

Sasang Medicine Part II

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Note: Access part one on the AAOM website www.aaom.org under "American Acupuncturist."

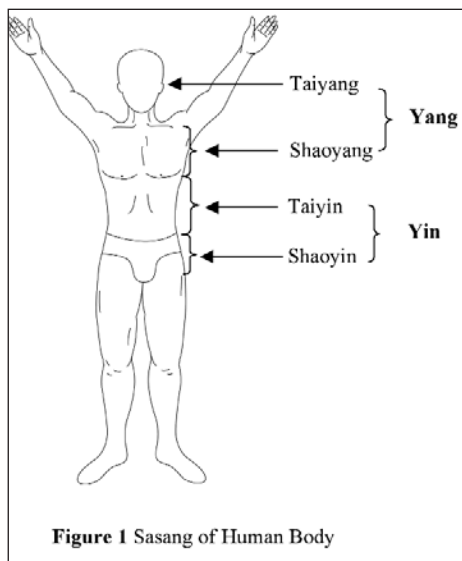
THE EXTERNAL APPEARANCE OF SASANG BODY TYPES

Traditional Eastern medicine is the study of syndromes. It uses the subjective and objective temperature of the patient, the strength of the pulse, and the speed of pathological changes, among other things, to determine the nature of the abnormality in the physiology of the internal organs. Sasang Medicine, however, is a constitutional medicine, emphasizing the physical build of a person, and the functional strengths of two paired internal organs, which will be discussed later.

There is good reason for the difference in emphasis. First, structure generally gives insight into functional tendencies. Secondly, understanding the innate aspects of a human being requires the consideration of the fundamental attributes of a person that don't change quickly, such as a person's physical frame. On the other hand, basing constitutional discernment on such ephemeral and rapidly transforming phenomena, such as the state of the pulse or the fluctuations of an individual's personality, is an impossible task, as none of these things are enduring, nor do they point to anything fundamental or original.

In considering the human body as Tai Chi (totality), the Sasang distribution is as follows (Fig. 1): The head is Taiyang, the chest is Shaoyang, the abdomen is Taiyin, and the pelvis is Shaoyin. The head is shaped like a bud in the process of sprouting from the body. Since it is located in the highest part of the body, it is considered Yang. As it is hard, it is Taiyang (because Taiyang is Yang that has not yet fully blossomed). The shoulders and arms extend out from the

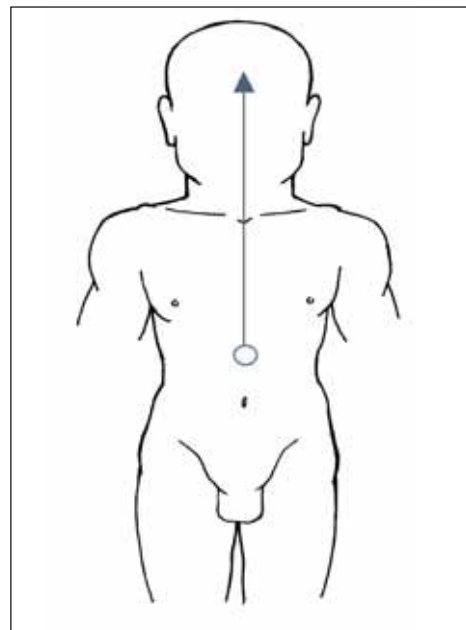
chest, giving it the shape of a funnel, trumpet, or branching tree spreading Yang energy upward and outward. The chest region is also always hot. For these reasons, the chest belongs to Shaoyang. The abdomen is round and holds a large amount of fat (stored energy). It can be compared to the exuberant fruits of autumn, and so belongs to Taiyin. The pelvis is the region surrounded by the cold buttocks, and is the attachment sight of the legs (Yin appendages). It calls to mind the image of tree roots storing the energy of wintertime and belongs to Shaoyin. See the diagram below.



TAIYANG

The outstanding characteristic of the Taiyang body type is the large head, a sign that the Taiyang's brain and spinal cord are well developed (Fig.2). Thus, in general, Taiyangs are very smart. There are quite a few brilliant and creative heroes and geniuses among the Taiyangs, including Napoleon, Lenin, Picasso and Van Gogh. However, excessive brain development carries with it the possibility of degeneration (by the principle, "extreme Yang converts into Yin."). So it is possible to see Taiyangs

who suffer from brain and spinal cord disorders, such as mental retardation, cerebral palsy, and Downs syndrome.



In considering the human body as Tai Aliens are usually depicted as having big heads, slim trunks, and weak, skinny legs. This is similar to the body composition of Taiyangs. Coincidentally, in the future, once machines are able to perform all manual labor, this is what the human form may come to look like. Man's arms and legs will grow weak and atrophied from lack of use. Meanwhile, the head, the only body part frequently used will grow larger because it houses the brain.

When Yang becomes strong, Yin becomes weak. According to both genetics and Eastern Medicine, the brain, spinal cord, bones, and sexual organs belong to the same system. The energy of Taiyangs tends to concentrate in the organs of the upper region (resulting in their brilliant minds) making the organs in the lower region generally deficient. This results in weak reproductive organs. Thus, Taiyangs generally have difficulty conceiving children; Taiyang women frequently suffering from infertility and Taiyang men from impotence. Taiyangs also generally have weak bones

and weak legs (Yin), so when they get sick, their legs may become paralyzed. The abdomen and waist, which belong to Taiyin, are also weak. Thus, Taiyangs usually have thin waists, and easily develop problems in their lower backs.

Although constitution is not exactly inherited, there is a high correlation of constitutional transmission. It is estimated that Taiyangs are about one in a thousand, making them the rarest among the constitutions.

SHAORYANGS

Shaoyangs are distinguished by a broad chest and wide, highly placed shoulders (Fig. 3). Their torso has the shape of an upside down triangle, while their hips, which are the Shaoyin region and the opposite of the Shaoyang region, are small. The "Road Runner" cartoon character depicts the Shaoyang body type. It has a lot of muscle mass concentrated in its chest and shoulders, but almost none in its hips, excepting its powerful legs. Chickens, particularly roosters, possess a Shaoyang nature, and make excellent tonics for Shaoyins.

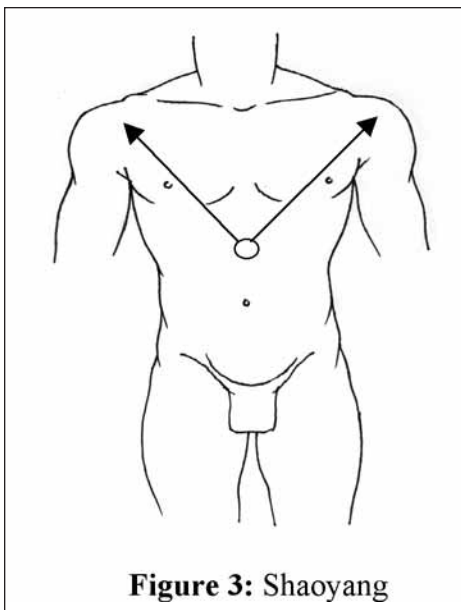


Figure 3: Shaoyang

The chest region contains the heart and lungs. Since this area is well developed in Shaoyangs, those of this constitution generally have good blood circulation and a healthy supply of nutrients. They also have strong metabolisms, which make their movements very active. Shaoyangs have loud voices and love to talk about themselves, believing that they are the cream of the crop and that there is nothing they cannot do. They are also quite reassuring,

for they always interpret things in a positive way.

Shaoyangs spend a lot of time on their appearance. They are veritable social butterflies, cheerfully flitting from friend to friend. They possess a strong sense of righteousness, and place high value on honor. Since their Yin energy is weak, they are unable to see things through to their conclusion, and tend to neglect matters concerning their own health or family.

Do you remember Elvis Presley or the Fonz (from "Happy Days")? Both of them had the Shaoyang body shape, with the wide shoulders and the relatively narrow hips, and both lived flashy, dramatic lives, with a relative lack of domesticity.

In general, both Taiyangs and Shaoyangs have thin bodies, because their bodies are able to convert substance into energy (a Yang process). However, Shaoyangs tend to have weak reproductive capabilities due to their small pelvises (part of the Shaoyin region). Although Shaoyang men commonly suffer from premature ejaculation, men and women of this constitution are generally not infertile.

TAIYINS

Taiyins have well-developed abdomens and waists. These areas are thick, relative to their shoulders and hips (Fig. 4). So their bodies do not have an hourglass shape, even when they do not have a potbelly.

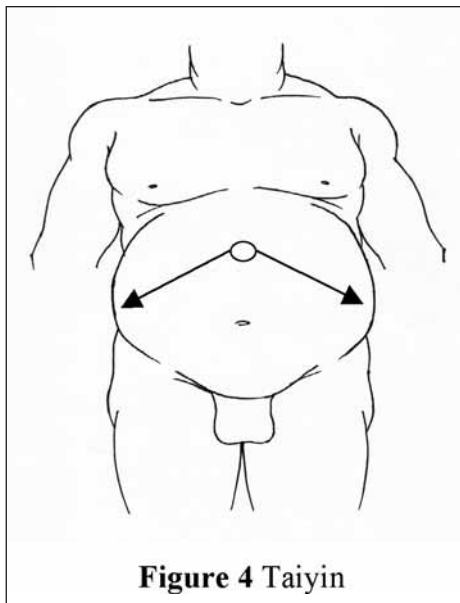


Figure 4 Taiyin

Taiyin is associated with strong materializing energetics. Therefore, the

Taiyin constitution has a predisposition for obesity. Generally any obese person can be considered Taiyin, except those who are able to lose weight quickly by regulating their diet. Because Taiyins have a strong materializing energy, even when they are not obese, they always have a big trunk and thick bones. On the whole, Taiyins are tall, weigh a lot, and have large eyes, noses, ears, and mouths.

The energy in Taiyins is centered in their abdomen and waist. Their digestive system (which is housed in this region) is very well developed. Taiyins are excessively greedy in regards to food, and get very hungry after just a little work. Although they overindulge when it comes to eating, they tend to digest things well.

Taiyins have weak hearts and lungs, as their chest region (belonging to Yang) is relatively undeveloped. Thus, they commonly suffer problems with regards to blood circulation and oxygen supply. Since their blood circulation and oxygen supply tend to be inadequate, nutrients do not convert readily into energy, and instead accumulate as fat in their bodies.

Taiyins are the most Yin of the four body types, and have the most physically (Yin) developed bodies. Although their heads (the Taiyang region of the body) are smaller than their bodies, Taiyins are generally fleshy and are more physically developed than any of the other constitutions. So, their heads appear to be relatively large. In relation to the head, their brains and spinal cords tend to be well developed, such that their thinking is lucid. Even though they have the ability to think clearly, Taiyins generally try not to use their heads too often. They think only when necessary, like when they are making money, making themselves comfortable, or supporting their families, for example. They tend not to use their heads for the sake of "impractical," idealistic matters such as art, creativity, impressing others, etc. Generally, Taiyin thought patterns are very practical and materialistic. They primarily focus on the task of acquiring money, as it is the energy of human society. However, it is possible for Taiyins to become very poor because of their inherent tendency towards laziness of both body and mind. continued on page 20

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Externally, they tend to accumulate property or money, but internally, they accumulate fat by reducing their energy consumption. Thus, we may say that for Taiyins, the function of materialization takes place both internally and externally. Many Taiyins are rich and powerful; Aristotle Onassis, Donald Trump, Lee Iaccoca, etc. President Clinton is also a Taiyin, although he may have lost some dignity due to his indiscretions with Monica Lewinsky, who is also Taiyin. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that the country's economy was much wealthier because of his efforts.

There are many Taiyins among opera singers, for example, Luciano Pavarotti and Placido Domingo. Taiyins make excellent opera singers, not because of their romanticism or creativity, but because they are able to produce powerful, beautiful sounds from their large, resonant trunks. Some Taiyin comic characters include Bluto (from the Popeye series), Fred Flintstone, and Yogi the Bear.

SHAOYINS

Shaoyins have well-developed pelvises and hips (Fig.5). Whether they are standing or sitting, they appear very stable. Their shoulders and chests (the Shaoyang region) are relatively narrow, while their hips look relatively big. The torsos of Shaoyins are shaped like upright triangles. Anyone who is not particularly overweight, but has unusually large hips and thick legs may be considered a Shaoyin body type. Shaoyin is associated with the winter, so Shaoyin people lack Yang energy. They generally enjoy eating spicy foods and chicken (both have Shaoyang energy), in an attempt to supplement the Yang.

Every athlete, regardless of his or her sport, needs strong legs. Good footwork is necessary, even in boxing. A boxer's punch is only effective if it is supported by the strength of the legs. Many Shaoyins excel in sports, because they have strong legs. However sports that require strong shoulders and upper bodies as well, like swimming or gymnastics, put Shaoyins at a disadvantage. These sports are more appropriate for Shaoyangs.

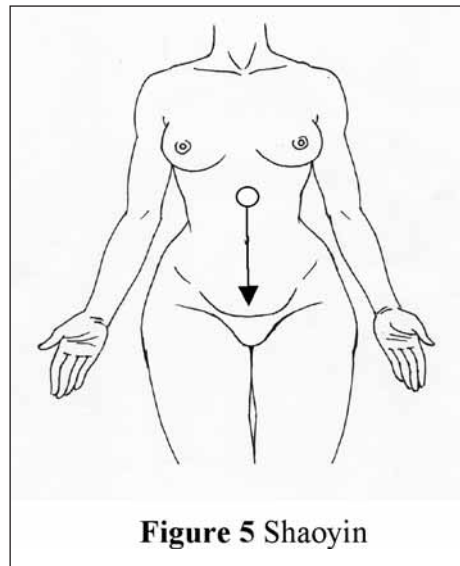


Figure 5 Shaoyin

Shaoyin people take on many of the characteristics of winter. They are generally quiet, love sexual activity, and produce strong children. The reproductive system is contained within the pelvic cavity, the Shaoyin region, so Shaoyins generally have healthy reproductive systems. Traditionally in Korea, one of the first things parents considered when selecting a bride for their son was the size and flexibility of the girl's hips. If they were large and flexible, she was selected.