



# Shen Chuan Review

*"Hit hard...Hit fast...Go to the House!"*

*"Students should learn precise martial art method until they know it by heart, then they can discard it for what has become natural."*

-Professor Joe Lansdale

## ACCUPRESSURE AND SELF DEFENSE: REACTION POINTS

PROFESSOR JOE LANSDALE

A warning. This will ramble a bit. Be repetitious a bit. But, if you've hung out with me, you'll know that's nothing new.

There isn't enough space here to go into great detail, but in a general way, I wanted to discuss my experience and expectations about the striking of accupressure points, which I have begun to refer to as reaction or reactionary points.

As a martial artist it is obvious that attacking certain weak areas on the body results in a dynamic physical response. This is of course not radical thinking. But at this point, I think it necessary to state the obvious.

Many accupressure points are effective with very little contact or effort. Light knockouts can be the result. I've done it, and I've had it done to me. Fact is, I didn't believe in these points until I was knocked out in this manner, and the first knock-out I achieved was a light touch knockout, and it wasn't intentional. I was merely lightly tapping a point to show where it was and my uke, who was also one of my instructors in aiki matters, collapsed. He didn't believe in the points. Didn't know a knock out could result. His body just reacted.

He became so enraptured with these points, he then began to study the techniques and teach them and claim to have been studying them for years. He claimed to have taught them to me.

Such is the power of these points not only on the human body, but on ego. This is one of their weaknesses. They give many egotistical teachers a feeling of God-like power.

So much, in fact, that during training sessions you will see these dedicated teachers huddled together discussing the finer aspects of the points, but doing very little actual technique. They explain everything through points, and have ideas on how to make the technique better by touching even more points (not necessarily a bad idea, by the way). But for them, it is more fun to be one of the Gods, than one of the mortals who actually have the technique done on them.

In fact, they are often too good to actually practice the technique itself. Better and easier to talk about it. And, to give it more credit than it sometimes deserves.

These points are pretty miraculous in self-defense. According to Grandmaster

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## ACCUPRESSURE AND SELF DEFENSE: REACTION POINTS...(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

George Dillman, some points work better struck, some better poked or rubbed. He's right. I've proved this to numerous non-believers.

These points, and their usage, are not the same as general pressure point training. Well, they are and they aren't. Pressure points are taught in many martial arts schools and in police academies. But for the most part, this instruction is general. A martial artist or police officer is told to strike or poke a certain place on the body, and the instruction seldom goes beyond that. It's all theory, no application.

With this method, what you often end up with are lame results. I know. My original training concerning pressure points was of this nature. We certainly worked them, activated a few, but something was missing. It wasn't miraculous at all and no more effective than just hitting your opponent so hard his house plants turned brown.

The problem lies in the fact that many of the points chosen by these so called pressure point experts, though painful or annoying, or not effective enough to stop anyone who does not want to be stopped.

More often than not, the point is a correct one, but the angle and direction is wrong. Many skeptics of these points think these angles and directions are hard to access in a real fight, but truthfully, once you understand how true weak points work, you discover they are easily accessed along the contours of the body. This fits in beautifully with one of SHEN CHUAN'S principles: **body contouring**, or as we sometimes refer to it, **streamlining**.

This said, these points, which we will from here on out refer to as **reaction points**, instead of accupressure points, or pressure points, because so much baggage is associated with these terms, are effective. Reaction points may have different levels of effectiveness, and this effectiveness may vary from individual to individual, but they are on the whole highly effective, and when done right, much more effective than you see in most martial arts classes or in the training of police officers.

It is my belief that though reactionary points work, and even the medical association is starting to acknowledge the reality of results from acupuncture and accupressure, this does not mean the metaphysical reasons associated with their success are real.

To quote from Guro Mike Casto's book in progress, **A PONDERING OF PRINCIPLES: ONE STUDENT'S PERSPECTIVE ON MARTIAL ARTS**: "I have met people who, in my opinion, put too much faith in pressure points. They used pressure points to explain everything they did. While I'm sure there were pressure points where they were striking and grabbing, I'm also sure the guy would have went down just because of leverage and gravity. I think that relying on **anything** too much is problematic."

Well said, and I feel the same. It's problematic for results, and it's problematic to one's thinking. You begin to give all kinds of credit to these points, when in fact, other components may be at play.

I've seen someone activate a point, go into a wrist lock, and say, see, the point makes them weak. The point contributed, but the wrist lock, which binds nerve, muscle and tightens these anatomical features against the bone, is also a contribution. You may in fact be working points while doing the wrist lock, but the other point, the one first activated somewhere else on the body, may not have weakened that point at all. It may have distracted, or it may have weakened him generally, but it may not in fact be, as it is often said, allergic to the points next applied.

I've seen the same sort of credit given to joint locks when it was obvious that what was happening was balance disruption. For example, if you stand from the front facing your opponent, and you put one hand--we'll say the left--behind his head and reach all the way to his left side with it, just above the ear, it can be said you are activating points here.

And if simultaneously you apply your right thumb to a place just below the cheek bone and push up, in, and around, you are activating a point there. This helps turn the head. In fact, when done in this manner, it usually causes the uke to leap frog like, turn, and go down.

I've seen it demonstrated that when you do this technique and your opponent turns, as he will, you must then

## ACCUPRESSURE AND SELF DEFENSE: REACTION POINTS.....(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2)

lift and put your left leg against your right as it activates some point or another in your body that makes you stronger, and therefore you are more able to take your opponent down.

Wrong. I've been doing this for some time, and what is really happening, is that you have better leverage, as well as a barrier to keep the head from escaping the pressure point pain, and when you reach behind the head and to the opposite side with the left hand, and when you pressure the painful point in the cheek with the right, his head attempts to jump away from the pain, and now the left hand can turn him more easily. When you lift your leg, this doesn't to my mind activate anything. It removes what was supporting your opponent in the first place. Which was, of course, your own leg.

By removing it, (and you need not touch your other leg at all) as he turns and his balance is already disrupted, you have in a sense, kicked a leg out from under a chair, and down he goes. One of four corners, his two legs and your two, have been disrupted by having one removed. In this case, your own.

Yes, the reactionary point in his face, and the reactionary point over his ear (more of a sensory point) did contribute. But so did removing what was holding him up by lifting your leg, and so did grabbing in such a way that you gained greater leverage.

The point alone could have brought him down, but by lifting your leg, you are assisting, but you're not activating anything.

Gravity and leverage and even psychology are in effect here, as well as a painful point, but to explain it all through reactionary points is misleading, and frankly, short-sighted.

Everything can not be explained through these points, and though they are effective, and I want to highly encourage the study of them, know the realities of what they can do and can't do, and be aware of what other aspects of the art are assisting you in completing a technique.

A note. I've had a handful of martial artists, all martial artists I respect, tell me chi has been proven. They site Chinese and or Japanese tests as proof.

If it were proven, it would be all over the news, pal. That simple. People want to believe this stuff so bad, if there was definite proof, there would be line ten miles long at every dojo in the world.

Everyone wants magic.

What is proven, is that the people who already believe it have identified something they claim is chi, or ki.

Sorry. No cigar.

Although I've seen demonstrations of it, I do not believe you can knock someone out by not touching them, by sending your chi through your palms, shooting it through the air into someone's body.

These are old tricks used by Indian fakirs, martial arts bullcorn slingers and many evangelists. As well as the sincere, but deluded.

But, if you except the idea that a sort of mutual agreement, a sort of self-hypnosis on the part of the "victim", can cause them to pass out, or they can convince themselves they have passed out, well, yeah, it can work. But this kind of thing only works under dojo conditions on a willing assistant.

Most likely, what's happening is either fraud or self-delusion, and since I know fine human beings who believe in this and practice this, I suspect the latter is a far larger part of what goes on than the former.

This, however does not rule out the televangelist approach, which is, of course, of the former. Fraud.

I think too, that people who practice this business and have a following, are constantly finding it more and more necessary to come up with new and exciting things to stimulate their followers. At some point, belief and fraud may become one.

Of the believers, there are many who think their chi (or their cheese, as I sometimes jokingly refer to it, and I stole that from one of my students, Coy Harry) is causing the person to pass out, but it's simply that the person

## ACCPRESSURE AND SELF DEFENSE: REACTION POINTS....(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

believes he should pass out.

Same concept as voodoo, religious rapture, or speaking in tongues. A spell has a greater chance of working if you believe that spell is real.

You believe your instructor can move chi through his body and knock you out, then, bam, out you go. This also applies, unfortunately, to some bodily contact. If you believe it enough, you'll sometimes go when you're struck even if the point is not that well activated.

I've also had a couple of people high up in these systems admit they faked it because they didn't want their instructor to look bad.

In our school, if you fake it and I know it, and I usually do, I'll make sure you find out about it when I perform my next technique. I can take the heat for failure, but I don't want false success.

Concerning self-hypnosis, it can be simply defined by saying that what is happening is an unspoken agreement between the two, the striker and the strikee, that it works, and therefore, over come with a sort of "silent rapture", the strikee, when he thinks he's receiving "negative waves", drops out, having experienced physically what the mind tells him to experience. Or, to be more precise, what he wanted or expected himself to experience.

Consequently, showing swollen irises or checking the heart rate to prove a knockout has occurred is useless, because the assistant is experiencing those sensations because his mind tells him to. Also, the eyes react to light, and if you close them, then open them, they will be swollen in size. Knockout or not. If it remains that way for awhile, then you can perhaps draw different conclusions.

Neat, you say. Just hypnotize folks. Who cares if it's chi?

Problem from the self-defense standpoint is it doesn't work on an unwilling attacker outside of the dojo who attacks you immediately and doesn't know you're a big Chi Guru.

It's self-hypnosis, or co-operative hypnosis.

Remember, hypnosis only works if the person wants to be hypnotized, and someone, hypnotized or not, will not do anything they would not normally do. In other words, you can't hypnotize someone to kill someone if they weren't prepared to do that when not hypnotized.

People who get up on stage and act like a chicken, do so because they want to. They believe they are hypnotized, and are therefore free to make an idiot out of themselves.

I volunteer for one of these no touch knockouts. I submit myself right now. Knock me out without touching me, and I'll study your system, pay your fees.

Me. Not one of your students or someone else.

You have to knock me out with a no touch knockout.

But it doesn't always work, they say. Some people aren't susceptible. I can buy that. Some people have better balance than others, and are harder to disrupt, some are hard to wrist lock, some can take tremendous punches and kicks.

But, I can prove these things on a larger number of people than the no touch knock-out artists can prove his knockouts to me.

So, hey, I'll give them a break. Let me pick ten people, and you knock them out.

If you can do it, you should be able to knock out fifty percent of these volunteers.

Right?

All right. Now that I've angered some, let me return to my original point and say this does not detract from the fact that there is a reality base to all of this, both in striking and grappling.

My opinion is this has nothing to do with chi--at least how it's normally perceived--or meridians.

## ACCUPRESSURE AND SELF DEFENSE: REACTION POINTS....(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

The dim mak method is a way to learn these points, the angles and direction, the effects, but that doesn't mean that what is really happening is that metaphysical waves are moving through the body, affecting these points.

Astrology may know where certain planets are, but that doesn't make it astronomy. Astrology knows where planets move and which planets they align with, but there are so many flaws in astrological thinking the evidence for its success is merely anecdotal or fraudulent.

Examples of the falseness of astrology are legion. One of my favorites was conducted by The Amazing Randi, a magician dedicated to logical thinking. A classroom gave their sun signs to an astrologer. He worked them over, returned them, had the students read them. The majority of the students agreed the sun sign evaluations were accurate.

Only thing was, though their sign was written on the chart, everyone got the same chart, and everyone thought it fit them perfectly.

You believe what you want to believe, and ultimately logic is not enough to keep people from believing idiotic things.

A light in the sky is a UFO, Unidentified Flying Object, (the key word here is Unidentified) but that doesn't immediately mean its a space craft. Often the explanation is quite different.

Years ago, early morning, I was up and out to do farm chores. I grew up in the country. I was used to seeing the sky. And I looked up and saw what looked to be thousands of silver craft moving through the early morning light.

An armada of space craft.

Holy Cow! Buck Rogers!

Further observation proved it to be a flight of insects with the light striking them in such a way as to make them look like silver craft flying at a high altitude.

Ghosts. Recently some have suggested (and it's still a theory) that ghosts are a case of the brain sending a message to the eye. The reverse of what is normal, where the eye sends a message to the brain. Sometimes the brain lies to the eye, and we see what it tells us to see. Maybe because we expect to see it. Or want to. This also fits in with auditory and other sensory events.

Anyway, the brain sending messages to the senses instead of the senses sending messages to brain is an intriguing theory.

Faith that something is true is not always worth while either. People have faith in all manner of foolish things. The earth is flat, for example. There are people who still believe this. Or believe we never went to the moon, in spite of overwhelming evidence and thousands of people working at Nasa.

Faith ain't enough, dear hearts.

You got to have real proof. Not me and Bob saw a ghost, no matter how real the event might be.

Same for, I saw him knock this guy out without touching and a Japanese study says it's true.

Ain't enough, McGee. You can't always believe your lying eyes. And always ask: Who conducted this study and why?

You'll usually find out true believers can conduct studies that fulfill their expectations.

That said, I'll add this:

Reactionary points, though clouded in silliness, are far more reliable than your Sun Sign or advice given to you by Uncle Teddy's ghost.

Do these points actually correspond with certain organs of the body? They may. There is certainly a lot of evidence to support that, though the degree of effect is debatable.

## ACUPRESSURE AND SELF DEFENSE: REACTION POINTS....(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

I use a number of little accupressure tricks to relieve headache, hiccups, and certain kinds of pain. But, can acupuncturist actually cure heart disease or cancer with these points?

I don't know. The degree of effectiveness is still debatable, but in those areas, it doesn't look good.

But the stuff is effective.

Consider this. Some veterinarians use acupuncture to operate on animals. They use the points to deaden the body so that the animal doesn't feel pain. This tells you a lot. Animals aren't subject to fraud or hypnotism. They respond to what works. Knock them out using your no-touch mojo and I may change my mind about traveling chi.

But, the bottom line is, metaphysics need not apply. Western science may not have all the answers, as it has made little investigation in this area from the standpoint of the martial artist. However, this is changing gradually, and currently more work, especially from outside examiners, is required.

There is a good possibility that Asian martial artists who first examined the human body thought the arteries and nerves were meridians and that chi traveled through them. This is the way they explained what they did not understand.

If you want to broaden your view of meridians, to include blood, nerve impulses, then you can say, yes, pain travels through these, or attacking them causes pain, cutting off the blood causes weakness or unconsciousness. But this is not the same as a magical force traveling through invisible conduits as some believe.

I can make the points work on most people, but I certainly don't think they do so because of chi, theirs or mine. Also, most of this stuff can be taught, at least on the fundamental level, quite rapidly, so much of the lore about building your chi through repetition of certain movements so you can perform these techniques, is even more suspect.

If you're so certain chi is the answer, and know you can prove it, let me suggest this. The Amazing Randi is offering a million dollars to anyone who can prove anything supernatural, or for that matter, wild claims such as chi traveling through meridians.

Look him up on the internet and collect your check.

He's been doing this for years

So far, he still has the million.

The effectiveness of **reactionary points** has to do with certain parts of the body that are naturally weak, and when attacked in a specific way, cause weakness, pain, or injury. In some cases, even death.

This said, some people do not react to them. Does this mean they have no chi? No meridians? Or is it that some individual's, for whatever reason, are protected by thicker skin, deeper points, less "hot" nerves, etc?

Muscle tone doesn't seem to have much to do with this, as very well-defined individuals are often the most susceptible, as their musculature allows for the attacker to find the natural curves and definitions of the body, exposing nerves, muscle groupings, blood-flow, more readily.

Overweight, somewhat pudgy people, if the pudge is solid, seem to be those who are the least susceptible to certain attacks. But, they are not immune. Again, it depends on the person.

In heavy people, the legs are often weak.

That makes sense. They are supporting a lot of weight, and these points on their body are more stressed. This kind of pressure and grounding makes attacking these points more effective.

Whatever, the "wiring" is different in a small percentage, and study of body types helps in effectiveness, but is no certain barometer. Some people defy common knowledge. Some muscular people feel it not at all, some heavy people feel it at the lightest touch, etc.

## ACCUPRESSURE AND SELF DEFENSE: REACTION POINTS.... (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6)

So, do these points work in a dramatic way on most people?

You betcha.

Our experience has been that on about eighty percent of those tested, they are highly effective. On another ten percent or so they are effective enough, though they may vary on which points are effective, but the points are still workable, if not dramatic.

The remaining percentage is divided. There are those who may feel the points, but not enough to effect them, or it may effect them in a limited way, and on the far end of the chart are those who feel nothing.

Some experts say that even when you don't feel it, it will effect you later.

Maybe, but that isn't very reassuring in an immediate self-defense situation. I mean, you're lying the dirt with your nose broke and the North end of your pelvis pointing South, the reassurance that later, the jackass who whipped you will wake up in the middle of the night with a stomach ache, just isn't enough.

An interesting aside is this. Those who feel the points the least, generally have the hardest time learning them. Their own body does not provide the map and sensations that allow those who are more susceptible to recognize the location and angle more immediately.

In Shen Chuan we teach reactionary points and believe in them, but with the above reservations.

At the lower levels, white to black, we don't stress it as much, but it is in every technique. As you go up the ladder, greater emphasis on these points, their location, angle of attack is taught and examined. Points that are in hard to access places are usually passed over. We use easy to attack points, as well as the points that give us the bigger bang for the strike.

At the higher levels, a few more esoteric points are shown, and we encourage students to study on their own to better understand them, and to expand their knowledge for knowledge sake.

Bottom line is: Shen Chuan would not be Shen Chuan without the reactionary points. The last ten years or so this has become a big part of what we do. But, only if it is worked in conjunction with striking, understanding of locking and joint manipulation, basic throws and balance disruption.

If you're ignoring these reactionary points, or think they are voodoo, then, you're missing a large part of your martial art.

It's like chiropractors. Many chiropractors make ridiculous claims. Subluxation. Curing your sinuses by cracking your back, etc. But they can fix strained muscles, slightly out of align joints. I use them all the time. I went to doctors for these things and none of it worked. A chiropractor fixed me in five minutes.

Again, it depends on the chiropractor. Medical doctors aren't all good either. How many times have you known someone who was misdiagnosed or given the wrong medicine, or the wrong dosage of the right medicine?

They ain't wizards either, dear hearts.

Same with those who teach reactionary points.

Practicing these points under the supervision of someone who really knows them can increase the effectiveness of your technique, your ability to move opponents about easily, as well as greater success over someone larger and stronger and younger and meaner.

And none of us stay young and strong forever. And, even when young, there's always someone bigger and stronger and more willing. We need every edge we can get.

And you know what? I could be wrong about chi. It could be magic.

But, it's up to those who believe it exists as a metaphysical force to prove it.

You prove it, I'll believe it.

No matter what your belief, however, reactionary points are a sharp edge indeed.

## OCTOBER CAMP 2003

**OCTOBER CAMP (2003)** was a blast. Our guest this year was Sifu Michael Billings, a practitioner of Kenpo. He showed his stuff and Professor Lansdale showed his. As an added bonus, Professor Frizzell and Guru Mike Casto and Sensei Norma Almanza conducted short clinics.

Guru Casto demonstrated Indonesian and Phillipino arts, with an emphasis on ground work. Painful nasty non-ju-jitsu groundwork.

Professor Frizzell demonstrated the effortless stick work that defines Shen Chuan Stickboxing, and Sensei Norma Almanza worked boxing drills and showed the connection between boxing and Shen Chuan.

And, of course, Professor Lansdale demonstrated a combination of low, mid, and high level techniques from Shen Chuan.

**Tapes of the October 2003 camp are available for twenty-five dollars. It's a two tape set. Includes Professor Lansdale, Sifu Billings and Professor Frizzell.**

The Photo Gallery for the Camp is located on Page 9 of this newsletter.

## OTHER SEMINARS...

**LATE IN OCTOBER**, Professor Lansdale was Sifu Billings' guest in Austin, Texas, where he conducted a seminar in Shen Chuan with the help of Jared and Adam Taylor.

**NOVEMBER**, Professor Lansdale conducted a seminar at Grandmaster Higginbotham's school in Indianapolis, and it went over very well.

This is the second time this event has been held, and it's scheduled again for the weekend before Thanksgiving, 2004. This is a favorite event of Professor Lansdale, as he and Grandmaster Will are good friends.

Shihan Coy Harry assisted in this seminar, and was of great aid to the Professor.

**ALSO IN NOVEMBER**, Professor Lansdale and Sensei Jared Taylor conducted two hour programs at the INTERNATIONAL COMBAT HAPKIDO HALL OF FAME meeting in Lexington, Ky. It was very well received.

The word is spreading.

For those of you who have been with us from the start, you are in on the ground floor of a martial art that is growing by leaps and bounds and will be prominent in the twenty-first century.

Future events. **APRIL 24-25**. Professor Lansdale, Uncle Bill de Thouars, Founder of the Kuntao system, and Guro Ken Pannell, who gave a great seminar here with Professor Lansdale not too long ago, will be giving a seminar in Louisville, Ky., conducted by our buddy Guro Mike Casto.

This is worth the trip. Not only to support Shen Chuan, but to train with two other excellent martial artists. Uncle Bill is a legend. Don't miss it. For information, check out TRIPLE IMPACT on the web at:

[http://impactacademy.com/seminars/flyers/triple\\_impact/](http://impactacademy.com/seminars/flyers/triple_impact/)

# PHOTO GALLERY....OCTOBER 2003 CAMP



Professor Lansdale, Guru Mike Casto and Sifu Michael Billings.

Sifu Billings showing us some Kenpo!



The Black Belts line up with Professor Lansdale and Sifu Billings.

# PHOTO GALLERY....OCTOBER 2003 CAMP (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9)



Professor Lansdale and Sifu Billings.



Guru Mike Casto and David Davidson, one of Guru's students.

**Compiled by the LANSDALE'S SELF-DEFENSE SYSTEM STAFF, including Professor Eugene Frizzell, Shihan Coy Harry, Shihan Billy Jack Worsham, and Karen Lansdale, Grandmaster and Sensei of the Lansdale household.**

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