this anatomical structure and end in the first and second toes

The Legs Move the Body

The fourth and fifth toes articulate through the cuboid and calcaneus to the fibular.

Research by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen [1,2] has shown how this section of the leg and the muscles attached to it, such as the *peroneus muscles*, are related to the development of postural alignment between the legs and the spine.

DIAGRAMS

Proper alignment means that force from the legs is transmitted smoothly into forward movement of the body. If this chain of structure is low in tone then a push from the legs tends to result in forces that push the body sideways rather than forwards. This means that the upper body needs to be controlled and contracted in order to pull the body back into the required line of movement.

Appropriately the Bladder and Gall Bladder channels, ending in these toes are energetically related to how we direct our Will smoothly into movement of the body i.e. how our intention is linked to our actions. The Bladder meridian guides the movements which bring the leg into alignment with the spine and tonifies the foot extensor muscles, such as the *gastrocnemius*, which initiate pushing actions such as walking and climbing.

DIAGRAM

In the torso, the Bladder channel provides support to the spine so that the horizontal component to the force is elastically 'contained'. Effectively the Bladder channel in the back helps the spine to act like a spring.

DIAGRAM

The Gall Bladder meridian provides support for the sides and also restrains the horizontal forces in the whole body. The muscular tone produced by balanced energy in the GB channel helps structures such as the pelvis, ribs and shoulder girdle to move as a unit with the force moving up the spine.

DIAGRAM

Low energy in the GB means that these structures 'wobble', dragging on the movement and causing a directionless feeling in the person. On the other hand, mis-alignment of the legs and spine require the GB to be hyper-tonified in order to pull the movement back into line. This results in a subjective experience of needing to be 'in control' and a lack of zestful spontaneity.

In essence, the Bladder channel provides the clarity of central alignment so that our Will can flow all the way through the body whilst the Gall Bladder channel restrains sideways movements and integrates the outer parts of the body with this central direction.

The Radial Arm Relates to Space

The elbow, radius, scaphoid, thumb and forefinger have evolved with their musculature to perform fine manipulative movements such as pinching, rotating and pointing. Jean Piaget and Daniel Stern have explored how these movements are used by children to learn the difference between self and other, to form concepts of the world and to create boundaries.

By trying to manipulate the world the child learns the extent and limits of her personal power and develops a sense of how far she 'extends' out into the space around her. This sense allows the energy to expand and fill the personal space. The pronation of the forearm combined with extension of the index finger, a movement guided by the Large Intestine meridian, is also used universally by humans to say 'No!'.

DIAGRAM

This movement is also used by children to define their personal space and to resist coercion. It is therefore appropriate that the Metal meridians, associated with the energy functions of personal expression and defence, run through this aspect of the arm.

The Ulna Arm Expresses the Centre

The ulna aspect of the arm is structurally more connected to the torso and, developmentally, to movements which involve the whole body. The movements of the Metal hand, articulated from the Scaphoid bone, are more precise. They are initiated from the fingers and forearm and can be limited to the distal arm.

The movements involving the ulna arm are integrative, wider and initiate from the central body. Structurally, this is because the ulna bone articulates directly with the elbow and movements of this bone involve not only local muscles but also ones which relate back to the spine such as the Latissimus Dorsi and the Rhomboids.

DIAGRAMS

The ulna articulates with the Lunate and Capitate bones in the wrist which form the foundation for the 3rd, 4th and 5th fingers. Appropriately, the Fire meridians run in these digits whose energy integrates and relates the whole self to the gesture of expression.

DIAGRAMS

The Six Divisions Connect Arms and Legs

So far we have been discussing how the function of the arms and legs are different. However, the four limbs are also functionally and anatomically parallel since they all evolved out of mammalian legs. Each hand and foot has five digits which articulate

through the wrist and ankle bones onto two limb bones. The proximal part of the limbs have one bone each. Thus the basic structure of the limbs is similar.

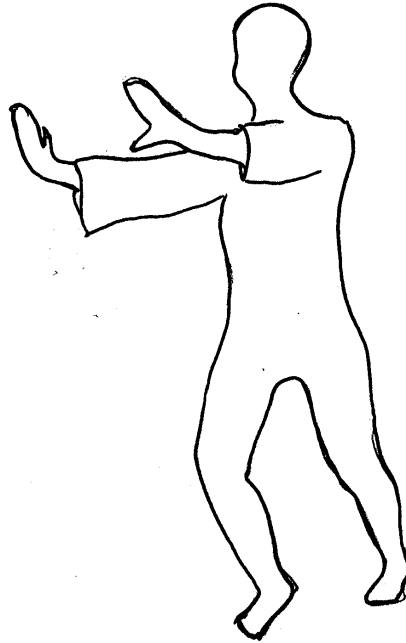
DIAGRAM

The Six Divisions are a traditional way of linking the meridians that run in the parallel anatomical structures of both upper and lower body. For example the Spleen meridian and the Lung meridian are joined into the Greater Yin meridian because they both have an end in the first digit of their limbs and run along the forward and inside aspect of the respective limbs.

Traditionally, not much else has been said about the Six Divisions. Yves Requena has developed a theory that they are related to the eight psychological temperaments described by Corman and Berger [8]. This theory may be laudable in its attempt to re-connect the energetics of the body to the personality but I feel it does not capture the essential meaning of the Six Divisions for the simple reason that, in order to make this correspondence between six meridians and eight temperaments, Requena has to split two of the Divisions again into their leg and arm components.

To me this misses the real point about the Six Divisions, that they link arm and leg, Heaven and Earth. They express deep holistic connections between the different but parallel structures, linking both Earth and Heaven in six common functions which are even deeper processes than the energies expressed by the Organ meridians. The rest of this chapter describes what these deep processes are and how they manifest in the development of posture and personality.

The Bright Yang (Yang Ming) Division

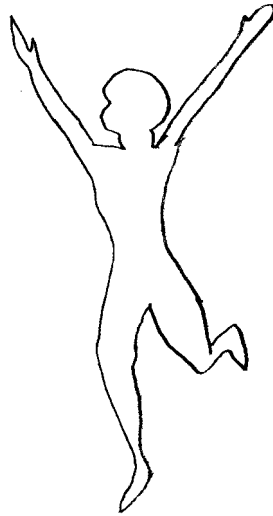


The Yang Ming Division links the Stomach and Large Intestine. The Stomach traditionally accepts outer energy and allows us to take it into the organism as nourishment. In a deeper sense it allows us to feel the support that the outer world (our Ground) can give us rather than having to “do it all ourselves”. If it does not function well then we are not able to accept and digest Outer help. Our sense of self is isolated, needy and effortful. It is hard to relax.

The Large Intestine, on the other hand, creates the boundary of the Self by saying ‘No’ and pushing out energy which cannot be incorporated into the Self. Developmentally, the movements of the arm & head structures around the Large Intestine meridian are first seen in babies learning to say ‘NO!’, to push away and to reject. This is an important skill and if it is missing then the sense of self is insecure and is too influenced by outer forces.

Thus the division as a whole gives a balanced sense of self: not rejecting the help of the outer world but also not allowing the invasion of hostile energy. It gives a posture of grounded confidence and creates healthy boundaries.

The Greater Yin (Tai Yin) Division

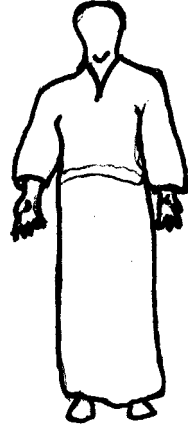


The Tai Yin Division meridian links the Spleen and the Lung meridians. The Spleen function traditionally supplies nourishing energy (Gu Qi) and transports it to the Lung to be spread into the tissues. The Spleen supplies Qi from the centre whilst the Lung spreads it to the surface. Thus both Organs are concerned with the basic process through which energy manifests in the flesh and nourishes it. So the Tai Yin Division expresses the process of Incarnation.

If this collaboration is not functioning then the person will experience a difficulty being in their body. They either feel a lack of inner support (Spleen) so there is a tendency to collapse or that their energy is inward and not manifesting in their movements (Lung). In both cases the posture tends to collapse inward and close off from the outer world.

On the other hand, if this division is functioning well then energy supports the body from the centre and spreads outward to the surface, manifesting as radiant expression. The posture is open and soft and the person looks comfortable in their body and with themselves.

The Lesser Yin (Shao Yin) Division



The Lesser Yin Division links the Kidney and Heart. The Kidney is the source of our constitutional and primal energy. The Heart is the centre of our primal self-awareness. Both Organs are at the deepest level of the energy organism. They do not act themselves but are the foundation and source of our sense of Physical and Spiritual vitality. They are the centre of self but do not, themselves, have characteristics. As such they embody what the Buddhist philosophy calls Sunyata or the Void [11] . A state of emptiness which can easily move into appropriate action because it is not attached to a conditioned, past-oriented view of self.

If this division is not working then the person feels a lack of Life and spontaneity. Their actions are weighed down by considerations of the past and future and they feel trapped and victimised by their situation rather than creatively dealing with it in the present. The deepest feelings of insecurity and anxiety come from this dysfunction.

The posture given by the Lesser Yin Division is both centred and light. A feeling of unattached poise is given out, expressing a capacity for action in any direction. This state is reflected in people who have practised spiritual disciplines to an extent that they are not conditioned strongly by one rigid view of themselves.

The Greater Yang (Tai Yang) Division



The Greater Yang Division links the Bladder and the Small Intestine which both express the clarity of a person's intention and sense of self. Clarity is a term used in Buddhism to describe the state when the Spirit shines through the person's actions without being clouded by those things which we have absorbed into ourselves and not been able to assimilate. These clouding energies are often called impurity in both Buddhist philosophy and in Chinese Medicine.

For instance, if we feel that we should do something but, in our heart, we don't want to then we do it by repressing our true feelings. This is an unassimilated bit of our conditioning. In psychological language it is called an INTROJECT, something we have swallowed whole without digestion. Examples are: 'I should be a happy person', 'I shouldn't get angry', 'Men don't cry!'

These introjects can cloud our spontaneous energy and sap our Will with guilt and shame. The Small Intestine traditionally separates the pure energy, which we can assimilate into our sense of self, from the impure introjects and thus clarifies our awareness and our impulses.

As we explored before in an earlier section, the movements developmentally associated with the Bladder meridian align our legs and our body in such a way that the action of pushing with the leg moves our body in the direction we mean to go. Thus it too provides an early experience of clarity in our action through which our Will can shine.

This division, if it is dysfunctional, produces a lack of drive. It's not so much that people are in conscious conflict but their life force is clouded by 'shoulds' and 'can'ts'.

The positive functioning of this division, however, gives movement a sense of pure focus. A person's intention is reflected in all parts of their body and is not repressed by inhibition.

The Lesser Yang (Shao Yang) Division



The Lesser Yang Division links Gall Bladder and Triple Heater. The Triple Heater is the traditional function of integration, the avenue along which Primal Energy (Yuan Qi) acts through the whole body. Whereas Absolute Yin is concerned with Finding a Centre, Lesser Yang is concerned with how we act from that centre as an integrated organism. Developmentally, the movements initiated by the musculature around the Triple Heater meridian, as it were, knit the baby's body together, particularly through whole body extension and spiral movements of rolling. A new-born baby feels physically disconnected. By three or four months they have found their centre and their movements act on the body as a whole.

The Gall Bladder gives the ability for acting decisively, without conflict. It is less to do with knitting the self together as in arbitrating between potentially conflicting impulses, so that one can yield, allowing the organism to act as a unified being. This process is what we normally call 'making a decision'.

Thus the division as a whole gives the ability to act as an integrated person, either by acting from a unitary centre or by making decisions.

A dysfunction of this division creates many developmental problems, such as clumsiness and lack of balance, that can be traced to a lack of Sensory-Motor Integration.

The Absolute Yin (Jue Yin) Division

The Absolute Yin Division links the Liver and Heart Protector. The Liver is traditionally concerned with facilitating the smooth flow of Qi whilst the Heart Protector is often seen as a 'shock absorber', helping the Heart not to be too distressed by the choppiness of emotional life. So these two Organs have this deep common function of smoothing life.

Chapter 9 explains how both Organs do this by connecting to a 'centre'. The Heart Protector guides energy from the periphery through to the centre so that the organism can receive it as an integrated whole. So rather than one part taking the whole brunt of a traumatic force, the whole being can roll with it. The Liver function is more concerned with providing a common central purpose around which potentially conflicting forces can collaborate.

If the division is not working well then the person is jumpy and jerky, not able to deal with change easily and very irritable and protective.

The division working well gives a sense of grace and flow to the person's movement and posture. They have an ability to go with the flow of life without fighting the process.

Conclusion

The archetypes expressed by the Six Divisions are at a very deep, spiritual level. Often I find they illuminate a core issue in a person's life, which one could see as a life-task. By bringing this Core task into awareness the therapy takes on a different dimension. Instead of trying to 'solve problems', the issues can be seen as challenges and stimuli within the person's life process; a deep part of themselves which can be a seed of learning.

Since the Six Divisions also run through the whole body, "linking Earth to Heaven", they also link physical posture to personality patterns. Often clients come for therapy with a structural or postural problem that turns out to be inseparable from their sense of self on an emotional level.

Also, it is common for clients to present an emotional or stress related issue which is hard to resolve because it is 'stored' in the postural and movement habits of the body. Working with the Six Divisions, seen as Body-Mind lessons to be learnt, both the mental and somatic aspects of a person's condition can be worked with in an integrated way