



Question and Answer Series
The Essence of Shaolin
by Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit

Table of Contents

Page 3	Foreword by Dimitri - Shaolin Wahnam Student
Page 4	Question 1 from Sifu Mark Blohm - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 7	Question 2 from Olli - Shaolin Wahnam Student
Page 11	Question 3 from Sifu Nessa Kahila - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 16	Question 4 from Sifu Markus Kahila - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 18	Question 5 from Sifu Leonard Lackinger - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 21	Question 6 from Sifu Andrew Barnett - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 23	Question 7 from Sifu Anton Schmick - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 26	Question 8 from Sifu Roland Mastel - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 30	Question 9 from Sifu Roeland Dijkema - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 32	Question 10 from FJ Shaolin Wahnam Student - Shaolin Wahnam Instructor
Page 35	Ten Shaolin Laws, poetic couplet & other useful quotes

Foreword by Dimitri

Dear Shaolin Wahnam Family,

I'm very happy to announce that Sigung has happily agreed to answer 10 Questions on the upcoming "Essence of Shaolin" course, which will be held somewhere at the end of the next year in Malaysia [December 2017].

Here is a short background to the "Essence of Shaolin" (Siu Lam Khuen Shuit Jing Wah):

The Essence of Shaolin is a 108 Pattern Set which contains the best of Shaolin techniques for combat.

It took Sigung two years to learn every night this glamorous set from his first Kung Fu teacher, Uncle Righteousness.

The roots of the set can be traced back until the second Shaolin Temple in the Nine-Lotus Mountain, Fujian Province, South China. The set was not well known because it was kept as a secret, one which a master normally transmitted to his successor. So Sigung was the only person who learned the Essence of Shaolin Set from his Sifu, Sifu Lai Chin Wah.

Sigung decided to teach the Essence of Shaolin to everyone who is going to attend the course. So don't miss this golden opportunity because Sigung won't teach it again (like the Dragon Strength)!

Please limit/compress your question(s) to only one, so that we will give other ones also a chance to ask one.

If you don't know how to do it, please take a look at some other questions from other 10 Q&A to get a better understanding.

Thank you for your cooperation.

So let the questions start!

With shaolin salute,

Dimitri.

Question 1

Sifu has most generously agreed to teach the Essence of Shaolin set, a secret set that was normally only transmitted to a master's successor.

Sifu has said that Uncle Righteousness' eldest daughter said to Sifu that "Uncle Righteousness treats you better than he treats his own sons". Sifu treats us like we are Sifu's own sons and daughters, and we are so grateful for this. Why is Sifu so generous to allow everyone who attends the course to learn this secret set when in the past it was reserved only for the most tested disciple?

Sifu Mark Blohm

Answer

The Essence of Shaolin is a highly secretive set Uncle Righteousness taught this set only to me, he did not teach it to anyone else. Understandably, many people, including some masters, asked me to teach this set to them. But I declined, saying that I would teach this set only to my chosen successor.

The Essence of Shaolin is what its name suggests. It incorporates the best techniques in Shaolin Kungfu. Masters can use whatever skills or types of force they specialize in, to execute the techniques.

It is worthwhile to note that different masters many specialize in different skills or types of force. For example, one master may specialize in tiger-claw and applies the force of triple-stretch for his tiger-claw, whereas another master may specialize in Wuzuquan, and applies the force of Cotton Palm for Wuzuquan. Other masters may have other specialization. Hence it is not practical to compose the best skills. Nevertheless, the training of these different skills or types of force can be found in the Shaolin 72 Arts.

Techniques are quite different. They are more specific. Hence it is practical to collect the best techniques in an art, or a kungfu style. The Essence of Shaolin contains the best techniques in Shaolin Kungfu. As Shaolin Kungfu is regarded by many masters as the greatest martial, it can be extended that Essence of Shaolin contains the best techniques of all martial arts.

Uncle Righteousness' eldest daughter, Sister Kam, told me that her father treated me better than he treated his own sons and daughters, for which I am very grateful. All his students, friends and other people also commented that I was his best student. Uncle Righteousness' real name was

Lai Chin Wah. He was nick-named “Old Righteousness”, or “Lou Yi” in Chinese (Cantonese), in his young days for his sense of righteousness and his fighting abilities to ensure it.

Please take note that “Old” here has no reference to age or time, it is an endearing term. When my sifu was more elderly, which was the time when I learned kungfu from him, the public called him “Uncle Righteousness”, or “Yi Sook” in Chinese. The honorable nickname had become so popular that his students also called him “Uncle Righteousness” instead of “Sifu”. As far as I know, and following my father’s advice, I was his only student to call him “Sifu”, for which he was very happy.

The word “Sifu” means “teacher-father”. I regard all my students as my own sons and daughters. This, in fact, is what a sifu should regard his students. The term “sifu” carries a heavy responsibility. In modern China today, wushu students call their teachers “lau shi”, which means “old teacher”. “Lau shi” does not have the connotation as “sifu”.

There are a few reasons why I am generous to teach this secret set, “Essence of Shaolin”.

This set was taught to a master’s successor. Now I have many successors, not just one. A main reason why I established Shaolin Wahnam Institute was my real concern that the Shaolin arts would be lost. But now, if I were to retire tomorrow, there will be many teachers, including you, who will continue with our Shaolin Wahnam arts and tradition.

Not all Shaolin Wahnam family members will be successors. Hence, the Essence of Shaolin course will be by invitation only. Those invited to the course can be my successors, or qualify to be successors. Two chief requirements are to practice the Ten Shaolin laws and to have attained a high level in kungfu performance.

This course will be offered only once. It will be conducted at the end of 2017, probably in late November or early December. In Penang. I have to consult Wei Foong to confirm the dates. It will be held in conjunction with the Small Universe Course, as many people have also asked me for this course.

Many people, including masters, regard some kungfu sets as secrets. I remember that in our Discussion Forum a grandmaster mentioned that some Taijiquan sets were not taught to the public because they were secrets. Douglas once told me that Maro, a kungfu practitioner of another school, went to China every year to learn from his sifu because he was afraid that his sifu might not teach him some secret sets.

Some masters purposely distort their sets when they demonstrate publicly so as to hide the secrets. I believe the pattern “Single Leg Flying Crane” went through this process. When I learned this pattern in the 36-pattern and the 108 pattern Tiger-Crane Set, I stood on one leg with both hands at the sides like the wings of a crane. It was only when I learned the 72-pattern Tiger-Crane Set that I realized its hidden secret.

This is also the reason why secrets are hidden in the open. In other words, the secrets incorporated in kungfu patterns are performed openly, but only those who know the secrets can see them. Others will see the patterns but miss the secrets. The Three-Harmony Set, which I taught recently in Toronto, is an example of hiding a lot of secrets in the open.

Another secret hidden in the open is the hook-spring leg technique, found in the pattern, “Hook-Spring Chop Sword”, in Essence of Shaolin. This hook-spring technique was one of the secrets of no-shadow kicks of Wong Fei Hoong, and is found in the 108-pattern Tiger-Crane Set. I learned the secret when I learned from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam.

Once I had this concept of secret kungfu sets. But as I progressed in my kungfu development, my concepts of kungfu changed. While there are secrets hidden in the open, I now regard the secrets not in the sets but in their application and force training. Essence of Shaolin will give many examples how ordinary-looking techniques are used in marvellous ways.

This was the reason why Essence of Shaolin, which is still regarded by many masters as a secretive set, is openly posted on my website. People can learn the set from the video, but its marvellous combat applications have to be learned at the course.

Our training also makes us generous. This is the reason why we share a lot of secrets with others, including strangers – secrets which many masters would regard as top secrets.

We also have many secrets to share. If a master has only 10 secrets, he will be generous to share 5 or 6 of these secrets. If we have 100 secrets, it does not take a lot of generosity to share 30 or 40.

Many of these “secrets” are actually established principles known to genuine kungfu practitioners in the past. An obvious example is “safety first”. In kungfu, we always ensure our own safety whenever we attack our opponents. But the standard of kungfu has been so debased today that martial artists generously exchange blows with a shocking disregard of their own safety.

Question 2

Assuming pre-requisites are met for all the courses, if a person was given a choice of learning any one of the following: Dragon Strength, Weapons Course, Cosmos Palm, Cotton Palm, and Essence of Shaolin, and nothing else in addition, on which criteria would you recommend a specific opportunity to the person?

Olli

Answer

So far I offered two once-in-a-life-time courses, which were Dragon Strength and Cosmos Palm. The third once-in-a-life-time course I shall offer is Essence of Shaolin. I won't offer these courses again. Those who miss them, just miss them.

It is incredible that I offer these courses. These are arts that masters only teach to their very special disciples. Some masters didn't even teach to their very special disciples, their arts just left the world with them.

Dragon Strength is my specialty. It includes three very rare and privilege arts, that many people think have been lost. These three arts are dragon force, dragon speed and dim mark (or the art of dotting energy points). It is simply ridiculous that course participants succeeded in learning these three very rare and prestigious arts in just five days of the course. But then we in Shaolin Wahnam are used to being ridiculous.

If a master could learn any one of these three arts in five years, he would jump with joy. But our course participants, many of them are masters in their own right, learn three rare and prestigious arts in five days! It was true that our course participants had prior kungfu experience. But it was also true that masters did not become masters over night; they also had prior kungfu experience.

The Cosmos Palm course was quite an accident. Matt asked me, in my very relaxing mood, whether I would teach Cosmos Palm. As I always agreed to the suggested courses put forward by our course organizers, I casually answered "yes", without actually realizing it was Cosmos Palm. Matt was very fast in making full use of the opportunity. He quickly post an announcement on our Discussion Forum, giving me no chance to change my mind.

But not only I did not regret the decision to teach Cosmos Palm, but I am actually grateful to Matt for organizing this wonderful course. All those who attended the course were deserving students

(including many masters), and I am happy that I passed on a rare art so that it would not be lost to posterity.

The Special Weapon Course which I taught in Kuala Lumpur this year (2016) and the Cotton Palm Course which I shall teach at the UK Summer Camp next year (2017) are also very special. But I did not explicitly say that they were once-in-a-life-time opportunities. I may, or may not, teach them again.

In the Special Weapon Course we learned eight weapons in five days. The big trident and crescent-moon spear are weapons rarely practiced today. The guan dao, or the Big Knife of Guan Yu, is prestigious. The Ho Family Flowing Staff is one of the four famous staff sets in all kungfu. The soft-whip must be learned from a master; students learning it from books or videos will hurt themselves.

The Cotton Palm was a specialty of my second sifu, Sifu Chee Kim Thong, who was known as a living treasure of the Peoples' Republic of China. Sifu Chee Kim Thong was famous for his internal force, which many martial artists today think is a myth. The Cotton Palm is an excellent manifestation of internal force, as the master applying it seems to ordinary people that he leisurely moves his palms.

Different masters, understandably, will choose different arts to specialize in. Many of the masters might not have a choice. They just had to practice, and later specialize, in what their teachers had taught them, often determined by environmental conditions. A particular master, for example, might want to specialize in Cotton Palm, if he had a wide knowledge of kungfu philosophy, but he might have to specialize in Iron Palm, which in my opinion is far inferior to Cotton Palm, if that was what he had been taught.

Of the arts you have mentioned -- Dragon Strength, Weapons Course, Cosmos Palm, Cotton Palm, and Essence of Shaolin -- being able to specialize in any one of them in their essence is already a rare accomplishment. Most people just learn the external form; they miss the essence. If they ever specialize, they will perform "flowery fists and embroidery kicks" to please spectators.

How many martial artists outside our school you know who can use dragon force to damage an opponent, capture an opponent's weapon with their crescent-moon spear, cause severe injury with Cosmos Palm or Cotton Palm without leaving an external mark, or overcome a seemingly impossible attack using a sophisticated kungfu technique like one from Essence of Shaolin? A

generous estimate is less than 10%. It means more than 90% of martial artists have no chance to specialize in what you have mentioned.

If a participant to any one of the above courses has met all the pre-requisites, he can attend the course. But I still can recommend the criteria he can focus on.

The most important criterion for learning any one of the courses mentioned above, is to practice the Ten Shaolin Laws. This is the requirement not only to learn any of the courses mentioned above, but also to learn any art taught in our school.

It is important to emphasize that the Ten Shaolin laws are not restrictive or punitive, but to enable practitioners to get the best benefits from their training and to live a meaningful life. If they practice the Ten Shaolin Laws in their daily life, they are deserving students

Practitioners should also know quite well the prescribed set for the course so that time at the course can be more rewardingly used to learn other things, like developing skills. For example, if a practitioner is to attend the Essence of Shaolin course, he should know before attending the course, the Essence of Shaolin set.

Many people think that certain sets are top secrets. I had this idea in my earlier years. But as my knowledge and experience of kungfu improved, I realize that the secrets lie not in the set, which you can learn from the internet, but in combat application and skills, including various types of internal force.

Another important criterion is that course participants must be willing to learn.. This criterion may appear odd to many people, but a lot of participants, luckily not in our school, attend courses with preconceived ideas or, worse still, they think they are smarter than their teacher. If they come with pre-conceived ideas or think they are smarter than the teacher, the course participants place a huge handicap on themselves.

Although this criterion is not common in our school, I still like to mention it. Some of our students, without their own realization, think they know more than the master. If the master asks them to perform a certain combat sequence every day for a period of time so as to develop the necessary skills, they perform it whenever they like. .

It is only logical to follow the advice of the master if course participants want the best results, after

making sure that the master is genuine and produces the results they want. If they do not want to follow the master's advice, they should not learn from him.

Although all our family members will like to attend all the courses mentioned, different people will have different choice if they have to choose only one. Personally I would choose Dragon Strength. This is quite obvious because Dragon Strength is my favorite, and dragon force and dragon speed are my specialty. Although dim mark may not be my specialty, as I prefer chin-na, practicing Dragon Strength can enable me to perform dim mark well.

Attending the Dragon Strength Course would enable course participants to develop dragon force, dragon speed and dim mark. There are wonderful skills. But they still need techniques to implement the skills.

In today's low level of combat, when practitioners have advanced skills, they can use ordinary techniques. But if their opponents are advanced too, the practitioners will need advanced techniques.

The best techniques are found in Essence of Shaolin. As Shaolin Kungfu is the greatest martial art – please see <http://shaolin.org/shaolin/greatest.html> for the justification of this statement – by extension the best techniques of all martial arts are found in the Essence of Shaolin.

As mentioned earlier, this Essence of Shaolin course is once-in-a-life-time course. Those invited to attend the course should not miss it.



**Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit
demonstrating
One Finger Shooting Zen**

Question 3

What are the benefits of practicing the Essence of Shaolin set, both in kungfu practice and in daily life?

Sifu Nessa Kahila

Answer

The Essence of Shaolin set contains the best combat techniques of Shaolin Kungfu. As Shaolin Kungfu is the greatest martial art (please see the webpage at <http://shaolin.org/shaolin/greatest.html> for justification), by extension the best combat techniques in all martial arts are found in Essence of Shaolin.

The combat techniques in Essence of Shaolin are really marvelous. I shall take the first two patterns in the set, “Show Dragon Hide Tiger” and “Reverse Thunder Roll Heaven”, as examples.

Most martial artists would not know the combat application of “Show Dragon Hide Tiger”. But when its combat application is explained, many people, as it is often the case, may think why they have never thought of it before.

There was a story about “Reverse Thunder Roll Heaven”., which has another name, “Reverse Hanging of Golden Lotus”. I was sparring with a well-known chi kung master. He gave me a thrust punch, and I covered it. Instantly he swung his arm at my face in the pattern “Reverse Thunder Roll Heaven”. Most people would be caught by surprise, and be hit. But I knew the technique well from Essence of Shaolin. I just thread away his attack calmly. The chi kung master was both surprised and impressed. He was so impressed that he asked me to teach him some combat application.

The first pattern touches on the element of marvel, and the second pattern on the element of surprise. Many of the combat applications of the patterns in Essence of Shaolin are marvelous and surprising.

Besides effective techniques, a kungfu practitioner must also need other qualities, especially when his opponents are of high level. His form must be picture-perfect, he must have good force and speed, his movement is fluid, and he applies tactics and strategies effectively.

If an exponent does not have good form, he may not be able to use the combat applications of

many of the patterns in Essence of Shaolin even when he knows their combat application. This was a main reason why I took more than 2 years to learn the set, even when I was known to have picture-perfect form. Uncle Righteousness made sure my form in all the patterns of the set was picture-perfect.

Hence, one of the many benefits of Essence of Shaolin is to have picture-perfect form. When your form is picture-perfect, you will not only be good at Essence of Shaolin, but also in all martial arts, including those arts which you may not have learnt before. If you attempt any wrestling techniques, presuming you have not learnt wrestling before, not only you will perform the techniques in picture-perfect form but also you will know why if your form is not picture-perfect you will expose yourself to counter-attack. You will also know that the shoot, which is a common technique in wrestling, is suicidal in a real fight where safety rules do not apply.

But you do not need 2 years to learn the set. It is because of a few reasons. A very important reason is that now we have the advantage of modern technology, the internet, which I did not have before. Another reason is my progress in kungfu philosophy. Now I don't regard the routine of the set itself as a top secret, though many other masters still do. I also prefer to teach you how to fish, instead of giving you a fish. You will, for example, attempt picture-perfect form of all the patterns of Essence of Shaolin on your own, instead of me correcting your form pattern by pattern. For those who are enterprising, you can work out sophisticated applications of some of its patterns, like what we have done in many of my kungfu courses.

To have picture-perfect form is one of our basic skills in kungfu training. If you have attended my Intensive Shaolin Kungfu Course or Intensive Taijiquan Course, which are a pre-requisite for attending the Essence of Shaolin course, you would have learnt the skill of picture-perfect form.

But the techniques of Essence of Shaolin are not taught in my Intensive Shaolin Kungfu Course or Intensive Taijiquan Course. How is it, then, that having attended these courses, you would have the skill of picture-perfect form to perform the techniques in Essence of Shaolin? It is because having picture-perfect form is a basic skill, and once you have the basic skill, you can perform all other techniques, though in some sophisticated techniques you may have to pay particular attention to certain aspects of the skill. Similarly, once you have the basic skill of typing, you can type any documents, though in some sophisticated documents you may have to pay attention to certain aspects.

You need some force besides picture-perfect form to apply the sophisticated techniques of

Essence of Shaolin. Here, you have a big advantage that I did not have before. All our arts in Shaolin Wahnam now are triple-cultivation. Even if you did not practice any special force training methods, by practicing a kungfu set, you can develop some internal force.

But being a pattern-set, i.e. all the 108 patterns in the set are individual patterns, not part of a combat sequence, Essence of Shaolin is not a choice set to develop internal force. It is a very advanced set for those who already have internal force. Examples of choice sets to develop internal force are “Lohan Asks the Way” for the force method, and “White Crane Flaps Wings” for the flow method, which are basic sets in our school. Examples of special force training methods are Zhan Zhuang or stance training, One-Finger Shooting Zen, and Lifting Water.

Besides picture-perfect form and force, you also need speed to execute your techniques successfully. A good way is to be relaxed. The more relaxed you are, the faster you can perform an action. But for those who do not have internal force, they have to tense their muscles to have muscular strength. Hence, it is common for those who want to be fast, do not have strength. What about professional Boxers, they are quite fast? If you observe carefully, they are actually relaxed. They have developed internal force without their own knowing through years of dedicated training.

But we have the magic of chi flow, which can enable you to be very fast, and also powerful. Those who attended my Dragon Strength course, would have learnt the skill of dragon speed which makes them very fast.

However, unless you are lightning fast like applying dragon speed, sometimes you may have to slow down to apply your techniques successfully on your opponents. Although your movement may be slow, or slower, you must be flowing, not staccato. Taijiquan provides much practice in this area.

Fluidity of movement is important in kungfu, and in daily life. I learned this important skill with my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, when performing patterns in the Four-Gate set in a staccato manner. “Perform the patterns in a sequence, use one breath for each sequence,” he advised.

Without false modesty, I was a fast and smart learner. This statement alone contributed greatly to my kungfu performance and understanding. I was able to defeat many opponents, including professionals and masters, because I overwhelmed them with my combat sequences, which necessitated this skill.

Techniques from Essence of Shaolin are so sophisticated that I could overcome opponents without consciously using tactics and strategies. But tactics and strategies are actually incorporated in the techniques, though practitioners of Essence of Shaolin may not be conscious of them. For example, in the first pattern of the set, “Show Dragon Hide Tiger”, the technique is used when an opponent attacks, especially with a thrust punch. In the second pattern, “Reverse Thunder Roll Heaven”, an attack is used as a feint, and when an opponent responds to the initial attack, the technique is used surprisingly on him.

On the other hand, if opponents are very skilful, it will be helpful to use tactics and strategies consciously. In the first technique, you leave some openings for your opponent to attack. When he attacks, you strike him with “Show Dragon Side Tiger”. In the second technique, you feint an attack, which can be real if he fails to counter it. When he responds to your initial attack, you strike him with “Reverse Thunder Roll Heaven”.

The benefits we gain from Essence of Shaolin in kungfu performance can be rewardingly applied to our daily life. As far as I know, we are the only school that does this consciously. Other masters may apply their kungfu benefits to their daily life, usually unconsciously, but they do not teach the beneficial transfer as a school.

When we have attained picture-perfect form in our kungfu, we can also have picture-perfect form in whatever we do in our daily life. If your form is not picture-perfect in your daily activities, you can improve the form with the understanding from your kungfu training. For example, if you have been sitting slackly on your chair, you can now sit upright in a relaxed manner. If you have been using muscular strength of your arms to lift a heavy object, you can now do so by raising your stance. First you hold the heavy object firmly and lower your stance in picture-perfect form. Then you raise your stance, without raising your arms.

Force is necessarily in our daily activities. Most people use mechanical strength in their daily activities, and they soon become tired. You can use chi flow and work well for a long time.

Speed is also a necessary factor in daily life. A lot of people have missed their opportunities because they are slow. Sometimes, they are too hasty. You can apply “right timing” from your kungfu training, and in more sophisticated situations from Essence of Shaolin, to achieve success and happiness in your daily life.

Fluidity of movement is very important in daily life. I have applied this principle to enhance many things I do in my daily activities. Many people have asked me how I can achieve so many things in my daily life. I usually reply that I apply kungfu and chi Kung principles. Looking back, fluidity of movement is one of these important principles.

The use of tactics and strategies is very beneficial in our daily life. We do not wait for others to make changes if situations are less than satisfactory. As we are so blessed to be trained in Shaolin Wahnam arts, we are leaders, not followers, and we apply tactics and strategies in a win-win manner.

If, for example, you find that a chair at your work place is misplaced, you don't wait for others to place it back properly; you do it yourself. If you find that your wife, husband or housemate is depressed, you don't wait for him or her to be cheerful again, you cheer him or her with appropriate words or actions.

These are minor examples, but if you work on them, you will be habitual in changing problems into opportunities for improvement, and major problems in daily life will become simple.

The Essence of Shaolin course will give opportunities for such improvements in daily life.

Past Master Lai Chin Wah (Uncle Righteousness)

Poised in Picture Perfect form

**Uncle Righteousness has passed on the
opportunity to learn The Essence of Shaolin
through Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit**



Question 4

Is there a signature or essential pattern / patterns in the Essence of Shaolin set, such as the "Dragon Manifests Miraculous Majesty" pattern in the Dragon-Form Set?

If not, can you tell us which pattern or patterns are your favourites in the Essence of Shaolin set, and why?

Sifu Markus Kahila

Answer

There are no signature or essential patterns in the Essence of Shaolin set because all the patterns are special. All the patterns are selected to be included in the Essence of Shaolin set because of their special, sophisticated or marvellous combat application.

If any one of the 108 patterns is used in an ordinary set in the same way as it is used in the Essence of Shaolin, that pattern will become a signature or essential pattern.

Take the first pattern of the Essence of Shaolin set, "Show Dragon Conceal Tiger". This pattern is found in many other kungfu sets in an ordinary way. Most practitioners regard it as a poise pattern. So it is not a signature or essential pattern. But if it is used in the way in Essence of Shaolin, it becomes very special. It will become a signature pattern of that set.

Let us take another pattern, "Dragons Return to Den", which is found in every kungfu set, often called "Two Tigers at Ready". It is bringing two hands of a practitioner to his waist after completing a pattern, like bringing back his two hands after a Shaolin greeting at the start of a Shaolin kungfu set. There is nothing special about this movement, so it is not a signature pattern.

But if this pattern, "Dragons Return to Den" or "Two Tigers at Ready", is used in a special way like in Essence of Shaolin, it becomes a signature pattern. All the patterns in Essence of Shaolin are signature patterns as they are used in very special or sophisticated ways. But because all of them are special by themselves, they become normal when considered as a whole.

We can have an analogy using our school, although other people may think we are being arrogant. As I have mentioned often, that is their problem.

Having chi flow or having internal force is normal in our school. It is nothing special. Every student in our school has chi flow. Every student in our school has internal force.

If a student of our school goes to another school, he comes very special. No other students in another school have chi flow. No other students have internal force. He is the only one to have chi flow and internal force.

It is the same with Essence of Shaolin. Every pattern in the set is special, but because all the patterns are special, they become normal or common.

In the same way it is not easy for me to identify my favourite patterns in Essence of Shaolin. Because every one of the patterns in the set can be used in a special way, it is not easy for me to say which one is more special.

Moreover, and I really don't mean to be boastful, I didn't have to use these patterns in a special way to defeat my opponents in sparring or actual fighting, except in some special occasions like when I used "Hook-Spring Chop Sword" and "Fu Sing Kicks Bushel", which were special techniques for hook-spring leg and no-shadow kicks.

However, if I have to pick some favourites, I would, quite randomly, mention the following patterns: Show Dragon Conceal Tiger, Second Auntie Catches Crab, and Cross Step Horse-Riding. The first pattern contributes to Dim Mark, which is regarded as a lost art by many people but is still alive in our school; the second pattern contributes to chin-na, which is one of my specialties; and the third pattern demonstrates the marvellous, causing even opponents to exclaim why they didn't think of such application before.

The Essence of Shaolin not only enabled me to understand combat application deeply, but to apply techniques in a marvellous way I can look at any kungfu set, including one that I have not seen before, and tell the combat application of every pattern. Most kungfu practitioners do not know the combat application of most patterns in their sets. I am glad that a few instructors and senior students have this ability. Essence of Shaolin may not be the only kungfu set that develops this ability, but it is certainly very effective in this development.

A more important and deeper benefit of Essence of Shaolin is to apply any kungfu techniques, which may not necessary [be] from Essence of Shaolin, in a marvellous way. There are 108 patterns in Essence of Shaolin, which means there are 108 marvellous ways to apply these techniques! If a practitioner knows just 3 or 4 marvellous ways, he has the material to arrive at the marvellous level, which is the highest level.

The Essence of Shaolin is once-in-a-life-time course, and I do not intend to repeat it.

Question 5

The Essence of Shaolin is full of highly developed patterns. What unique benefits can participants expect from this to-be-legendary course? Will they get a chance to learn all the sophisticated applications and maybe also some combat sequences?

Thank you for offering Uncle Righteousness' legacy to us! I will do my best to arrange my attendance.

Sifu Leonard Lackinger

Answer

The Essence of Shaolin course is once-in-a-lifetime as I am not going to offer this course again. It was Uncle Righteousness legendary set. Uncle Righteousness was his honourable nickname, his real name was Lai Chin Wah. He was called Uncle Righteousness for his sense of righteousness and his kungfu to uphold righteousness.

Uncle Righteousness was an excellent fighter – at a time when the fist, not law, ruled the day. Certainly he was not called Uncle Righteousness for no reason. But I believe he did not need techniques from Essence of Shaolin to defeat his opponents. He was such a good fighter that even ordinary techniques could make him victorious.

But Uncle Righteousness had excellent fighting skills, and Essence of Shaolin certainly contributed much to his fighting skills. Essence of Shaolin was Uncle Righteousness' legendary set, and I was very lucky to be the only student to be taught this legendary set.

After Uncle Righteousness had gone back to heaven, many masters asked me to teach them this legendary set, but at that time I wanted to reserve it for my chosen successor. Now I have decided to teach it to deserving students.

Many of the patterns in Essence of Shaolin are highly developed or sophisticated, but there are also many that are apparently simple, like Show Dragon Hide Tiger, Precious Duck Swims through Lotus, and Advance with Triple Punch. These patterns are found in most kungfu sets.

However, it is how they are used that make them highly developed or sophisticated. Most kungfu practitioners, even advanced ones, for example, would use Show Dragon Hide Tiger as a poise pattern, and Precious Duck Swims through Lotus and Advance with Triple Punch as ordinary attack patterns.

In Essence of Shaolin, these patterns are used in a very special way which make them very special. There are 108 patterns in Essence of Shaolin. They are specially selected for their marvellous application, including the apparently simple looking ones. That is why the set is called Essence of Shaolin. It contains the essence of Shaolin Kungfu, and by extension all martial arts.

Essence of Shaolin reminds me of the famous Chinese saying that if someone has studied the 300 poems of the Tang Dynasty, which is sometimes called the Golden Age of Chinese civilization, he can recite poetry like a poet even if he has no poetic talents. Of course, he must know some rudiments of Chinese poetry. If he does not even know what poetry is, he cannot recite the poems like a poet.

If someone has learnt the 108 combat applications of the 108 patterns of Essence of Shaolin, he can apply them in a marvellous way, even if he has no marvellous talents. Of course, he must know some rudiments of kungfu. If he is unable to perform a simple pattern well, he will be unable to perform any of the combat applications like a high-level master who has reached a marvellous level.

The patterns used in a marvellous way are taught in combat sequences. There are 108 patterns in the set, so there are 108 combat sequences. To attain a marvellous level, one does not need to use the 108 applications. If he can apply two or three patterns in a marvellous way, that is quite sufficient to make him attain the level of the marvellous.

On the other hand, if someone has learnt 108 sequences applied in a marvellous way, or even a quarter of them, he become so used to them that he becomes marvellous, not only in applying patterns form Essence of Shaolin, but also any kungfu patterns, and if he is smart in anything in his daily life.

Do you know the secret why our Shaolin Wahnam family members can use kungfu techniques for combat in just a few days in my intensive kungfu courses, whereas other people may not be able to do so after raining for many years? I had the inspiration from Douglas, the most senior Shaolin Wahnam practitioner in Europe.

Douglas, who is American, speaks Spanish like a native. Once I asked him how he learned Spanish. He told me that he learned it in about a week when he first landed in Spain.

“About a week?” I asked.

“Yes,” he said. “I paid a lot of money to a company. The company sent a lady teacher who spoke only Spanish. So every day for a week, I spoke Spanish, ate Spanish, and slept Spanish.”

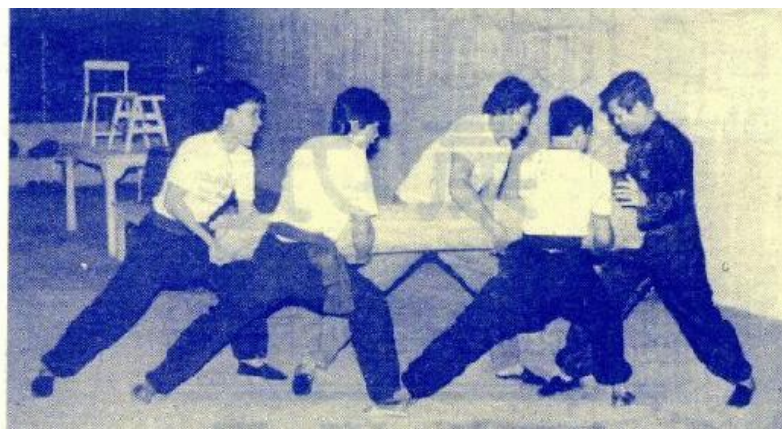
I forgot to ask him whether the lady teacher was young and pretty.

So, if a student practices 108 combat sequences in an ordinary way, he becomes ordinary. If he practices the combat sequences in a marvellous way, he becomes marvellous.

Course participants will also have a good opportunity to use different types of force when using combat application in a marvellous way. Although Essence of Shaolin focuses on techniques, because those who attend the course already have internal force, I shall also spend some time to use selected patterns from the set to develop various types of internal force. In the unlikelyhood that I forget, can you or some kind soul please remind me?

Combat efficiency is the most basic of any kungfu training. Combat efficiency in a marvellous way is a once-in-a life-time opportunity.

But we are elite in Shaolin Wahnam. The Essence of Shaolin course will not only make us combat efficient in a marvellous way, but also contribute greatly to our health, vitality, longevity, peak performance, mental clarity and spiritual joys. Other arts in our school also bring us these wonderful benefits, but the Essence of Shaolin course will enable us to attain these benefits in a marvellous way.



Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit making use of Internal Force whilst being rammed with a Tree trunk in a Golden Bell demonstration

Question 6

Sifu once said that he would teach this set to his chosen successor(s) and then retire from public teaching and international travel. Could Sifu please comment on this plan?

Sifu Andrew Barnett

Answer

Because of changing times, I have to change my plans accordingly, although the basic principles remain the same.

An example of changing times is that when I was young, or younger as I am still young at over 70, I dated Simu, my wife. Then I married her and had children. Now I have grandchildren. Dating a beautiful girl is very different from playing with grandchildren.

An example that my basic principles remain the same despite these changing times is my deep respect for my sifus. I had great respect for my sifus when I was their student. I still have great respect for my sifus now when I have become the grandmaster of our school.

When I first learned Essence of Shaolin from my first sifu, Uncle Righteousness, many people, who were usually my seniors, asked me to teach them this set. I told them that I was not qualified, and requested them to ask Uncle Righteousness, which they dared not.

When I established Shaolin Wahnam Association, many people also asked me to teach them Essence of Shaolin. I told them I would reserve the set for my chosen successor. It was a tradition to have one chosen successor at that time.

Now that I have established Shaolin Wahnam Institute, there are many worthy disciples who can spread our Shaolin Wahnam arts all over the world. I feel it is unfair to name only one chosen successor.

All these three reasons regarding Essence of Shaolin were truthful. When I first inherited Essence of Shaolin from Uncle Righteousness, I felt unqualified to teach it. When I was the grandmaster of Shaolin Wahnam Association, I wanted to pass the art to a chosen successor. Now I want to transmit the art to deserving disciples irrespective of race, culture and religion.

This idea of having many disciples to pass on our Shaolin Wahnam arts instead of choosing only

one successor was inspired by the Venerable Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen. Hui Neng had many worthy disciples, and many of them could succeed him to spread the teachings and benefits of Zen. So he did not name a specific successor, but asked his worthy disciples to spread Zen.

Before Hui Neng, each patriarch chose one disciple to succeed him. The First Patriarch was Bodhidharma, the second Hui Ke, the third Seng Can, the fourth Dao Xin, the fifth Hong Ren, and the sixth Hui Neng. All the first four patriarchs lived and taught at the Shaolin Monastery on Song Mountain in Henan Province. Hong Ren, the Fifth Patriarch, mainly taught Zen at Huang Mei, or Yellow Plum. Hui Neng mainly taught Zen at Nanhua Temple in Guangdong Province in south China.

I was sincere when I said I wanted to retire from active public teaching. But changing times make me modify my original aim. Although many disciples are established, there are still new ones who need my support and guidance, without which they may not be able to stand on their own. Moreover, I still have some prestigious sets to pass on to succeeding disciples. Essence of Shaolin is the last that I would want to be passed on to posterity before my public retirement. There are a few other sets, but even if they are not passed to posterity, it is alright, but not Essence of Shaolin.



The Venerable Hui Neng, the Sixth Patriarch of Zen.

A famous painting by Liang Kai of the Six Patriarch Hui Neng cutting bamboo.

Huineng & the Platform Sutra - Wisdom from Chapter 1

Self-nature is pure.

Who sees intuitively his own nature, is a Buddha.

Take good care of yourself.

Image & Wisdom text sourced at <http://oaks.nvg.org/hui-neng.html#a>

Question 7

As you have modified the Dragon Strength Set, did you also modify the Essence of Shaolin? If yes, could you please explain the differences? If no, could you please explain why?

You have mentioned that you specialized in the Dragon Strength Set, then what about the Essence of Shaolin?

How did the Essence of Shaolin affect your personal and kungfu development?

If you would ascribe an animal style to the Essence of Shaolin Set, what animal(s) would it be and why?

As there is no specific internal force part in the Essence of Shaolin, what kind internal force training, like One Finger Shooting Zen, Cosmos Palm, Iron Wire, Grasping Sparrow's Tail, Dantien Breathing, would fit best?

During the Dragon Strength Course we have learned Dim Mark, Dragon Force and Lightning Speed. What skills will be taught during the Essence of Shaolin Course?

Sifu Anton Schmick

Answer

Yes, I have also modified the Essence of Shaolin set. As I progressed in my understanding of kungfu, I made modifications according to my new understanding. This includes a deeper understanding of the classics. I am lucky to have a little classic on the Essence of Shaolin. Initially I could not understand many of the applications described in this classic. But as my understanding grew, I could understand better. So I made modifications to bring out the applications.

For example, in Pattern 11, Double Dragons Embrace Pearl, I could understand that the pattern was not just a double punch as outwardly shown, but gripping an opponent's head even from behind. At first I did not understand the combat application of Pattern 13, Double Dragons Subdue Serpent, but later I knew it was dislocating an opponent's wrist.

I also made modifications to meet expedient needs. Originally Pattern 3, Dragons Return to Cave, was performed separately as a pattern by itself, i.e. a practitioner performed just that one pattern. But I incorporated it into the main flow of the set as a continuation of a sequence.

Nevertheless, the main structure of the set remains the same as I learned it.

I specialized in a few sets. Essence of Shaolin is one of them. However if I were to compare which set I specialized more than the other, I would say the Dragon Strength Set. This is relative, and it does not mean that I do not specialize in Essence of Shaolin.

The combat applications in Essence of Shaolin are very sophisticated, though some techniques may look common-place. When they are used on opponents, the opponents have no chance to escape, unless he is very, very skilful so I seldom used them in free sparring or real fighting. I did not need to use them because I could defeat my opponents using simpler techniques like those found in Dragon Strength.

The Essence of Shaolin have great effect on my personal as well as kungfu development. A main reason why I could know the combat application of any patterns, including those I saw the first time, was because of my training in Essence of Shaolin. The combat applications of Essence of Shaolin are sophisticated or marvellous. Once I know these applications, all other combat applications became easy.

This ability in kungfu helped me greatly in my daily life. Because I was trained in sophisticated or marvellous applications of techniques in Essence of Shaolin, I could transfer this skill to daily living. Things or events that appeared to be complicated, became clear and easy. Many people were kind to comment that I could see situations wisely. I believe this ability owed much to my training in Essence of Shaolin.

As the Essence of Shaolin set comprise of the best techniques in Shaolin Kungfu, all major Shaolin animals are represented, although the animals may not be mentioned by name. For example, the Snake is not mentioned, but certainly there are patterns manifesting the training of energy as represented by the Snake. In fact, in the hands of a master all the patterns in the set is a training of energy.

The most commonly met animals are the Dragon, the Tiger and the Crane. The word "Crane" may not be mentioned often, but elegance of movement and good balance, which are characteristics of the Crane patterns, are frequent.

Describing an animal style to Essence of Shaolin will limit the set to a particular characteristic represented by the animal. It is best that being the essence of Shaolin techniques, the set trains all the characteristics represented by Shaolin Kungfu, Nevertheless, if I had to do so, I would choose the Dragon, which also happens to be the Shaolin animal that is most represented in the set.

The Dragon trains mind, or spirit. It is the most important and influential of all the characteristics represented by various animals. If a practitioner is good at other characteristics, like energy

training represented by the Snake, internal force represented by the Tiger, speed represented by the Leopard, or elegance represented by the Crane, but lacks presence of mind or spirit he will be much compromised.

Unlike some Southern Shaolin sets like Triple Stretch, Flower Set and Dragon Strength, there is no special section for internal force training in Essence of Shaolin. There is also no special section for internal force training in many Northern Shaolin sets, like Seven-Star, Eighteen Collection of Praying Mantis, and the 50 sequences of Eagle Claw Kungfu. Indeed, for some time I wondered how great masters like Hou Yun Jia and Wang Zi Ping, who specialized in Shaolin Tantui, had so much internal force. Later I discovered that their internal force came from training the Eighteen Lohan Art.

It is the same for Essence of Shaolin. Practitioners of Essence of Shaolin have to practice other methods of internal force training to develop their internal force. Personally I believe One-Finger Shooting Zen will fit best. If a practitioner practices One-Finger Shooting Zen, by the time he has the rare opportunity to learn Essence of Shaolin, he would have much internal force.

Apart from One-Finger Shooting Zen, any of the methods you have mentioned – Cosmos Palm, Iron Wire, Grasping Sparrow's Tail, and Dan Tian Breathing -- will generate internal force. Other useful methods are Bone-Marrow Cleansing at the Muscle Level,, Cotton Palm various styles of Taijiquan, Lifting Water and Stance Training. We are indeed very lucky that we have so many methods to develop internal force.

The Dragon Strength Course was fantastic. If a practitioner could learn only one of the three rare arts in five years, which were Dim Mark, Dragon Force and Lightning Speed, he would be extremely happy and grateful. Our course participants learned all the three arts in only five days! It was simply ridiculous, but true. Course participants who attended my Dragon Strength Course needed prior kungfu experience, but those who had the chance to learn any of these rare arts in five years also had prior kungfu experience. They were already at a master's level.

The special skill I shall teach at the Essence of Shaolin Course is to attain a marvellous level. Not many masters have a chance to attain a marvellous level; they would be happy if they could attain it after 20 years. Course participants at my Essence of Shaolin Course will attain it in 5 days! Again we are simply ridiculous. But we have been used to being ridiculous.

Question 8

If there is the essence of Shaolin, what is the essence of Shaolin?

Sifu Roland Mastel

Answer

It is useful to differentiate between “essence of Shaolin” with a small “e” for “essence”, and “Essence of Shaolin” with a capital “E”. Essence of Shaolin with a small “e” although a capital “E” is used here because it starts a sentence, refers to the best and distillation of various Shaolin arts. Different people following different Shaolin arts may prefer different essence. Essence of Shaolin with a capital “E” refers to a kungfu set that comprises the best techniques in Shaolin Kungfu.

The three best known of the Shaolin arts are kungfu, chi kung, or neigong as known in the past, and Zen. Kungfu masters of all styles have referred to three ultimate arts, namely One-Finger Zen, Strike-Across-Space Palm, and Marvellous Fist. All these three are Shaolin arts.

A One-Finger Zen master can dot the energy point of opponents within 36 steps. A Strike-Across-Space Palm master can injure opponents with his palm within 72 steps. A Marvellous Fist master could damage opponents with his fist within 108 steps. All the strikes are without physical contact. One may notice that the numbers 36, 72 and 108 are frequently used in the Shaolin arts. They are multiples of 18, which is in honour of the 18 Lohans.

Although a Marvellous Fist master can injure opponents at a greater distance, One-Finger Zen is traditionally considered the most advanced of these three ultimate arts, followed by Strike-Across-Space Palm. No reasons have been given. I believe it is due to kungfu tradition. The fingers are normally considered superior to the palm and the palm superior to the fist.

Personally I believe that the internal force of a One-Finger Zen master can be used for healing, besides hurting. The palm may sometimes be used for healing. The fist is mainly used for striking.

There are also three ultimate arts amongst the Shaolin arts. They are dim mark, chin-na and neigong, which are dotting energy points, gripping energy points, and internal arts. As I have said before, kungfu terms are for convenience. In this context, dim mark and chin-na are considered external, and neigong is internal. The classification here is that one can see the action of dim mark and chin-na, but not the working of neigong. Generally, external arts are concerned with combat, and internal arts with health.

Hence, if we consider the essence of Shaolin kungfu, most informed people would refer to One-Finger Zen, Strike-Across-Space Palm and Marvellous Fist, or refer to dim mark and chin-na. In this context, neigong is not “kungfu”, i.e. for combat. It is a category by itself under chi kung, or neigong.

Before we move onto chi kung, it is worthy to note that this description is subjective. Shaolin masters who specialize on their chosen arts will refer to their specialized arts as the essence of Shaolin Kungfu. A master who specializes on sweeping with his Iron Leg, would consider his Iron Leg the essence of Shaolin Kungfu.

Shaolin Chi Kung, or Neigong, is the biggest school of chi kung known in the world. It has a very extensive range, starting from chi kung exercises like massaging the face and loosening leg muscles to merging with the Ultimate, or in Western terms, returning to God the Holy Spirit.

Different people, understandably, would have different preference, and choose different arts as their essence. For those who are sick with so-called incurable diseases, their essence of Shaolin Chi Kung is to regain their good health. For those dying of cancer, for example, any chi kung exercise that can help them to recover is the essence of Shaolin.

For those who have renounced their worldly lives, Shaolin chi kung exercises that can help them to merge with the Ultimate or return to God the Holy Spirit is the essence. For the majority who still live in the phenomenal world, Shaolin chi kung exercises that give them good health, vitality and longevity are the essence. We are indeed very lucky that in Shaolin Wahnam we have a whole range of chi kung exercises that serve our individual needs and aspirations.

Not many people, including Zen practitioners, know that Zen came from Shaolin. There were six Zen patriarchs. All the first four patriarchs lived and taught at the Shaolin Monastery in Henan. The fifth and the sixth patriarch, Hong Ren and Hui Neng, went south, but they frequently returned to the monastery to pay homage.

Zen means meditation, or training of mind or spirit. Zen is non-religious, i.e. any person of any religion or of no religion can practice and benefit from Zen.

As Zen is a training of mind, the essence of Zen concerns the best in both the mundane and the supra-mundane dimensions. In the mundane dimension, i.e. in the phenomenal realm, Zen training enables us to have better result no matter what we do! Just take a few seconds to reflect

on this statement. Because you have trained your mind, no matter what you do, you will do better than if you had not trained your mind.

In the supra-mundane dimension, i.e in the transcendental realm, Zen training enables you to accomplish the highest and most noble spiritual attainment, i.e. merging with the Supreme, or returning to God the Holy Spirit. It is not just words. Many of those who attended my advanced chi kung courses accomplished this highest and most noble attainment. But as we still live in the phenomenal realm, we come back to our world. It is very important that one must practice this highest level of Zen under the supervision of a master.

Besides these three well known Shaolin arts of kungfu, chi kung and Zen, other lesser-known arts include calligraphy, Buddhist scriptures, poetry and Chinese medicine, especially traumatology or kungfu medicine. Perhaps it would be appropriate to use “included” in the past tense rather than “include” in the present tense, because the Shaolin Monastery is now a tourist attraction rather than a collection and distribution centre for the best arts of the Chinese civilization.

The collection of stone tablets behind the main gate of the Monastery was regarded as the library of calligraphy. Writings of great calligraphers of all dynasties were engraved in the stone tables. One could find stone records of the calligraphy of any great calligraphers at the Shaolin Monastery.

The monastery library housed a great collection of Buddhist scriptures, which unfortunately were burnt when a warlord attacked the Monastery in 1928, 11 years after the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

By the way, this burning of the Shaolin Monastery in 1928 had nothing to do with kungfu, chi kung or Zen. The “burning of the Shaolin Monastery” by the Qing army, often mentioned in kungfu circles, concerned the Shaolin Monastery at Quanzhou and later on the Nine-Lotus Mountain. Our patriarchs, Jiang Nan and Chee Seen, escaped from the burning of the Shaolin Monastery at Quanzhou, which was associated with the infamous flying guillotines. Chi Seen built a secretive temple on the Nine-Lotus Mountain, and it was also burnt by the Qing army led by Pak Mei.

Many poets spent some time at the Shaolin Monastery, and composed poetry there. The scenery at the Monastery was exquisite. I happen to have a book on Shaolin poetry.

Chinese medicine, especially kungfu medicine, was well known, but was kept as a top secret. The medicine was mainly on treatment for internal injuries, dim mark and chin-na. I also happen to have two books on Shaolin medicine.

What the essence of Shaolin on calligraphy, Buddhist scriptures, poetry or medicine is, will depend on who the seekers are. It can be said without any doubt that the forest of stone tablets at the Shaolin Monastery is the essence of calligraphy. Nowhere else in the whole world can one find a bigger or better collection.

Let us now come to the Essence of Shaolin with a capital “E” for Essence. It is a kungfu set comprising 108 patterns in Shaolin Kungfu applied in a marvellous way. There is also a small classic accompanying the set. Uninitiated persons will not understand the classic.

The term, “Essence of Shaolin”, is my invention. In Chinese it is “Quan Shu Jing Hua”, which is literally word-by-word “Fist-Technique-Essence-Beauty”, and figuratively “Essence of Martial Art”. In Chinese, “fist-technique” means kungfu or martial art.

I don’t know when the set was first composed and by whom. I believe it was composed quite late in the Qing Dynasty. All the patterns in the set are from Southern Shaolin Kungfu.

There was a reference to the Venerable Harg Yein, the most senior disciple of the Venerable Chee Seen, the abbot of the Shaolin Monastery on Nine-Lotus Mountain, and first patriarch of Southern Shaolin Kungfu. I believe Harg Yein could be the author of Essence of Shaolin. +++++

The poetic couplet, “Marvelous techniques beget marvelous techniques, Wondrous skills generate wondrous skills”, is found in the classic. I have adopted this poetic couplet for our school, as it highlights the essence of the highest Shaolin techniques and skills.

When an opponent applies a sophisticated technique on you, and there is no way you can escape, so it seems, but by a little twist you reverse the combat situation, putting the opponent in an impossible position, it is an expression of “Marvelous techniques beget marvelous techniques”.

When you accomplish a feat, like breaking a brick without any brick-breaking training, and proceed to a seemingly impossible feat, like breaking the bottom of two bricks one on top of another, it is an expression of “Wondrous skills generate wondrous skills”. I am happy that some of our instructors and senior students have experience of accomplishing this poetic couplet.

Question 9

If all things were equal, is it more advantageous to use a simple technique against a simple attack (a boxer's jab for instance)? Or is it for an advanced practitioner better to use techniques found in advanced sets such as Essence of Shaolin?

Sifu Roeland Dijkema

Answer

If all other things were equal, it is more advantageous to use a simple technique against a simple attack. For example, if a boxer at an elementary level were to attack you with a simple jab, presuming all other things were equal, which means you are also a boxer at an elementary level, it is advantageous to use a simple technique like parrying it with your hand.

If both of you are equally skillful, it is also advantageous to parry the jab. If you use a more complexed Boxing technique, like moving to his side to counter-strike him, because he is equally skillful, he can strike you as you attempt to move to his side. Technically, he has a good chance of hitting you while you are moving.

However, if you are more skillful than him, which means other things are not equal, you have a good chance of hitting him with this more complex technique. Your less skillful opponent may not know what to do, or even if he knows, he is too slow for your counter-attack.

If a Boxer were to jab at you, presuming you are using kungfu, which means that all other things were equal except that he uses Boxing and you use kungfu, it is also advantageous to use a simple kungfu technique against the jab. If you try to move to his side to strike him with a kungfu technique, because he is equally skillful, irrespective of whether both of you are at the elementary, intermediate or advanced level, he can hit you with another jab while you are moving.

If you try to grip his attacking arm with a complex chin-na technique, he will also hit you with another jab. This is because you need to make 4 movements in chin-na, and he makes only 1 jabbing you. If you use other complex techniques, it is also disadvantageous, simple because as both of you are at the same level, your techniques are complex and his techniques are simple.

This is what we do at my courses, though the reason may not be the same.. When a Boxer jabs at us, we use a simple technique to defend against the jab. Normally we use "thread-hand" in Shaolin Kungfu or "lift hand" in Taijiquan at a Box-Arrow Stance from outside in. The reason is not

because it is advantageous to use a simple defence against a simple attack, which actually is a good reason, but because we want to have “safety first” before we learn to counter strike our opponents. We use a “thread-hand” or a “lift-hand” because it is simple, direct and effective.

If you are more skillful than your opponents, which means that other things are not equal, it is more advantageous to use complex counters against your opponent, provide you have the skills to use these complex techniques competently.

If you move to a side and counter with a strike or a kick, if they are equally skillful, many of your opponents know how to defend or counter. But if you use felling attacks or chin-na techniques, many of your opponents may not know how to defend or counter. This is because there are no counters in their repertoire against such attacks. But you must have the skills to apply these attacks.

Even when your opponents trained in Boxing or other martial arts apart from kungfu are more skillful than you, unless the difference in skills is overwhelming, if you apply sophisticated attacks on them. As an analogy, a car is a more sophisticated vehicle than a bicycle. Even when a cyclist is more skillful in cycling a bicycle than a driver driving a car, the driver will be faster than the cyclist.

Similarly, even when your opponents using other martial arts are more skillful than you, because you use kungfu, you will be more combat efficient than your opponent. Of course, you must be able to use kungfu effectively in combat.

In the Essence of Shaolin course, you will learn sophisticated techniques, or otherwise simple techniques used in a marvelous way.



**Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kitt
shows the Students how to apply
Kungfu skills and techniques for
combat.**

Question 10

How have you benefited over the years from learning the Essence of Shaolin set from Sigung?

FJ

Answer

My tremendous benefits over the years from learning the Essence of Shaolin set come from three sources:

1. I learned the Essence of Shaolin set from my sifu, Sifu Lai Chin Wah, or better known as Uncle Righteousness.
2. I learned internal force and combat application which I could apply to the Essence of Shaolin set from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam.
3. Over my many years of teaching, I worked out the marvelous combat application of the Essence of Shaolin set, and transferred these skills to daily living.

Those invited to the Essence of Shaolin course will derive these wonderful benefits.

I am very grateful to Uncle Righteousness for teaching me the Essence of Shaolin set, a top-secret set taught only to selected successors. If I was not taught this set, even when I learned combat application and internal force from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, and even I have the intelligence and make the necessary effort to work out marvelous application, and apply the skills to daily living, I would not have a base to do so.

Now I have posted this top-secret set on my website. People may learn the set, but they lack the combat application and internal force, and they lack the marvelous way of the application and transference of skills to daily life.

My learning of combat application (not necessary of the Essence of Shaolin set) and internal force from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam was priceless. A person may know the set, but he does not know how to apply the techniques in the set for combat, and he has no internal force.

Even when a person can use the Essence of Shaolin set for combat, and has internal force, he does not know how to apply the techniques in the set in a marvelous way. To do so, one must have intelligence and make the effort.

There are many intelligent people, but they may not make the effort. On the other hand, those who want to make the effort, may not have the intelligence. Further, it is not just intelligence. It includes wide understanding of kungfu philosophy and experience of applying kungfu techniques in a marvelous ways.

Over the years I have benefited much from the Essence of Shaolin set, but I shall just focus on three.

As many of you know, in my younger days I went out to look for sparring opponents to confirm my combat efficiency, and I remained undefeated. At the beginning, I looked for opponents whom I could beat. I made my victory doubly sure by practicing on my own combat sequences I could apply to them in sparring.

Later when I was sure of my combat efficiency, I did not have to look for sparring opponents, but they looked for me instead. I could defeat them. Much of this was due to my training in the Essence of Shaolin set.

If I applied a technique used in a marvelous way on my opponents, they have no chance to escape. I did not have to do that in free sparring with other people, because I could defeat them using simple techniques in simple ways. However, in class demonstrations, I sometimes applied techniques in marvelous ways. This, again, was due to my training in the Essence of Shaolin set, though the actual techniques used might not be from the set.

Many people were kind to comment that I was marvelous. They might not use the word “marvelous”, but that was what they meant. I just recall at random two examples., one in a kungfu situation and the other in a non-kungfu situation.

Once I was sparring with a Ng Mui Kungfu master who applied his “ultimate” technique on me, which was “Single Leg Frying Crane”, striking my eyes with his two hands, which were actually a feign, and simultaneously executing a double flying kick, which was kicking with one leg, and if an opponent avoided it, kicking with the other leg. I retreated to avoid all his attack, and as he landed I drove a phenix-eye fist to his solar pluses. I intended to stop an inch or two away from target, but as he was flying in, I had to release my phoenix-eye fist and let his chest brush against my fingers.

“Why were you so fast?” he asked. I believed most people would be taken aback by the question.

But because of my training in the Essence of Shaolin set, I answered in a marvelous way. “I was ready for you,” I replied.

The other occasion was in Hawaii. Emiko and some Japanese and Canadian disciples invited me and Simu for lunch. The waitresses put us in separate tables, but I insisted that we all sat in one table so that we could talk together.

The waitresses were reluctant, but our Japanese girls were very fast. Before the waitresses realized what had happened the Japanese girls had arranged some table so that we could all sit together. I took the lead and we all sat down, with the waitresses not knowing what to do. But I gave them a big tip at the end of the meal.

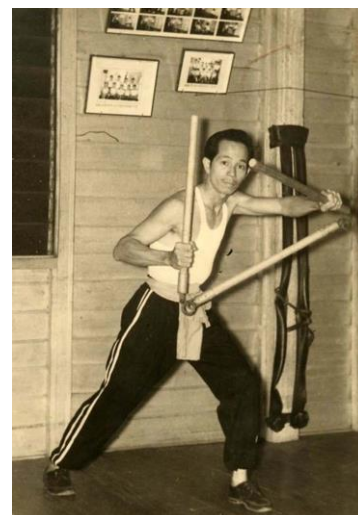
Being marvelous is not easy. Even real masters themselves cannot apply their kungfu in a marvelous way. There is a kungfu saying that “strength is inferior to techniques, techniques are inferior to force, force is inferior to speed, and speed is inferior to the marvelous.”

A person may be strong, but he can be beaten by another person who uses techniques. A person may know a lot of techniques, but he can be beaten by someone who has force. A person can be forceful, but he can be beaten by someone who has speed. A person may be fast, but he can be beaten by someone who is marvelous. To be marvelous is to accomplish something in a manner that even opponents are surprised.

There are 108 techniques in the Essence of Shaolin set, and each technique is used in a marvelous way. Even when a course participant may know nothing about being marvelous, but after learning how to apply these 108 techniques in marvelous ways, they would be marvelous.

There are many situations in daily living when you can apply your marvelous ways. After attending the Essence of Shaolin course, you can be marvelous.

Past Master Ho Fatt Nam
the third generation successor of the southern
Shaolin Temple at Quanzhou, was the third Sifu of
Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit.



The Ten Shaolin Laws

1. Required to respect the master, honour the Moral Way and love fellow disciples as brothers and sisters.
2. Required to train the Shaolin arts diligently, and as a pre-requisite, to be physically and mentally healthy.
3. Required to be filial to parents, be respectful to the elderly, and protective of the young.
4. Required to uphold righteousness, and to be both wise and courageous.
5. Forbidden to be ungrateful and unscrupulous, ignoring the Laws of man and heaven.
6. Forbidden to rape, molest, do evil, steal, rob, abduct or cheat.
7. Forbidden to associate with wicked people; forbidden to do any sorts of wickedness.
8. Forbidden to abuse power, be it official or physical; forbidden to oppress the good and bully the kind.
9. Obligated to be humane, compassionate and spread love, and to realize everlasting peace and happiness for all people.
10. Obligated to be chivalrous and generous, to nurture talents and pass on the Shaolin arts to deserving disciples.

