

# HANDS FROM ACROSS THE SEA

*L.A.'s latest Japanese import is shiatsu, and it's putting pressure on aches and pains*

By Hunter Drohojowska

If the pressure of modern American living is giving you aches and pains, maybe what you need is a little ancient oriental pressure. You can find it in Los Angeles in the form of *shiatsu* — literally Japanese “finger pressure” — the latest natural healing method to immigrate from the Orient. In fact, it has achieved such popularity, influence — and results — that even Western science has begun to take note. Now, from Little Tokyo to Downey, the Japanese are asking Americans, “Why pump yourself full of drugs when so many ailments can be eased or cured through shiatsu?” Shiatsu is a 3,000-year-old massage technique uniquely designed to iron the wrinkles out of your nervous system. Unlike the conventional massage, which works your muscles and circulatory system in the same way as a session with Nautilus equipment, shiatsu is the application of intense but artful pressure to vital points on the body to release tension. It is basically acupuncture without the needles.

Like acupuncture, shiatsu is based on 657 “vital points,” or *tsubos*, located on the twelve pathways, or meridians, on both sides of the body. Each meridian is connected to an internal organ and also affects other areas of the body. Energy flows through these meridians but occasionally becomes blocked at certain points, causing all manner of physical imbalance. The goal of shiatsu is to dissolve these blocks.

Shiatsu is part of the Eastern philosophy that finds an essential unity and balance to all existence. The unity is maintained by the equal interaction of positive and negative forces, the yin and the yang. Shiatsu is intended to keep these forces in harmony within the body, to keep the life energy flowing. Contemporary



The pressure of his company: DoAhn Kaneko, of the Tao Healing Arts Center in Santa Monica, says Americans are “a collective nervous wreck.” The diagrams on the wall behind him illustrate the vital points of the human body.

Western science is beginning to recognize that these vital points are trigger areas in the body where the nervous and circulatory system can be effectively stimulated.

The Japanese will warn you that shiatsu is addictive, and it's true. I first encountered shiatsu when I lived in Tokyo and have been a devotee ever since. What I didn't know until recently, when I set out to survey the best shiatsu centers in Los Angeles for this story, was that it is the healthiest

addiction I've ever acquired. Shiatsu lifts depression, reduces hypertension and temporarily eases a profound range of physical disorders, from headaches to circulation problems. (One word of warning, though: If you have infections, malignancies, blood clots, redness or contusions, phlebitis or skin diseases, you should not undergo any kind of massage.)

My own personal favorite of all the shiatsu centers is the Tao Healing Arts Center, run by DoAhn Kaneko, who

performs acupuncture and practices and teaches shiatsu. Kaneko combines shiatsu with a technique called *anma*, which is a soothing kneading performed before the finger pressure to relax the muscles. To give you an idea of what to expect during a typical shiatsu session, here's a description of one I had with Kaneko:

First I changed into a *yukata*, a Japanese cotton robe, and laid down on a pad in one of the rooms. Japanese koto music played softly in the background. Kaneko started rubbing the lower part of my back and explained, "We see the human being as a miniature of the great universe. The head is Heaven and the body is Earth. Vital points along the meridians have special names. The points on the muscles on either side of the neck, which support the head, are called 'Pillars of Heaven.' Other vital points have names like 'Gates of God,' or 'Welcome Human.' For practical reasons, they all have numbers as well."

With hard, precise movements, Kaneko proceeded to release all the little kinks in my shoulders, emitting a sigh of disappointment as he went. Japanese shiatsu technicians usually think that Americans, who make up 90 percent of Kaneko's clientele, are very imbalanced — a collective nervous wreck.

"Your right side is very tight," declared Kaneko. "It's connected to the meridian of the liver and the gall bladder." He explained that the liver meridian is affected by the emotions of anger, anxiety, fear, sadness and loneliness. I admitted to all of them. Kaneko added that the climate of windy, cold, humid or hot weather also takes its toll on the liver.

When Kaneko finished pulling and pressing, I emerged refreshed, realigned and revitalized. And relaxed. I could have fallen asleep on the spot.

Kaneko's modest studio has a gentle, homey feel. It is decorated in raw wood and plants, and the walls are covered with Zen ink paintings and diagrams of the vital points of the human body. There are two rooms for massage, one room for acupuncture and a hot tub.

Kaneko, being a shiatsu master, charges \$35 an hour; his assistants command \$25. It's \$5 extra for the hot tub, and discount packages are available. Hours are 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily. Tao Healing Arts Center, 2309 Main Street, Santa Monica, 396-4877.

The largest Southern California shiatsu parlor is in, of all places, Downey. Japan Shiatsu Center is something of a resort, a retreat for healthy hedonism. The place is enormous, 7,200 square feet, and decorated in an odd meld of East meets West — crystal chandeliers and ink-wash landscapes, TV sets and paper shoji screens. There are lavish facilities for saunas, steam baths, Jacuzzis, showers and lounges, all of which are separate

for men and women. The 30 massage rooms have straw tatami mats, which give off the lovely, delicate scent of cut grass. The center is attached to a restaurant, Sambi, which serves Japanese teppanyaki, grilled meats and sushi, as well as Western fare. There is a dance floor and entertainment nightly. (There is also a bakery called the Pink Bear that serves totally unmacrobiotic cream puffs and kiwi tarts.) Imagine the combination: two hours of hot water, a hot sauna, a lengthy massage, a meal, a couple of hot sakis and the best night's sleep you've had all year.

The Japan Shiatsu Center has about 900 members, of which 90 percent are American; an annual membership runs \$250. But nonmembers are also welcome, and for them the whole treatment, from sauna to shiatsu, is \$39. For members, it's \$26. Hours are Monday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Sunday 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Japan Shiatsu Center, 8641 East Firestone Boulevard, Downey, 862-5111.

In Little Tokyo downtown there are two shiatsu centers. Tawa's Spa is located next to the Japanese Village Plaza and has a membership that is about 50 percent Asian. It has three massage rooms decorated in primarily Western decor, and their steam bath and sauna are for men only. There's also a private lounge where men can sit and talk, read the paper or watch TV. Not much English is spoken here, but then it isn't necessary either. Shiatsu master Shonoshin Tawa is the director, and he has other spas in Redondo Beach and Palm Springs. Tawa charges \$24 an hour, \$32 with a sauna. Hours are 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. weekdays, noon to 9 p.m. Saturdays. Tawa's Spa, 362 East 1st Street, Little Tokyo, 680-9141.

The first place in Los Angeles I discovered shiatsu was the Sanwa Health Club at the New Otani Hotel. Located on the fourth-floor patio of the spacious building, it's convenient and somewhat luxurious. They have six shiatsu technicians, and they're all first rate. It's also the most expensive of all the places I went to, at \$6 for a sauna, \$40 for a Jacuzzi and \$40 for an hour massage. Sanwa is a club, charging \$250 per couple per year. For members, the sauna is free, the Jacuzzi is \$5 and a massage is \$28. Sanwa is also the only place that allows a man and woman to take a sauna and Jacuzzi together. And if you're feeling extravagant, you can wind up the treatment with a meal at the hotel's Japanese restaurant, A Thousand Cranes. Hours are 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily. The New Otani Hotel is located at 120 South Los Angeles Street, Little Tokyo, 629-1200. ■

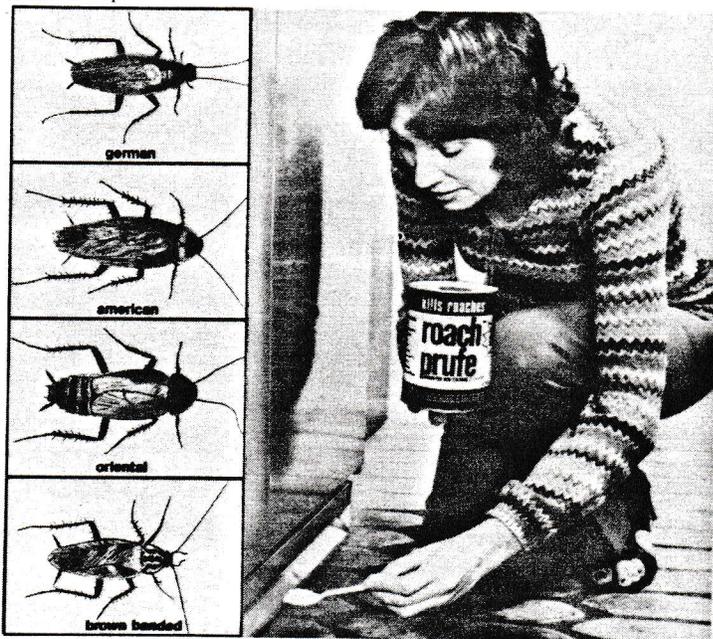
*Hunter Drobojowska's last piece for California Living was on Soledad prison artists.*

As reported in news stories in the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Miami Herald*, *Ecologist*, *Paul Harvey News* . . . . .

## ROACH PRUFE, #1 in University Tests

In a report released by the UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA and published by the ENTOMOLOGICAL SOCIETY OF AMERICA, eight commercial and test products that included a broad spectrum of insecticides were tested against a product called "ROACH PRUFE." The tests were conducted in heavily infested apartments and showed at the end of the 8 week test period that with a single application of ROACH PRUFE in each apartment, the roach population was reduced by an average 99.5%. By comparison, with the worst results were two widely recognized insecticides currently used in aerosols and applied by exterminators. They showed a 0% (no) reduction at the end of the 8 week tests.

Commenting in a letter, the University researchers stated: "Our experience under field conditions has shown that when properly applied, the ROACH PRUFE formula provides a degree of cockroach control that is usually superior to all other registered commercial or consumer products."



Disease Carriers

Odorless, Easy To Apply

Alan Brite, holder of 15 U.S. and foreign patents has just been awarded the first of 3 U.S. patents pending on ROACH PRUFE. Brite says: "Because roaches simply do not recognize ROACH PRUFE as an insecticide, they do not try to avoid it by scattering to other parts of your residence as they do with other insecticides. Plus the electrostatically charged powder sticks to their bodies. They then carry the powder back into the walls spreading it among the other roaches. The result is you kill not only the roaches you see, but also those hiding and multiplying in the walls."

ROACH PRUFE is odorless, non-evaporating, non-staining and non-flammable. The powder is simply applied with a teaspoon under kitchen appliances and in other hidden areas. It can be used in homes, schools, hospitals, restaurants, plus new construction.

If ROACH PRUFE is not available at your local hardware store, you can pick it up at the factory or they'll send it to you. ROACH PRUFE costs \$7.95 plus 48% tax. If you wish it sent, add 95%. The address is Copper Brite, Inc., Dept. 28 at 5147 W. Jefferson Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90016, one block west of La Brea. Hours 9-4, Monday-Friday. Copies of the University test are available upon request.

© Copper Brite Inc., 1980