

Could acupuncture be a science given to the ancient Chinese by "Gods" from Outer Space?"

# ACUPUNCTURE

## The Medical Miracle From Another Planet

The ancient Chinese therapy of acupuncture is first of all a mystery, and the Chinese readily number themselves among the mystified. They say candidly that they know of no proven scientific explanation to substantiate this system of treating human health problems by sticking needles into the body, often at points remote from the ailment. Acupuncture's own practitioners know that results depend on how faithfully they follow the complicated rules, but to questions of how and why this should be they have answers that sound like a formula for magic.

Such medieval overtones mean nothing, of course, to the rheumatic who acupuncture frees of pain, or to the paraplegic allowed to walk, or to the deaf enabled to hear. Acupuncture, however, is viewed with caution by many members of our own medical profession who are hesitant to accept a foreign procedure which can be explained only in the obscure idiom of Taoism.

But the most truly astonishing aspect of acupuncture is simply its antiquity. The available evidence states it has been practiced for more than 4,000 years, and has changed little in the time. In fact, it would seem that when acupuncture was first practiced in 2,697 B.C., it may have been even more precise and elaborate than today's procedures. Yet today's acupuncture charts—which are said to be basically unchanged from the originals—confront Western medicine with an entire network of nerve patterns it seems to have ignored. In other words, Western medicine has yet to learn and understand a medical practice which has been in widespread use in China for thousands of years. And while acupuncture's lessons for Western medicine may be significant, I'm still haunted by a newsman's hunch that if we ever learn its real nature and origin, the momentous excitement is likely to be among the historians and anthropologists rather than physicians.

Nevertheless, acupuncture is very much with us. Clinics have opened in major cities all across the country despite the roadblocks set up by a defensive medical profession concerned both with competition and potential quackery.

By 1973, the acupuncture beachhead had expanded to such an extent that the *American Journal of Chinese Medicine* began publication, something that would have been improbable only a year earlier, before Henry Kissinger and former President Nixon went to Peking and restored China to a status it had not enjoyed in the American press for 25 years.

Since then, a number of American physicians have visited China and have seen acupuncture at work. They return mystified; skeptical, but impressed, particularly with the anesthetic or analgesic potential of acupuncture. Those who come back talk less of hypnotism, suggestion, and fakery than before they witnessed the technique firsthand.

Acupuncture is just another of those puzzling surprises that China has been springing on the Western world since Marco Polo returned to Venice with tales of an advanced civilization far to the East. The West has to recognize that the Chinese knew about the circulation of the blood 2,000 years before we found out about it. They beat us handily to the invention of gadgets such as the magnetic compass, gunpowder, rocketry, moveable type, and even that essential ingredient of inflation, paper money. It's a long list which we too easily forget.

The first issue of the *American Journal of Chinese Medicine* made a wise decision when it announced it would deal with all aspects of Chinese medicine, not just acupuncture. The practice of moxabustion (the burning of the herb *artemesia vulgaris* in association with acupuncture), the important field of diagnosis through the pulses (note the plural), the vast pharmacopoeia of Chinese herbal rem-

edies, and, by no means least, the philosophical concepts on which the whole system is based.

One of the problems about understanding these procedures is the difficulty of the language. Acupuncture demands its own terminology, and confronts the Westerner with propositions such as this: if you stick a needle into a certain very specific point, you can rectify the yang-yin imbalance which is causing a misery at some quite different but equally specific point of the body. If the Westerner asks for a definition of yang and yin, the answer comes back that these are two aspects of *Ch'i*, which the ancient Chinese conceived to be the life force. *Ch'i* is literally everywhere and in everything, suffusing the universe and, in microcosm, all living things.

The going gets heavy at this point because there seems to be no scientific definition of *ch'i*. Yang and yin are equally elusive terms connoting male and female in one context, light and dark in another, and so on.

If the Westerner turns to the acupuncture chart for clarification, or to the mannequin often used for demonstration, he gets a double shock. Even a superficial examination shows that the acupuncture points are positioned along trails or "meridians" and each point seems to be a socket which influences some different, but specific, part of the body. Secondly, the patterns traced by the meridians seem to be related to the central nervous system only in a rather offhand manner.

To the layman, it is almost as if the meridians were an afterthought, a sort of supplemental circuitry installed during some model recall period. Clearly, the meridians are not a monitoring system, like the electronic circuit analyzer your mechanic attaches to diagnose your car's problems. Diagnosis, in Chinese medicine, depends heavily on the elaborate procedure of pulse-taking in which a dozen different

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America, first specializing in turning ordinary Alfa-Romeo sports cars into track monsters, often in the hands of driver Kwech, then other sports cars as well. In the early '70s, Kwech needed some suspension consulting and that's how DeKon Engineering, then of Northfield, Mich., entered the Kwechian world.

DeKon was Lee Dykstra, acting as a consultant to racers Warren Tope, Allan Moffat, and others, while still a Ford safety-car engineer. Lee was to stay with Ford until 1976 when he was forced to choose between being a Ford man or a Monza man. He chose Monza and racing all the way.

The racing Monza project at DeKon began in July 1974. A prototype was ready that same November and appeared at Daytona International Speedway, although it didn't start.

At Road Atlanta in April 1975, the Monza made its first racing start, but the car broke down. It kept on breaking while new components were tried, until the right combination was found. At Road Atlanta 1976, a Monza won for the first time in Al Holbert's capable hands. It was DeKon-built, as was second-place Mike Keyser's. Ron

Fournier's Monza was fifth with John Morton at the wheel.

This was what IMSA and a whole lot of other people were looking for after six seasons of victories by foreign cars—mostly German Porsches and BMWs—in the Camel GT series.

Not that all problems have been solved. There are still some gearbox problems, but even with its somewhat soft transmission the Monza has to be considered a racing success story. Every car DeKon has built has proven competitive, and they are spreading the racing Monza doctrine worldwide.

The original prototype, for example, was raced by Canada's Mo Carter and now performs in New Zealand. The second car built appears in SCCA events in the hands of shipping magnate (and owner of Lime Rock Park in Connecticut) Harry Theodoropoulos. Kwech's original Atlanta car, later raced by Al Unser, now provides a mount for Keyser.

Australian Allan Moffat, Dykstra's old client, wipes up the opposition Down Under with the fifth car built. A sixth car was the one that went in June to Le Mans as an IMSA entry. Holbert's win-

ner is the seventh out of the DeKon plant.

You have to have a high degree of skill to drive a racing Monza. But as a race car, it's a lot easier to drive than, say, a Porsche Turbo Carrera, often its major competitor. Unlike a European road racer, the Monza is predictable—it always understeers. It always has that extra something in power to make up for momentary lapses in concentration that can get the best of drivers in a tight spot. It is rugged and strong.

There are purists who say unless a racing car is an open-wheeled single-seater with the driver sitting in a slim torpedo-shaped body, engine to the rear, capable of 200 miles per hour in bursts, that it isn't racing.

You can see many of those purists at Charlotte racing Richard Petty or David Pearson two inches away at 160 miles per hour, or at Daytona with Holbert and Keyser battling the \$50,000 Turbo Ceras on even terms.

This DeKon Monza definitely is a race car. If you see one on your street, don't try to drag with it. You'll not only get beaten, you'll get evaporated. ★

## ACUPUNCTURE

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pulses are distinguished, with each conveying its own category of information. Acupuncture, along with moxibustion and herbal medicine, make up the therapy which follows. The ancient Chinese health system also includes entire physical and philosophical disciplines, such as *t'ai chi ch'uan*, with all these elements understandable only in terms which originated in Taoism, a whole field in itself, but one in which the principal concepts are simple.

The Tao, meaning The Way, is well known. It's the rational path on which the Chinese always have maintained their thoughts regardless of whether they were thinking as Taoists, Confucianists, Buddhists, Christians, or Communists. What is less well known is that Taoism insists upon a simple principle which the West should also understand. All effects have causes—nothing just happens.

Taoism sees the cosmos as a balance of forces, an equilibrium attained through the interplay of relative weights and dynamics. Man is not only in the middle of this ordered environment, he is part of it, his every atom suffused with *chi* like everything else.

Therefore, man will be healthy if the internal components within him, also are in balance. If they're not—if his yang should gain the upper hand over

his yin, he's in trouble. This is all spelled out in extremely complicated detail in a body of learning which the true acupuncturist properly takes years to master. In actual practice, he first questions a patient closely, establishing a rapport. He will sometimes spend hours reading the pulses and noting any other signs. He then diagnoses the ailment in terms of the imbalance he considers responsible, and with needle treatment, begins the therapy designed to restore internal balance, thus curing the illness.

It is at this point that the skeptic wonders about hypnotism, suggestion, and the placebo effect known to Western medicine. There seems to be no reason to rule them out. The fact is, however, that for thousands of years the Chinese knew no other medical system until the last century and still survived very well.

The Westerner now runs into the question of how acupuncture began. Before WW II, I lived in Peking for 10 years and had an opportunity to learn something about Chinese medicine, including acupuncture. I didn't.

Acupuncture already was a sort of underground practice because Dr. Sun Yat-sen had been a Western-trained physician, and he and Chiang Kai-shek had decided the answer to China's health problems lay in Western medicine. The old Chinese practitioners were dying off, hard to find, and always avoided foreigners.

I remember hearing about acu-

puncture and asking about it. The answer I got from a serious student of Chinese culture, was that apparently all phases of Chinese medicine represented a purely empirical body of knowledge and belief, built up through the *travaux* via simple trial and error. So we all ignored acupuncture, herbal medicine, and the rest, overlooking the fact that we were assuming, in effect, that a sensible people like the Chinese had spent thousands of years sticking needles into each other and sampling every strange herb they found, just to see what would happen. There were even Western-educated Chinese who made the same ridiculous assumption.

After WWII and the revolution, such assumptions could no longer be afforded and the People's Republic revived old-style Chinese medicine because of the desperate need for any kind of medical care. The ancient ways were still popular in the countryside, and as the revival progressed, the daring decision was made to merge them with modern medicine. In so doing they discovered the pain-blocking effects of acupuncture—which the Chinese readily concede have their limitations as well as their promise of a drugless substitute for anesthesia.

This actually may have been a rediscovery, as the ancient records speak of surgery, including brain surgery, practiced before the dawn of the Christian era. Surgery apparently was outlawed after Buddhism entered China from India several hundred years later. At

any rate, surgery was not part of traditional Chinese medicine at the time the People's Republic revived it.

The revival again brought up the mystery of how acupuncture originated. However the Chinese, nor anyone else, say much about this because acupuncture apparently predates the development of writing in China, and the only evidence of its beginning is found in myth and legend. There is simply no other evidence.

The legend is one of those bland, sweeping Chinese fables that numb the Western mind. It says simply that acupuncture was bestowed upon the Chinese people in 2697 B.C. by Huang Ti, the mythical Yellow Emperor, when he ascended the throne as the first true emperor of China. The key word in that sentence is *bestowed*. Not discovered or developed—bestowed.

What really happened? No one knows. What we do know is that there is a problem about dismissing the myth. The acupuncture chart attributed to Huang Ti (actually it dates from the Han period a century or two before Christ) is not substantially different from the chart used today. What's more, Russian scientists report that they have verified Huang Ti's acupuncture points, where the nerve fibers of the meridians come close to the surface of the skin, by using especially sensitive equipment developed to study acupuncture. So there it is: Huang Ti said it all in 2,697 B.C., some 4,672 years ago.

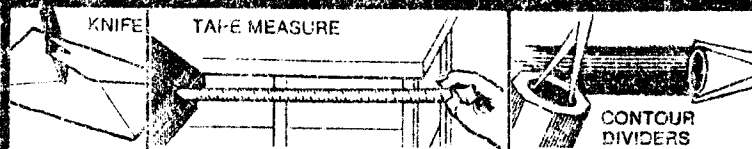
The legend says that Huang Ti set up the first real Chinese government and reigned for 100 years. It then tells us that his immediate predecessor, a non-political man named Shen Nung (Divine Agronomist), had been on the scene for no less than 300 years.

We are told that Shen Nung spent his time, developing the enormous herbal pharmacopoeia and teaching agricultural methods such as sophisticated irrigation and silkworm culture. This all could add up to the claim that these two emperors left their Chinese protégés with complete technological, if not actual scientific, disciplines. This is the traditional and legendary "explanation" for the whole riddle of how China had such a head start on her barbarian neighbors. The Chinese people seem to have burst with relative suddenness on the ancient scene with skills and social institutions markedly superior to those of the other tribesmen around them. Generations of historians have pondered this problem with inconclusive results.

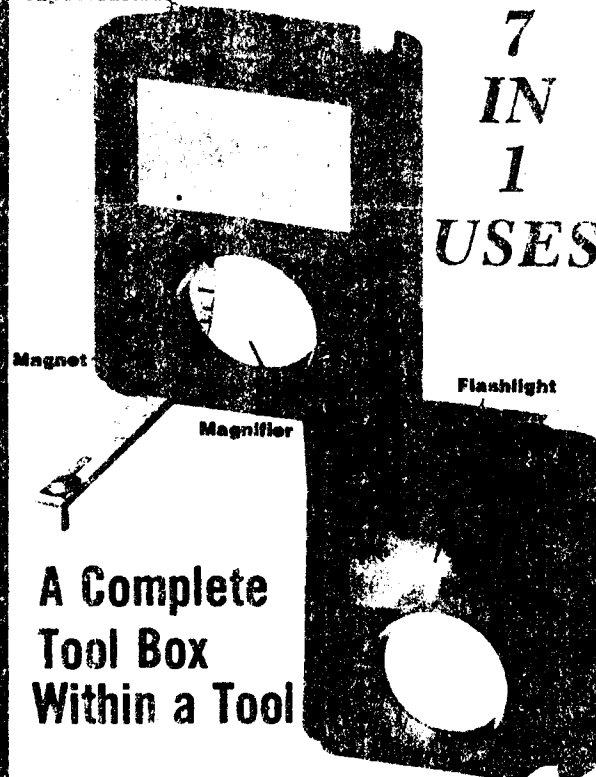
Before disregarding the legendary explanation, one has to remember that legends have a nasty habit of having some factual basis—however obscured.

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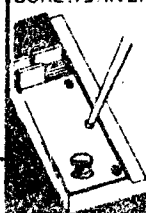
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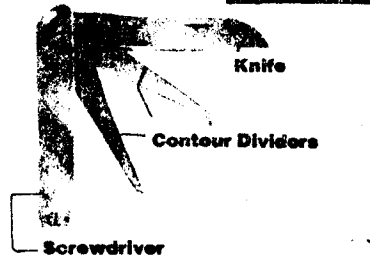
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or distorted the facts may have become—and that the common cultural claim to having had supernatural help in getting started is nearly universal among Mankind. It occurs among indigenous cultures all over the world and in regions too isolated for probable contact among widely separated prehistoric societies.

Acupuncture contributes uniquely to this larger riddle. Only the ancient Chinese had it, although it later spread to Japan and the rest of the Orient, and still more recently to the rest of the world. But equally important is the complexity and precision of acupuncture. Precision is evident in the chart, with each of more than 300 access points leading to specific effects.

The complexity of the system is evident in the many years the old practitioners spent learning it, even though they were native to its Taoist beliefs. Many wrote they never stopped learning new things about its possibilities, even in old age.

The more one considers these details and senses the scope and precision of the chart, the more one gets the uneasy feeling that whoever started all this knew a great deal about human anatomy, which leads us to this ques-

tion: How much of this science was lost or forgotten before the Chinese developed a written memory? The suspicion keeps haunting us: Can acupuncture be a residual science, a remnant eroded by the ages, instead of the accumulation of blind trial and error it's said to be?

Thus far, the tentative, unproved theories of how acupuncture actually works all point toward belief that the meridians represent some sort of circuitry for stimulation of various parts and organs of the body. One often hears Western doctors say they cannot cure a patient, they can only help his body cure itself. Was acupuncture designed to speed up this process?

If this is even remotely the case, we have been faced, since 2,697 B.C., with a problem of startling sophistication, hinting at what might be thought of as the original blueprints for the human body. The acupuncture chart seems superimposed over what we understand to be the central nervous system!

It must be emphasized, however, that no such speculation is to be found in any of the material on acupuncture that I have encountered, and that no Chinese ever has suggested anything of the sort to me. It's only speculation. However, I find it difficult to dismiss the apparent probability that there was

something significantly extraordinary about the origin of acupuncture, especially in view of other startling things which were going on in other parts of the world at roughly the same time that acupuncture came on the scene.

The more we discover about ancient history, the more we realize that there were many kinds of supernatural phenomena occurring during this period of Man's development.

The Egyptians were constructing the Pyramids along exact lines and proportions that imply a knowledge of astronomy. The Hebrews were being visited by angels, fiery chariots, and wheels in the sky. The Mayans came up with a calendar more precise than the one we use today. In India, Sanskrit mythology tells of repeated visits by heavenly beings arriving in fire-spewing vehicles. In Stone Age England, primitive tribesmen were setting up the great pile of monoliths known as Stonehenge, which Britain's foremost astronomer, Sir Fred Hoyle, assures us was actually an observatory for forecasting eclipses and other celestial events. In Peru, Andean natives were erecting structures comprised of incredibly massive stones of such weight and fitted so precisely that no one today would think of duplicating these feats.

The rest of such anomalies goes on and on and is part of a growing exotic literature which increasingly relates these ancient phenomena with modern ones notified by what we call unidentified flying objects, or UFOs. The latest and most successful example of this literature is a trio of books by the Swiss author Erich von Daniken, who argues the theory that many of the gods worshipped by our ancient ancestors were extraterrestrial humanoid visitors who arrived in spaceships. The natives took them to be gods, naturally, and Von Daniken advances the idea that they improved the human stock they found by interbreeding or by producing mutations. Von Daniken's books appearing after the Apollo space program put man on the moon, have been accepted by the same public which mostly ignored earlier books dealing with the same subject.

But Von Daniken is merely the latest in a long series of such authors, beginning with an eccentric newsman, Charles Fort, who compiled lists of cultural anomalies and reports of strange things in the sky, early in the 20th century, which upset the scientific establishment of his day because accepted knowledge couldn't explain them. It was apparently Fort who first advanced the idea that the Earth has been visited from preBiblical times and that Man himself may be a very old species indeed, not necessarily native.

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to this particular planet. Twenty years ago an American astronomer, Morris K. Jessup, wrote two books on the subject of UFOs in which he developed the hypothesis that the angels and fiery chariots of ancient Israel were UFOs, and he postulated that if these were piloted by spacemen they could represent other human civilizations no longer capable of, or interested in, permanent residence on a planet such as Earth.

There have been many other such authors, particularly since UFOs became a widely recognized phenomenon with the highly publicized sightings of Kenneth Arnold in the summer of 1947. But for more than a quarter of a century, UFOs have been largely left to the amateurs to report and evaluate, while the scientific establishment has kept well away from the subject, the mass media have treated it mostly with a tongue-in-cheek attitude and governments have denied, or censured reports, that UFOs exist. Since Man stepped on lunar soil, however, there has been a gradual and significant change. It is now possible, without risking careers, to note apparent similarities between UFOs and ancient phenomena, and more and more scientists are quietly joining the investigation of UFOs.

## BILLY JACK

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she became one of his fans. "Watching *Billy Jack* was painful for me. It challenged my notion of what was art. I had grown up with a certain kind of background, gone to certain types of schools... and I thought the movie was crude and simple and self-righteous. But I saw the people in the theater enjoying it, learning from it, and I realized that I was out of touch with Americans..."

The Laughlins struggled on, but Tom wasn't really going anywhere. Both he and Dody had become fiercely ambitious, determined to make their own films. Every extra penny they made went into renting film equipment ("We'd cheat and rent it on a Saturday, so we could get an extra free day"). It took them three years but they made *The Proper Time*. "When it looked as if we might have to scrap the whole thing, a friend mortgaged his house and gave us \$15,000. I vowed that when I got successful, I would do the same kind of thing for others." United Artists released the film but it bombed, although UA called Laughlin "a young Orson

They believe that something is going on that should be studied seriously and systematically. The bolder ones think we've been having visitors all along. The oldest and hardest of the UFO study groups, the Aerial Phenomena Research Organization of Tucson, Ariz., lists 34 doctoral degrees on its roster of consultants who evaluate reports from correspondents in 48 countries. They represent a range of disciplines that encompasses physics, astrophysics, astronomy, biology, exobiology, anatomy, medicine, engineering, metallurgy, psychology, history, sociology, and religion.

This suggests that as Man relates the mysteries of the present with those of the past, we should be prepared for some surprises. This is an age when a detailed, ancient science such as acupuncture presents a challenge that has a growing relevance to such modern endeavors as the radio-astronomy plan for Project Cyclops, which will probe the Galaxy with powerful radio telescopes in search of life. Already Pioneer 10 is carrying out of our solar system an intergalactic calling card, a metal plate depicting two human figures and saying in effect that this modest spacecraft is the handiwork of a species of mammalian bipeds who reside on the third planet from a particular

Welles" and offered him a contract. But after 10 weeks, Laughlin bridled under the authority and left.

During this period, Laughlin took to recording his dreams, to "devoting time to the psyche." One of his conclusions:

"Men are violent but underneath they have a feminine side which they feel threatened by. It's only when a male gets comfortable with his feminine side that he can give up his macho. I knew about Richard Nixon early because I sensed the Nixon in me. Everybody is good and bad, and we have to be comfortable with our destructiveness."

On a plane he met a stewardess named Elizabeth James, said she had a "great look," and promised her the starring role in his next movie—but she'd have to write it. Incredibly, she did—on speculation—and the result was the 1967 feature *Born Losers*, directed by Laughlin and financially backed by some Oklahoma people looking for a tax shelter. It was this motorcycle-fault film that introduced half-bred, ex-Green Beret Billy Jack to the world.

"Dody and I wrote the picture, of course," says Laughlin today. But the screen credit reads "James Lloyd," Elizabeth James's pseudonym, and the Writers Guild credited "E. James

star. Not the most effusive invitation in history, but it tells anyone interested where we are and that we're willing to talk things over. If Jessup and Von Daniken are right, the question may not be whether anyone will get the message, but whether it will occur to anyone to answer.

In our new perspective, riddles of both past and present are merging, and the distinctions between them are fading. The more we venture into space and relate the new experience with the anomalies of the past, the more the ancient riddles suggest that there were strangely sophisticated characters operating in the ancient scene. If they were indeed visitors from space, and if they fiddled with our genes or otherwise dabbled in our affairs, they would have arrived here in ways which we are beginning to discover for ourselves.

They would have left us far more relics of our beginnings than we are likely to recognize unless we can bring ourselves to be more systematic and open-minded as we rummage through our cultural attics. Whether or not acupuncture, for instance, is a legacy instead of an accident, it stands as the most exotic and well-preserved of the ancient technologies, and the Chinese culture in which it flourished for more than 4,000 years offers our longest look back into human prehistory. ★

Lloyd. Halfway through production, Laughlin had an appendicitis attack, "but I had to stay on because Jane Russell was giving me a day at a fee which was for us incredible." He finished the film with his abdomen packed in ice. "My appendix had burst the day before. Because I waited so long the recovery was very bad." It was distributed by American-International and the money he made was enough to launch the real *Billy Jack*. He had written the screenplay back in the 1950s, but the idea burned in his mind since the days in South Dakota. "When we started shooting, I had an Indian medicine man with me. He saw an owl perched on a neon Shell sign. Well, the owl to Indians is a messenger of death. But the medicine man put out all this things and smoked, then he came to me and said, 'Tom, this is not a symbol of death. But the owl has a very heavy message for you. The film you are about to make will have a greater impact on American youth than any film ever made.' He also said that I was the first spiritual Indian ever to appear in films."

Twentieth Century-Fox agreed to distribute *Billy Jack*. Laughlin worked on it with Elizabeth James for a year, then he

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