



Question and Answer Series
Shaolin Five-Animal Set
by Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit

Question 1

When selecting an animal spirit for specialization, we are looking for a person's character and abilities. How are the various animal spirits manifested in a person and on the other side how does the training of the various animal spirits affect our character and personal growth in everyday life?

Sifu Leonard Lackinger

Answer

For those not familiar with the terms used here, it may be useful to briefly explain what we mean by "animal spirit". Here we do not mean the soul or that invisible aspect of the animal apart from its physical body. We mean the characteristics or qualities manifested by that animal, and in particular with special reference to the Five-Animal Set.

When we say the spirit of a tiger, for example, does not mean the soul, or non-physical part of the tiger. We mean the characteristics or qualities manifested by a tiger in general, such as courage and ferocity. In the special case of the Shaolin Five-animal Set, we mean internal force.

The Shaolin "five animals" are the dragon, the snake, the tiger, the leopard and the crane. Whether the dragon really exists is another issue.

The spirit or qualities manifested by these Shaolin "five animals" are mind, qi or energy, internal force, speed and strength, and elegance. In other words, when we train the dragon form, we train presence of mind when we train the tiger form, we train internal force.

When we select a Shaolin animal for specialization, we look for the person's character and abilities. These factors are considered by both the student and the teacher.

For example, if a student is slow in his daily activities, we may select a set with a lot of leopard forms for his specialization. By specializing in the set, he may improve his speed of doing things.

Does that mean that if another student is quick, we would not choose a set with a lot of leopard forms for him? No, not necessarily. It depends on our criteria. We may choose the set for him if we want to make full use of his speedy action.

In this respects, those attending the course on the Shaolin Five-Animal Set are very lucky. It is not a specialization course, but a course where participants will have an introduction to all the Shaolin five animals. It is certainly a wise move, as well as a rare opportunity, to have a taste of all the Shaolin five animals and their manifestations, regardless of whether you will specialize in any one animal later on.

Most other students do not have this practical opportunity; they do not even have the theoretical knowledge. Some students may have practiced the Tiger-Crane Set for years, but do not know what the tiger and the crane manifest. Others may have practiced Dragon Style kungfu for a long time, but are still absent-minded.

By practicing the various animal forms with their spirits, will manifest the respective qualities in the practitioners' nature, behaviour and action.

By practicing the dragon form and manifesting the dragon spirit, practitioners will have presence of mind as well as enhance their mind power.

By practicing the snake form and manifesting the snake spirit, practitioners will increase their energy level and have better energy management. They will, for example, have more stamina in their daily life.

By practicing the tiger form and manifesting the tiger spirit, practitioners will increase their internal force. With internal force, they will have better results in whatever they do!

By practicing the leopard form and manifesting the leopard spirit, practitioners will increase their muscular strength and speed of performance. They will accomplish their daily tasks in shorter time.

By practicing the crane form and manifesting the crane spirit, practitioners will be more elegant and flowing in whatever they do. They won't, for example, be clumsy when they go out on a date.

Successful practice of the various animal forms with their spirit will enhance our character and personal growth in our daily life.

A forgetful person will have a good chance of overcoming his weakness with a successful practice of the dragon form. On the other hand, as all Shaolin Wahnam family members have presence of mind, practicing the dragon form and spirit will strengthen our mind power. It is very important that we must always use our powerful mind for good.

A person who is easily out of breath will have a good chance of overcoming his setback by practicing the snake form and spirit successfully. As all Shaolin Wahnam family members already have good chi flow, practicing the snake form and spirit will increase their energy level as well as energy management. One of the benefits, amongst many others, is that we will live to a ripe old age.

A person who is weak or timid will benefit much by practicing the tiger form and spirit. As all Shaolin Wahnam family members, including those who do not practice kungfu, have internal force, practicing the tiger form and spirit will add to our internal force, contributing to our daily peak performance.

Those who are clumsy will have a good chance to overcome their weakness by practicing the crane form and spirit. As all Shaolin Wahnam family members are already elegant in both action and speech (which is clearly evident in our Shaolin Wahnam Discussion Forum), practicing the crane form and spirit successfully will increase their elegance.

Many Shaolin Wahnam instructors and students have written to me to express how lucky they are to be able to learn our wonderful arts. The course on the Shaolin Five-Animal Set is another wonderful opportunity to gain these incredible qualities.

Question 2

We have so many speciality sets and even styles in Shaolin Wahnam now. What makes the five animal set special and, in this context, what reason should a student (or instructor) have to learn this rather than any of the other specialisation sets? As a P.S. to this question, how will learning and practicing the five animal set complement other specialisations and styles?

Sifu Andrew Barnett

Answer

Not only we in Shaolin Wahnam are very lucky, we are also very special. Not only we have a great variety of sets and styles to enjoy ourselves in and benefit much from, we have also attained very high levels in each of the many sets and styles. Such an opportunity is not only unavailable to many kungfu practitioners today, when the standard of kungfu is much lower than that in the past, it was also not available to many past masters.

I myself was quite lucky — luckier than most other martial artists, but not as lucky as students of Shaolin Wahnam today. Of course I don't complain. Indeed it is a special privilege to have Shaolin Wahnam being so lucky.

I had opportunities to learn many other martial arts, like Judo, Boxing, Karate, Taekwondo, Jujitsu Aikido, Hapkido and Muay Thai. Kick-Boxing and Mixed Martial Art were unknown then. Wrestling was considered a sport. My kungfu school-mates and I were fully aware that if a person used Wrestling in a real fight, he would be maimed or killed. But honestly, and with due respect to these martial arts, their depth and benefit was nothing compared to that in Shaolin Kungfu, i.e. genuine Shaolin Kungfu.

I also had opportunities to learn different styles of kungfu. I learned Hoong Ka, Wuzuquan, Northern and Southern Shaolin, and Wing Choon from my four teachers, who were patriarchs of their arts. I also had opportunities to exchange arts with my schoolmates and other masters on Tantui, Praying Mantis, Eagle Claw, Choy-Li-Fatt and Ngok Ka Kungfu. I also could have learnt to a deep extent Taijiquan and Baguazhang, but due to my ignorance then I thought these kungfu styles were not as deep as the Shaolin Kungfu I practiced.

Most martial artists today, including kungfu practitioners, do not have such opportunities. They have an unbelievable range of martial arts offered to them, but what they learn is a generous exchange of blows amongst

themselves or flowery fist and embroidery kicks for demonstration.

Genuine past masters also did not have the opportunities that our Shaolin Wahnam family members now have. Hoong Hei Khoon, for example would not have learnt Baguazhang, nor Wang Lang learned Taijiquan. Even Yue Fei and Zhang San Feng, for different reasons, did not have the opportunities to practice Choy-LiFatt or Wing Choon Kungfu.

Please note that the issue is opportunities, not attainment. Yue Fei and Zhang San Feng, or even Hoong Hei Koon and Wang Lang, certainly were of higher levels in their attainment than any of us.

If I had such wonderful opportunities in my students' days, why wasn't I as lucky as our Shaolin Wahnam students now? It is because of the depth and benefits that our students get. My depth and benefits during my students' days were nothing compared to our students'. I would not have the opportunities to learn in a few years what our students learn in a few days!

Again, the issue is opportunities. Our students have unbelievable opportunities — opportunities that were unprecedented in all kungfu and chi kung history. But if they do not spend time and effort in their practice, they will only have opportunities.

Others may be angry at what I am going to say, but even our attainments in a few days of regional or intensive courses are incredibly high. We actually attain in a few days what others may never attain, and even masters in the past would take many years to attain. How do we know our attainments are high? We can attain results that only high level masters could attain as recorded in kungfu classics!

For example, in a just few days of our Baguazhang course, our course participants could get to the back of opponents easily. In a few days of our Xingyiquan course, our participants could develop tremendous internal force using the Correspondence and the Expansion modes. In a few days of the Dragon Strength course, our participants could acquire the almost lost skills of dragon force, dragon speed and dim mark!

Even the attainments of our ordinary students are remarkable. How many other practitioners who have practiced chi kung or kungfu for many years can generate a chi flow, have internal force and can use kungfu for fighting? I myself took more than 17 years to be able to develop some internal force. But within three months, our chi kung students can generate a chi flow, and within a year our kungfu students have internal force and can use kungfu for fighting.

Referring to the Five-Animal Set, what makes it special?

The Five-Animal Set represents the crystallization of Southern Shaolin Kungfu. Southern Shaolin Kungfu represents the continued development of Northern Shaolin Kungfu. Shaolin Kungfu is the greatest martial art of the world, the justification of which can be found in "Why Shaolin Kungfu is the Greatest Martial Art" at <http://www.shaolin.org/shaolin/greatest.html> In other words, the Five-Animal Set is the best of the best.

Kungfu, or any martial art, may be categorized into three levels. At the lowest level, mediocre kungfu is for fighting. In other words, any art that cannot be used for fighting cannot be called kungfu. Shockingly, a lot of kungfu practitioners cannot use their kungfu for fighting, though they may fight well using other martial arts.

At the intermediate level, good kungfu is for fighting and good health. Kungfu that is effective for fighting but does not contribute to good health is only mediocre.

At the highest level, great kungfu is for fighting, good health and spiritual cultivation. All kungfu practiced in our school, not just the Five-Animal Set, is great kungfu, as it serves the purposes of combat, good health and spiritual cultivation.

Besides being great kungfu, what makes Five-Animal Set special, or what differentiates it from other great kungfu sets?

An outstanding answer is that when we train the Five-Animal Set, we do not merely train skills and techniques for fighting as well as for non-combat benefits like good health, vitality, longevity, mental clarity and spiritual joys, which can be found in other sets in our school, but we also train the internal essence symbolised by the Shaolin five animals.

The Shaolin five animals are the dragon, the snake, the tiger, the leopard and the crane, and their training manifests mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance respectively. In other words, when you train a kungfu set like the Shaolin Pakua Set or the Taijiquan Old Eagle Catches Snake, you develop skills and techniques for combat efficiency as well as have good health, vitality, longevity, mental clarity and spiritual joys. But when you train the Shaolin Five-animal Set, besides the wonderful benefits of combat efficiency, good health, vitality, longevity, mental clarity and spiritual joys that you will get from the other sets in our school, you will also train mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance.

Would students train mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance if they train sets other than the Shaolin Five-Animal Set? It depends on where they train and what other set they choose.

For most other students not only they will not train mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance, they will not accomplish the main aim of learning any martial art, i.e. self-defence. They submit themselves to generous exchanges of blows, or perform flowery fists and embroidery kicks for demonstration. Some of them may have good health, longevity and presence of mind, or other benefits our students are trained to have, and we sincerely hope so, but these benefits if they have them are not due to their training, but due to other factors.

For our students, their training will give them good health, vitality, longevity, mental clarity and spiritual joys. Our kungfu students who do not train the Shaolin Five-animal Set but other kungfu sets, will also have combat efficiency. These statements may make us appear boastful, and may make other people angry. As I have said numerous times, that is their business, but I am just stating the truth.

I would also like to add that our training will give these benefits. If our students fail in their training, like they train wrongly, over-train or do not train, they will not have these benefits.

Will our kungfu students also train their mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance if they do not train the Five-Animal Set? It depends on the sets they train. Nevertheless, because Southern Shaolin forms the base of kungfu training in our school, and Southern Shaolin is characterised by the Five-animal Set, our students will also get general benefits of these special aspects, but if they learn the Five-Animal Set they will have special methods to train mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance.

If students choose a set like Praying Mantis Eighteen Collection or Drunken Eight Immortals, they will not have special methods to train mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance as provided in the Five-Animal Set. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that Five-Animal Set is superior to Eighteen Collection or Drunken Eight Immortals. This would be dualistic thinking — a fault many other people may make, but which we know very well. There are other special benefits that Eighteen Collection or Drunken Eight Immortals has over the Five-Animal Set. For example, when students practice the Eighteen Collection, they practice the best 18 techniques of the time. When students practice the Drunken Eight Immortals, they practice the skills of dodging and mobility.

If students choose a set like Tiger-Crane, they practice the qualities of the tiger and the crane, which are internal force and elegance. As our Taijiquan sets are more of a dragon than a snake, which characterizes Taijiquan sets of other schools, our Taijiquan students have a lot of opportunities to train the manifestations of a dragon.

But the Five-Animal Set is special. It is not limited to just only one animal, it involves all the five Shaolin animals. Instructors and students attending the Five-Animal Set course will have the opportunity to learn special methods to train the mind, energy, internal force, speed and elegance. For this we have to thank Leo, who made it a point to ask me to teach these special methods.

Other specialization sets or styles may not provide this opportunity. This itself is enough reason for our instructors and student to attend the course. Just imagine, besides other benefits, they have the opportunity to learn special methods that manifest the Shaolin five animals. I believe that even real masters who have practiced kungfu for many years may not have this opportunity.

Learning and practicing the Shaolin Five Animal Set, with the opportunity to learn special methods to manifest the essence of the Shaolin five animals, will certainly complement and enhance other specialisation sets or styles. Like what I mentioned before, such as for the Baguazhang course at the UK Summer Camp, even if someone, for the sake of discussion, would not practice the Five-Animal Set again, but because he attended the Five-Animal Set course, the skills, techniques and philosophy acquired at the course will not only complement and enhance his chosen specialised set or style, but also enhance his daily life.

For example, whatever he does he will have a better presence of mind, and more zest to do it well. He may have this presence of mind and internal force before, acquired from his training in other sets or styles, but his training at the course will surely enhance these qualities.

Question 3

When preparing to teach Baguazhang, Sifu discovered that Baguazhang patterns adopt three planes, whereas Taijiquan patterns adopt two planes and Shaolin patterns adopt one. Furthermore, Sifu has commented that this three-plane facility enhances agility and provides better combat efficiency. How can we apply this development to our practice of the Shaolin Five-Animals Set?

Sifu Mark Blohm

Answer

Discovering that Baguazhang patterns have three planes whereas Taijiquan patterns and Shaolin patterns generally have two and one, I believe, is unprecedented. I haven't found this being mentioned in any of the classics I have read.

I also found, from experience as well as reasoning, that this three-plane feature of Baguazhang patterns enhances their agility and combat efficiency. If a Baguazhang practitioner using the same patterns but keeping himself to only one or two planes, he would be less agile and less combat efficient. This three-plane feature is one main reason why a Baguazhang practitioner can get to the back of an opponent easily.

I believe this three-plane feature, like other aspects of Baguazhang as well as other kungfu styles, was a natural development from actual fighting experience. In other words, it was not some Baguazhang masters intellectualising on combat efficiency, came up with the concept of patterns in three planes. Rather, it was Baguazhang practitioners in combat situations discovering that if they moved their body and their hands further from their foot-position, resulting in three planes, they would be more agile and more combat efficient.

This three-plane feature applies well in Baguazhang, because Baguazhang techniques are such that employing three planes will result in greater agility and combat efficiency. For example, if an opponent attacks you with a right thrust punch, for example, by using the Baguazhang pattern, "Green Dragon Returns Head", you thread his punch upward with your right hand, simultaneously move your left leg diagonally forward and turn round to strike the back of his head with your left palm, all in one smooth movement.

If you use Taijiquan, a similar counter would be to ward off his punch with "Immortal Waves Sleeves", cover his right elbow as you move your left leg forward, then turn around and strike him with your left palm while your right hand floats his right hand in the pattern "Jade Girl Threads Shuttle". This counter needs two patterns, although you can execute the two patterns in one smooth flow.

A similar, though not the same, counter in Shaolin Kungfu is as follows. Lean on his right punch using a right "Single Tiger Emerges from Cave". Then move your right leg forward in a Unicorn Step using the pattern "Run Unicorn Step". Move your left leg forward, then turn around to a right Bow-Arrow Stance and strike your opponent's back with your left palm using "Dark Dragon Draws Water." This counter requires three patterns.

If all other things were equal, using one pattern to counter an attack is certainly more effective than using two or three patterns.

Does this mean Baguazhang is more combat effective than Shaolin Kungfu? Or, if you want to keep Shaolin Kungfu, does adding the three-plane feature to Shaolin Kungfu make it more combat effective?

The answer to both questions is "No." Not only other things are not equal, Shaolin Kungfu as well as Taijiquan have other combat principles to counter the attack.

A Taijiquan practitioner may first sink back, without moving his feet, to avoid the full force of the punch, and ward it off with "Immortal Waves Sleeves". Instead of moving to the opponent's back, the Taijiquan practitioner may just move his body forward, still without moving his feet, and strike the opponent's throat using "White Snake Shoots Venom". These two patterns are executed in one smooth, continuous flow, using the tactic of "defence-cum-counter", or "lian xiao tai da" in Chinese, which is a frequently used principle in Taijiquan.

A Shaolin practitioner, at an advanced level, may not bother to defend. He just responds to the attack with "Fierce Tiger Descends Mountain", using the tactic of "no-defence-direct-counter". "No defence" is a misnomer. The defence is already incorporated in the counter-attack. As the tiger-claws land on the opponent's, the Shaolin practitioner's arm deflects the attacking punch away. "Fierce Tiger Descends Mountain" is found in the Shaolin Five-Animal Set.

While the patterns in the Five-Animal Set are generally in one plane, there are also some patterns in two or three planes. However, this is an exception,

rather than the rule. “Reincarnated Well-Fed Crane”, for example, is in two planes. “Golden Leopard Watches Fire” is in three planes. Like the Baguazhang patterns, these two-plane and three-plane features were the result of meeting expedient needs, not that of philosophising.

So, even when a pattern is normally in one plane, if the combat situation warrants it, we may modify the pattern to two planes or even three planes. For example, as we apply “Fierce Tiger Descends Mountain” on our opponent, he shifts to his left side. Instead of changing to another pattern, we may follow his shifting movement with our tiger claws, resulting in our pattern in two planes.

If he shifts further to our back, we can also follow his shutting movement with our tiger claws. In this case we may change into a Unicorn Stance, as the initial Bow-Arrow Stance would not be suitable, thus resulting in three planes. Better still, as it will give us a further reach, we change our tiger-claws to a leopard punch, using the pattern “Golden Leopard Watches Fire”.

Hence, we apply this development of having three-lanes, if the combat situation warrants it, to meet expedient needs. To do this well, not only we need good skills, we also need to understand sound kungfu philosophy. Such an endeavour is left for top masters.

What about other practitioners who have not reached the level of top masters? We are very lucky. We just practice some good kungfu sets. We ourselves do not have to do any modification, because top masters in the past had done that for us. We just apply the patterns correctly in combat.

There are many good kungfu sets in our school. At random, I can mention a few off-hand, like Eighteen Collection, Drunken Eight Immortals, Triple Stretch, Flower Set, Flowing Water Floating Clouds, Swimming Dragon Baguazhang, and Twelve-Animal-Form of Xingyiquan.

Shaolin Five-Animal Set is an excellent choice. The patterns are sophisticated, and there are some in two planes and three planes. The course on the Five-Animal Set is an opportunity not to be missed.

Question 4

In Kung Fu history there have been different collections of 18 weapons and 36 leg techniques. Are there any other collections of five animals too and how did they differ from the classic five animals in terms of combat efficiency and personal development?

Dimitri, Austria

Answer

The other well known “five animals” mentioned in chi kung and kungfu classics are the “five animals” of Hua Tuo’s Five-Animal Play. These chi kung five animals are more well known than the kungfu five animals, and they are also older by more than 1000 years.

The five animals of Hua Tuo’s Five Animal Play, which was established in the 2nd century, are the bird, the deer, the monkey, the tiger and the bear. The five animals of Shaolin Kungfu are the dragon, the snake, the tiger, the leopard and the crane. The tiger is common in both, but the tiger in the Five-Animal Play is different from the tiger in Shaolin Kungfu.

The five animals of Five-Animal Play come about because of bodily movements of practitioners due to chi flow in their chi kung practice manifested by conditions of their internal organs. A chi kung master teaches chi kung techniques to some students. These students experience a chi flow. Their bodily movements caused by the chi flow are different even when they practice the same exercises. These chi flow movements are due to conditions of their internal organs.

There are countless types of chi flow movements, but they can be generalised into five major types symbolised by five animals. Some movements resemble those of a bird, some those of a deer, some those of a monkey, some those of a tiger, and some those of a bear.

A practitioner performing movements symbolised by a bird may not look like a bird. But if we consider movements of the five animals, his movements are more bird-like than any other animals.

Sometimes, the movements of a practitioner may resemble those of more than one animal. At other times, the movements may not remember any of the five animals’ movements at all.

Why are there five animals, and not four, or six or any other number? It is because there are five major internal organs that manifest five different types of chi flow movements. These five major internal organs are the heart, the liver, the spleen, the lungs and the kidneys. These five major internal organs, known as yin-organs in Chinese medical philosophy, are closely related to their yang counterparts, namely small intestines, gall bladder, stomach, colon and urinary bladder.

Chinese physicians and chi kung masters have discovered over many centuries that there is a close relationship between these organs and chi flow movements. If a person has a heart problem, for example, his chi flow movements will be like those of a bird. If he has a liver problem, his chi flow movements will be like those of a deer, spleen problem like those of a monkey, lung problem like those of a tiger, and kidney problem like those of a bear.

Chinese physicals and chi kung masters also have discovered a close relationship between these chi flow movements and emotions. If a person is happy, his chi flow movements are like those of a bird, angry like those of a deer, anxious like those of a monkey, sad like those of a tiger, and afraid like those of a bear.

Hence, from actual experiences over many centuries, Chinese physicals and chi kung masters have worked out a relationship between organ, movement and emotion as follows: heart - bird - joy; liver- deer - anger; spleen - monkey - anxiety; lungs - tiger - sorrow; kidneys - bear - fear.

Making use of this relationship, Chinese physicians and chi kung healers have helped many people overcome their illness by practicing appraise exercises, like those from the Five-Animal Play.

As these five animals are concerned with health rather than with combat, their contribution to combat efficiency is indirect. A person who is relaxed is more combat efficient than if he is anxious; a person who is confident is more combat efficient than if he is afraid.

On the other hand, these five animals are very useful in personal development. If you are unhappy, practicing a bird play from the Five-Animal Play will open your heart and make you happy. If you are sad, practicing a tiger play will flush out the emotion of sadness from your lungs resulting in you not being sad.

There are no other versions of the kungfu five animals in Shaolin or other kungfu styles. Nevertheless, there are twelve animals in Xingyiquan. They

are the dragon, the tiger, the monkey, the horse, the alligator, the cockerel, the hawk, the swallow, the snake, the ostrich, the eagle and the bear.

The qualities of the animals are different. The dragon can shrink and expand, the tiger has the courage of charging, the monkey has agility, the horse has speed, the alligator has gliding ability, the cockerel has fighting spirit, the hawk has soaring power, the sparrow is swift, the snake has sliding ability, the ostrich has the power of ramming, the eagle has gripping ability, and the bear is stable.

Three of the Shaolin five animals are found in Xingyiquan, namely the dragon, the snake and the tiger. The crane in the Shaolin five animals, being a bird, may be associated with the hawk and the sparrow in Xingyiquan. But their characteristics are different. While the dragon, the snake and the tiger of the Shaolin five animals train mind, energy and internal force, those of Xingyiquan exhibit qualities of shrinking and expanding, sliding and charging. The crane train elegance, whereas the hawk soars the sky and the swallow is swift.

The Shaolin five animals train qualities that are holistic, whereas the animals of Xingyiquan are localised. If you have presence of mind from training the dragon, or energy flow from training the snake, you can shrink and expand, charge with ferocity or exhibits any of the qualities of the Xingyiquan twelve animals. You may also use any techniques. On the other hand, if you wish to shrink and expand, or charge with ferocity, you need to use techniques of the dragon and of the tiger.

Another aspect many people may not realize, and which is closely linked with their holistic aspect, is that the Shaolin five animals involve internal training, not just external forms, though using the appropriate animal form may enhance its internal training. When I first saw a classic showing the Shaolin five animals, which I believe was from the Ming Dynasty many hundred years ago, I was surprised that the forms of all the five animals were similar. In other words, a dragon form looked like the form of any other of the five animals. Later I discovered that the difference is in their internal training, not in their external form.

On the other hand, an initiated observer can tell the Xingyiquan animals by looking at their forms. A dragon form, for example, is characteristic different from any other animal form.

The combat application of the Shaolin five animals, in my opinion, is deeper than that of the Xingyiquan twelve animals. The two aspects explained above, i.e. being holistic and being internal, enable a practitioner to use any

form for any purpose. If you have internal force from training the tiger form, for example, no matter what techniques you use you will be more effective, regardless of whether you charge at an opponent like a tiger in Xinyiquan, be agile like a monkey or apply any of the special features of the Xingyiquan annual forms. On the other hand, if you use the Xingyiquan tiger form to charge at an opponent, it is useful for this particular purpose but not useful for other purposes.

Similarly for personal development, the benefits of the Shaolin five animals are superior to those of the Xingyiquan twelve animals. The reasons are similar to the case of combat application, i.e. the five-animal benefits are holistic and internal. If you have good management of energy after training the snake form, you can manage energy well in whatever you do. On the other hand, having sliding ability after training the snake form in Xingyiquan, may enable you to do well in activities where sliding is involved, but not necessary in other types of activities.

We can deduce an important principle to enrich our daily life. It is more advantageous to have a holistic and internal development than a localised and external development. For example, developing an attitude to do anything well, is better than doing one particular job well.

There are a few kungfu styles that developed from the Shaolin five animals, like the Dragon Style, the Black Tiger Style, and the White Crane Style.

Dragon Style was developed by Pak Mei, one of the five famous Shaolin grandmasters, in the 19th century during the Qing Dynasty. No one master was credited for developing the Black Tiger Style, but Chee Seen, another of the five famous Shaolin grandmasters, and his two disciples, Sam Tuck and Hoong Hei Koon, were famous exponents. White Crane Kungfu was earlier, and was popularly practiced in Fujian Province (where the two southern Shaolin Monasteries were located), where it was commonly known as Wing Choon White Crane (not to be confused with Wing Choon Kungfu which came later).

There is another style of White Crane Kungfu popularly practiced in Tibet and Western China. This Tibetan White Crane is different from Wing Choon White Crane. The former is long-reaching, with extended arms like a crane's wings, whereas the latter is short-range with open palms and kicks.

Two famous styles of kungfu named after animals, but not from the Shaolin five animals, are Monkey Kungfu and Praying Mantis Kungfu. There are actually many different styles of Monkey Kungfu, which are quite different from one another. Lama Kungfu, the style of kungfu practiced by Tibetan

Lama experts, is a style of Monkey Kungfu with long swinging arms. Dong Bi Quan, or Extended-Arm Kungfu, is also another style of Monkey Kungfu, but both Lama Kungfu and Dong Bi Quan are based on the big-sized ape rather than the small-sized monkey. The small-sized monkey is the model for most styles of Monkey Kungfu. It is noted for agility and trickiness.

Praying Mantis Kungfu was invented by Wang Lang at the Shaolin Monastery in Henan by selecting the best of 18 different kungfu styles with the Praying Mantis as the basis. Wang Lang's disciples spread the art to many places resulting in different styles of Praying Mantis Kungfu, such as Seven-Star Praying Mantis, Plum Flower Praying Mantis, Six-Harmony Praying Mantis, Empty-Plank Praying Mantis, and Taij Praying Mantis. But all these different styles are the same Praying Mantis Kungfu well known for kicks.

There is, however, a different type of Praying Mantis Kungfu known as Southern Praying Mantis. There are not many kicks in Southern Praying Mantis, but it uses the phoenix-eye fist.

The Five-Animal Set is popular in Hoong Ka Kungfu and Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu, which are both Southern Shaolin. Because of its long history, there are different versions of Five-Animal Set, not only in different kungfu styles but even in the same style. Different schools in Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu, for example, may practice different versions of the Five-Animal Set.

The Five-Animal Set practiced in our school was composed by me about 1995 when I wrote my book, "The Art of Shaolin Kungfu". I consulted many kungfu classics as well as various sources showing the Five-Animal Set. I used the Five-Animal Set as the base of my book because Southern Shaolin, which my book was mainly about, was characterized by the Shaolin five animals.

Unlike the original Shaolin five animals with their internal development, most of the kungfu styles named after animals today are so-called because their external forms resemble the animals. Even practitioners of the Shaolin Five-Animal Set today may not realise the inner essence of the five animals.

This is perhaps quite inevitable, as almost all kungfu styles today, not just the Five-Animal Set, have only retained their outward forms but lost their inner essence. Not only many Five-Animal Set practitioners do not use the dragon form to train mind, or the tiger form to train internal force, the great majority of kungfu practitioners today only perform the outward forms of their kungfu sets without being able to apply their kungfu forms for combat.

We in Shaolin Wahnam are very lucky. In the course on the Five-Animal Set we shall learn the inner essence of the five animals, as well as apply their sophisticated techniques for combat. It will surely enrich whatever kungfu we choose to practice as well as enrich our daily life.

Question 5

Recently on the forum, there was a thread about the 72 Arts of Shaolin and other "special skills" of Shaolin kung fu. Are there any particular special skills or practices from the 72 Arts of Shaolin that are particularly useful for the Five Animals set application, and conversely, is the Five Animals set conducive towards developing any of the 72 arts or other special skills?

Fred Chu, USA

Answer

Because of its long history there are different versions of the 72 Arts of Shaolin, and each version can be very different from the others. Three versions of the 72 Arts of Shaolin can be found at <http://www.shaolin.org/shaolin/72-arts.html>. Nevertheless, there are many arts that are common, such as Iron Palm, Iron Shirt, Iron Arm, Iron Sweeping Leg, Golden Bell, One-Finger Zen, One-Finger Gold and Red Sand Palm.

In general, all the 72 arts, irrespective of which version, are useful to the Five-Animal Set, and conversely the Five-Animal Set is conducive to all the 72 arts. It is because being holistic and internal, the Five-Animal Set can benefit from any of the 72 arts, even from "hard" and external arts like Twin Lock and Striking with Foot, and conversely any of the 72 arts is conducive to the Five-Animal Set.

For example, if your wrists are hard and powerful like in the Art of Twin Lock of the 72 Shaolin Arts, you will be more effective in having presence of mind from the training of the dragon form of the Five-Animal Set as you will not be distracted that you may have to clash your wrists with your opponent's. On the other hand, if you have presence of mind, you will be more effective in using your Twin Lock in combat application as you will be relaxingly focused. The same benefits apply both ways to all the other 72 arts and the Five-Animal Set with better energy management, increased internal force, greater speed, and more elegance of movement.

Nevertheless, some of the 72 arts are specially useful to the Five-Animal Set, and the Five-Animal Set is specially conducive to some of the 72 arts. Usually, the advantages work both ways, i.e. if one particular art is useful to the Five-Animal Set, the Five-Animal Set is also conducive to that particular art.

Obviously, dragon claw, and dragon force as well as dragon speed in our version of 72 Shaolin Arts, are useful to the dragon form of the Five-Animal Set. If you have powerful dragon claw, or better still, tremendous dragon force and lightning-fast dragon speed, you will perform the dragon form, or any form, of the Five-Animal Set excellently, even when, for the sake of discussion, your dragon form is not perfect or you lack presence of mind.

On the other hand, when you have presence of mind from the training of dragon form of the Five-Animal Set, you will be more effective in applying dragon claw, dragon force and dragon speed than when you are absent-minded. It is worthy of note that training the dragon form not only enables you to have presence of mind but also in a relaxing manner. You are not stressful when you are focused — a concept some people, for some odd reasons, one of which is linguistic, find it difficult to comprehend, but which top performers in any endeavour, be it science or philosophy, sports or business management, have discovered from direct experience.

Running Art and Light Body Art, and in our version, Chi Flow, Self-Manifested Chi Movement and Bone Marrow Cleansing are useful to the snake form of the Five-Animal Set. Training in any of these arts from the 72 Shaolin Arts enables you to manage energy more effectively. On the other hand, being able to manage energy effectively from your training of the snake form of the Five-Animal Set enables you to better perform these arts.

One-Finger Zen, Lying Tiger Art, Eagle Claw, Iron Plank Bridge, and in our version, One-Finger Shooting Zen, Flowing Force, Consolidated Force, Tiger Claw and Sinew Metamorphosis are very useful in the training of the tiger form of Five-Animal Set. On the other hand, having internal force is particularly advantageous to arts like Twin Lock, Shooting Leg, Kicking Leg, Iron Arm, Lifting Weight, Iron Bull, Art of Falling and Tortoise Back, as the internal force can overcome and minimise pain and injury sustained in these external hard-conditioning.

Art of Flying Star, Art of Somersaults, Iron Sweeping Leg, Jumping Art and Whirlwind Palm are useful in the training of the leopard form in the Five-Animal Set. These arts of the 72 Shaolin Arts make practitioners agile and flexible, thus enhancing their training of speed. Reversely, when training of the leopard form has resulted in practitioners having speed, they will be advantages in these particular arts.

In our version of the 72 Shaolin Arts, the Art of Stone Lock, the Art of Flowing Force, the Art of One-Breath Flow and Dragon Speed enhance the training of the leopard form. On the other hand, training the leopard form is particularly advantageous to Iron Arm, Pressing Attack, Through the Woods,

Empty Hand Enters White Blade, Tiger Enters Herd of Sheep, and Fighting with Fort Behind.

The Art of Falling, the Art of Somersaults, and Plum Flower Formation contribute to the training of the crane form for elegance. On the other hand, the training of the crane form is advantageous to arts like Lifting Thousand Pounds, Iron Pearl Bag and Kick Wooden Poles, as it adds elegance to external, hard-conditioning.

In our version of the 72 Shaolin arts, Smiling from the Heart, Entering Silence, Flowing Breeze, Floating Clouds and Standing Meditation are useful to training the crane form. On the other hand, crane form training is conducive to Pressing Attack, Art of Wooden Men, Plum Flower Formation, Empty Hand Enters White Blade, and Small Universe.

The Five-Animal Set is very useful and beneficial to any art, Shaolin or otherwise. More significantly, it surely enriches our daily life. The course on the Five-Animal Set is one that should not be missed.

Question 6

What benefits and skills can a practitioner expect and attain after practicing the Shaolin Five-Animal Set for one, five and ten years?

Bernhard, Austria

Answer

Three factors need to be considered when answering questions of this nature. To better understand what questions are of this nature, here are three other examples.

What benefits will a student get if he continues to learn in this school for six months, and for six years?

Can a person learn kungfu from a video?

Will he become the manager of the company if he works here long enough, say for 15 years?

The three factors to be considered are the person himself (or herself), the other person (or persons) involved, and the type of task.

For your question, the three factors are the practitioner, his teacher and the school teaching Shaolin Five-Animal Set.

For the examples above, the three factors are as follows:

1st Factor — the student, the learner, the employee.

2nd Factor — the teacher, the person who prepared the video, the current manager or the boss.

3rd Factor — the school, the video, the company.

For convenience, we may classify the three groups of factors above as poor, average and good.

Obviously, if the practitioner, the teacher and the school are poor, the result is little or none, often irrespective of how long the practitioner may learn from the teacher in the school. Reversely, if the practitioner, the teacher and the school are good, the result will be good, and it will increase, in volume or quality, the longer the practitioner practices.

These two statements may sound trite, though true, but it is shocking that many, many people do not realise their truth, or apply the truth of the

statements in their practice.

With this understanding we can now answer your question in some depth.

At the risk of hurting the feeling of many people, though of course it is not our intention, most teachers and most schools today teaching the Shaolin Five-Animal Set are poor. Saying that they are poor does not mean the teachers have no money, or the schools are in a dilapidated condition, but that they, the teachers or the school or both, do not produce the results that practicing the Shaolin Five-Animal Set is meant to give. Indeed, most of them, teachers and students alike, may not even realise what results the Shaolin Five-Animal Set will give, or what results the students practicing or the teachers teaching a kungfu style should be obtained.

Some teachers and schools are average, and a few good.

An average student taught by an average teacher in an average school can expect and attain the routine of the Shaolin Five-Animal Set in one year, perform the set reasonably well in five years, and theoretically know some combat application of the set in ten years, though they may not be able to apply it in practical combat. Those who have trained for more than ten years will also know and be able to perform many other kungfu sets. Naturally, a poor student will get less result, and a good student will get more, but the result will be the same, and in the category of being average, mainly in being able to perform the set.

In a good school taught by a good teacher, an average student can expect and be able to attain good form of the Five-Animal Set in one year. In five years, he will be able to apply some of the patterns in the set for practical combat. In ten years he will have presence of mind and some internal force, and his performance of the set will also be elegant. Usually he obtains these benefits not because he trains the appropriate animal forms, but because of his overall Five-Animal Set training. He may not know, for example, or he may not systematically train for this purpose even when he has the knowledge, that the dragon form trains mind. He will also discover that if he can successfully apply combat application of the Five-Animal Set on other martial artists, they will not know how to counter.

Our school, Shaolin Wahnam, is not only good; it is excellent. Our teachers and students are also excellent. If they are poor or average, they will not be in Shaolin Wahnam. Can we justify our claim? Of course, we can.

We, both teachers and students, know the philosophy of the Shaolin Five-Animal Set, including what results to get when we train correctly and

sufficiently. We expect to have the results practicing the Five-Animal Set will give us. Whether we really attain them will depend on how well, or not at all, we train.

We differentiate between techniques and skills. More important than using the right techniques, we use the right skills to get the results we want. We also realize that it is the results that we want, not just knowing the techniques. We obtain our results in a ridiculously short time. In fact, our concern now is not to over-train.

We transfer our training of the Five-Animal Set to enrich our daily life. In other words, we do not just practice the Five-Animal Set, or worse, sustain injury by tensing in solo training, and taking hits in free sparring, as poor and average students do. We employ the Five-Animal Set as an effective means to develop skills that contribute to our peak performance in work and play.

In one year of successful training of the Five-Animal Set, a typical Shaolin Wahnam student will have presence of mind, energy management, internal force, speed in action and thought, and elegance of movement. In five years, he will be a master of the Five-Animal Set, though out of modesty he himself and others who judge mastership on extended length of time, may not call him such. In ten years, he will have vibrant health and vitality, mental freshness and clarity, and spiritual joys, besides the specific benefits the Five-Animal Set will give. He will find life a joy.

Those who wish to become a master in five years, or at least learn the technique, skills and philosophy that make them a master in five years, should not miss the course on the Five-Animal Set.

Question 7

In the History and Philosophy of Shaolin Five Animal Set you said that

“The development of Shaolin Kungfu from Lohan Fist, the prototype at the northern Shaolin Monastery in Henan, to Five-Animal Set, the prototype at the southern Shaolin Monasteries at Quanzhou and on the Nine-Lotus Mountain, represented the development of the best martial art in the world over many centuries.”

In the History and Philosophy of Wudang Taihiquan Set you also explain that Zhang San Feng brought “Kung Fu development to an unprecedented height.”

Bearing this in mind it can be said that Shaolin Lohan Fist, Shaolin Five Animal Set and Wudang Taijiquan Set are representative of the best martial art of the world in their three stages of development. They are the best of the best in martial art history.

Then my question is, if one chooses to specialize in these three Sets, considering the almost unthinkable good fortune that all of them are taught in our school, which results can a practitioner expect in terms of character development, energy management, spiritual cultivation and combat efficiency from the combined practice of these Sets? How do the Sets enhance each other?

Davy, USA

Answer

We are incredibly lucky. There are four progressive reasons why we are so incredibly lucky:

1. We have the rare opportunity to practice genuine kungfu which brings us wonderful benefits. We shall appreciate our luck better when we realise that much of the kungfu practiced today is grossly debased. Most other practitioners cannot apply their kungfu for combat.

2. Not only we practice genuine kungfu, we practice the best kungfu. The justification for claiming the kungfu we practice is the best can be found in my article, “Why Shaolin Kungfu is the Greatest Martial Art” at <http://www.shaolin.org/shaolin/greatest.html> Not only we have the very rare opportunity to practice genuine kungfu, we also practice the very best.

It may be a matter of opinion, but comparing ourselves practicing genuine kungfu with other people practicing other genuine martial arts like Judo, Karate, Taekwondo, Wrestling and Mixed Martial Arts, we can reasonably argue that we are luckier. Comparing ourselves practicing genuine Shaolin Kungfu and genuine Taijiquan as it evolved from Shaolin Kungfu, with others practicing genuine Wing Choon, genuine Praying Mantis, genuine Baguazhang or any other genuine styles of kungfu, we can also reasonably argue that we are luckier. While the justification can be found in my article mentioned earlier, it may suffice to mention here that Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiquan are the only two martial arts where spiritual cultivation is an integral part of the training, besides good health and combat efficiency. Some other kungfu styles have good health and combat efficiency, while other kungfu styles and most other martial arts only have combat efficiency, sometimes at the expense of the practitioners' health.

3. Not only we practice the best kungfu, we also have a wide range of other styles of kungfu, like Wing Choon, Praying Mantis, Eagle Claw, Baguazhang and Xingyiquan, that further enhances our wonderful benefits. We do not just practice these other kungfu styles, but we also have reached a very high level of attainment. How do we know we have a high level of attainment? We can compare what we have attained with what is mentioned in the classics of these styles. Our opportunity to practice other kungfu styles to a high level is rare in kungfu history.

4. We transfer what we learn in our kungfu (and chi kung) lessons to our daily life. For example, we do not just learn the principle of four arrivals in our combat application, we apply the principle to enrich our daily life. We do not just develop internal force for our kungfu training, but use our internal force for peak performance in our work and play. This great benefit of our kungfu training is unprecedented in kungfu history.

Indeed, Shaolin Lohan Fist, Shaolin Five Animal Set and Wudang Taijiquan Set, if we practice them the way they should be practiced, as we do in our school, and not merely performing their outward forms as it is done by most other people, these sets are the best of the best in martial art history. As I have mentioned many times, my statement here may make us appear boastful to other people, and make many other people angry, but that is their business, not ours. We are sincerely not boastful; we merely state the truth. Practicing these three sets the way they should be practiced not only makes us combat efficient, but more importantly makes us healthy, full of vitality, enjoy longevity, mentally fresh and clear, peaceful and happy.

In terms of character development, a practitioner of Shaolin Lohan Fist can expect to be courageous and righteous, of Shaolin Five-Animal Set to be

resourceful and accomplished, of Wudang Taijiquan Set to be flowing and forceful.

In terms of energy management, a practitioner of Shaolin Lohan Fist can expect to regulate his breathing according to his movement, of Shaolin Five-Animal Set to enhance his internal force with chi flow, of Wudang Taijiquan Set to perform vigorous movement without being tired nor out of breath.

In terms of spiritual cultivation, a practitioner of Shaolin Lohan Fist can expect to be confident and morally upright, of Shaolin Five-Animal Set to be mentally alert and happy, of Wudang Taijiquan Set to be peaceful and have a glimpse of Cosmic Reality.

In terms of combat efficiency, a practitioner of Shaolin Lohan Fist can expect to be skilful in pressing attack, of Shaolin Five-Animal Set to apply sophisticated techniques, and of Wudang Taijiquan Set to flow with opponents and overwhelm them.

These qualities are the hallmarks of the respective sets. If a practitioner specialises in only one of these sets, the qualities of that set will be enhanced. If he specialises in all the sets, he will benefit from all these qualities.

On the other hand, because of the great benefit of spread and depth in our school, even when some students may not have practiced any of these sets, they may still have some of these qualities. For example, many of those who attended my Intensive Shaolin Kungfu Course or Intensive Taijiquan Course might not have specialised in Wudang Taijiquan, but they still could spar for hours without being tired and without being out of breath.

As you have rightly said, we in Shaolin Wahnam have almost unthinkable good fortune.

Question 8

The Shaolin Five Animals Set is dear to me as it was featured in your The Art of Shaolin Kungfu, the book which first introduced me to genuine Shaolin Kungfu.

Please can you talk about the development of this Set in your own experience of training and teaching?

Sifu Andy Cusick Thailand

Answer

Many people have kindly written to tell me that "The Art of Shaolin Kungfu" is the best kungfu book they have read. You may be interested to know I wrote the book in one month, working at the manuscript non-stop from 3.00 p.m. to 6.00 a.m. the next day, without sleep. Instead of sleeping I spent about 10 minutes on sitting meditation.

Apart from teaching in school from 7.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. and teaching in Shaolin Wahnam Association from 8.00 p.m. to 10.00 p.m. and time for traveling, shower and meals, I spent the whole day for one month working on the manuscript. It is a great testimony to our chi kung that I could do this. Not only I was fine and taught sensibly in school and at Shaolin Wahnam Association, I produced a book that gave an in-depth and comprehensive account of Shaolin Kungfu.

My original manuscript, which I took about a year to write, came to about 150,000 words, but earlier I told my publisher that "The Art of Shaolin Kungfu" would consist of about 75,000 words. The editor asked me to cut down the number of words and kindly gave me a month to do so. I thought I could easily polish another unpublished manuscript and submit it for the book. But when I read the other manuscript I was not satisfied with it, so I decided to write another manuscript. The manuscript of 150,000 words was later published as "The Complete Book of Shaolin". I am glad that both books, "The Art of Shaolin Kungfu" and "The Complete Book of Shaolin", not only give a clear picture of their subject but are also a pleasure to read.

I chose "Shaolin Five-Animal Set" for the book, "The Art of Shaolin Kungfu", because the set best described what Shaolin Kungfu was.

As many of the Shaolin monks were kungfu experts, like former generals, over time they modified the Eighteen Lohan Hands taught by Bodhidharma,

and eventually these modified patterns came to be called Eighteen Lohan Fist. Because of its long history, there were different versions of Eighteen Lohan Fist. Other ways or styles of kungfu also developed at the Shaolin Monastery, but Eighteen Lohan Fist remained the prototype.

The kungfu practiced at the Shaolin Monastery in Henan Province was naturally called Shaolin Kungfu. Later two more Shaolin Monasteries were built in the south, one in the City of Quanzhou and the other on the Nine-Lotus Mountain, both in Fujian Province. To differentiate the different styles of kungfu practiced at the different Shaolin Monasteries, the one practiced in Henan Province was called Northern Shaolin Kungfu, and the other practiced in Fujian Province was called Southern Shaolin Kungfu.

Because of their long history, the difference between Northern and Southern Shaolin Kungfu was quite obvious. There was also some difference between the Southern Shaolin Kungfu practiced at Quanzhou and on the Nine-Lotus Mountain, but the difference was not so obvious.

Although there are many different features in Northern and Southern Shaolin Kungfu, the main features of Northern Shaolin Kungfu can be represented by Eighteen Lohan Fist, and the main features of Southern Shaolin Kungfu practiced on the Nine-Lotus Mountain can be represented by Five-Animal Set. The Southern Shaolin Kungfu at Quanzhou is in between.

To have a clearer picture of this interesting point, which many people may not know, we can use an analogy. The type of kungfu practiced in our school, Shaolin Wahnam, is often described by other people as Wahnam Kungfu, though at the beginning I insisted that it was Shaolin Kungfu, but now because we also practice other styles like Taijiquan, Baguazhang, Xingyiquan and Drunken Eight Immortals, I am not as insistent.

The Wahnam Kungfu (not accurate, but we may use this term for illustration) I taught at Shaolin Wahnam Association in Sungai Petani in my early years of teaching could be represented by the Four Gates Set. The Wahnam Kungfu I taught at Shaolin Wahnam Ireland, for example, in my later years could be represented by the Flowing Water Floating Clouds Set. This does not mean that my early students in Sungai Petani and my later students in Ireland did not learn other sets. My teaching history is only about 40 years, but that of Shaolin Kungfu is about 2000 years, but it can give a picture of the situation when we say Eighteen Lohan Fist represents Northern Shaolin Kungfu and Five-Animal Set represents Southern Shaolin Kungfu.

Just as the kungfu I teach now represents the best of my kungfu teaching, Southern Shaolin Kungfu represents the best of Shaolin teaching, and by

extension the best of any martial art teaching. This does not necessarily mean that a Flowing Water Floating Clouds practitioner is better than a Four Gates practitioner, or a Five-Animal Set practitioner is better than an Eighteen-Lohan Fist practitioner, because other factors are also involved. But it means that students who learn Flowing Water Floating Clouds from me will also learn what I knew when I taught Four Gates, and more, and students who learn Five-Animal Set from me will also learn what I knew when I taught Eighteen Lohan Fist, and more.

On a personal note, the teaching of the Five-Animal Set in the coming course in Austria represents the latest and best development of my teaching methodology. I did not learn the set from a sifu, I created it myself. But it was not created out of the blue. The creation was based on my experience and knowledge as well as on whatever resources I could get on the Shaolin five animals.

The first kungfu set I ever learned was the 36-Pattern Tiger-Crane Set from Uncle Righteousness. At this time (I was only a boy of 10) I knew nothing about the Shaolin five animals nor even the combat applications of its sophisticated patterns. But the set did benefit me much in knowing the external form of the tiger and the crane.

The first kungfu set I created was the Dragon-Tiger Set. I still did not know the significant inner meaning of the Shaolin five animals, nor even the dragon and the tiger. I just collected some of the best dragon and tiger patterns from Uncle Righteousness school to compose the set.

When I learn Wuzuquan from Sifu Chee Kim Thong, I did not know that the crane was the main feature of San Zhan, the fundamental set of Wuzuquan. I just practiced the set dutifully.

But by the time I wrote "Introduction to Shaolin Kungfu" where I used this Dragon-Tiger Set as the core, I knew the sophisticated combat applications of the set, after learning from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. Some people, like Kai (Sifu Kai Uwe from Germany), told me that they were amazed at the secrets revealed in the book.

I had a good introduction to the snake form when I practiced Taijiquan on my own. Later when I taught chi kung to the public in the 1980s, I had a better understanding of the inner meaning of the snake, as expressed by energy flow. By the way our Taijiquan is more of a dragon than of a snake, which characterises the Taijiquan, or Taiji dance, practiced by most people today. I discovered from classical sources that Zhang San Feng's Taijiquan, which was called Wudang Shaolin Kungfu at his time, was characterised by

the dragon, and not the snake.

The leopard is not normally found in our school simply because we perform our kungfu movements with internal force, symbolised by the tiger. If we perform the same movements with external strength, from the perspective of inner meaning of the Shaolin five animals, our tiger becomes a leopard.

Another manifestation of the leopard is speed. If your kungfu movements are very fast, you manifest a characteristic of the leopard. However, if your high speed is due to chi flow, where the mind is a crucial factor, we call it dragon-speed instead of leopard-speed. If you are flabbergasted by such terms, remember that kungfu is alive, and kungfu terms are used for convenience, and not restricted definitions.

One of my earliest introductions to the inner meaning of the Shaolin five animals was from a classic, "Illustrated Explanation of Genuine Shaolin Kungfu", released from the past to modern readers by Sifu Li Ying Erng. I bought this book quite early, when I was learning from Uncle Righteousness. But I understood its inner significance much later, after I had learned from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam.

This classic was about the Shaolin Five-Animal Set. What struck me impressively was that almost all the illustrations looked alike. One could not tell, for example, a tiger form from a crane form, or any animal form from any other animal form.

Then, in a flash of inspiration, I realised its significance. The significance lies not in its outward form but in its inner manifestations. The external form may be similar, it is how the external form is used in training that is important. If the form is used to train internal force, it is a tiger form. If the same form is used to train elegance, it is a crane-form.

This realisation adds a new dimension to many other things. I can't remember now whether this realisation came before or after another realisation that the 12 different types of bridge force in Shaolin Iron Wire, or the 8 different types of force in Taijiquan were the same force but used differently, probably before, but they were closely related.

It also led to a later very important realisation that it was not the type of exercise in chi kungfu training, i.e. the technique, that overcame illness, but how the exercise was performed, i.e. the skill, that was of utmost importance. As we know very well, sometimes to the extent of wondering why other people can't understand it, many other people practice the same chi kung exercises we practice, but they have no result, but we have too

much result that we have to tell our students not to over-train.

The Five-Animal Set course is going to be exciting. Whether you are going to specialise in the set, or even just to practice it, you are going to learn the latest developmental state of our art.

Question 9

The Shaolin 5-Animal Sets (Solo Pattern Set and Partner Combination Sparring Set) cover all categories of combat (strikes, kicks, felling, qin-na , dim-mak), train various essences/spirits, involve tactics/strategies and incorporate force training (eg the repeated pattern of "Dragon Emerges from Sea").

Comparing the old southern Shaolin temples and Shaolin Wahnam: is the force training (to back up the 5-Animal techniques) similar and may we have a glimpse of the various force training methods?

And is moving meditation (eg doing swerving dragon patterns with presence of mind) more effective than sitting meditation in training the Dragon spirit (ie mind or shen) for combat? I presume the old warrior-monks were more combat efficient than us because they invested time in both sitting and moving meditation whilst we modern Shaolin Wahnam practitioners do more of the dynamic aspect but nevertheless have more time for leisure like watching kungfu movies.

Dr Damian Kissey

Answer

It may be interesting to give an example each of how the Five-Animal Solo Pattern Set of the Five-Animal Combination Sparring Set to train the special feature you've mentioned in the question. It is easier to use the Solo Pattern Set to train the features, and also easier to name the examples. We can also use the Combination Sparring Set to train special features, especially when we practice the Combination Sparring Set like a solo pattern set, like we do when we practice combination application set such as Black Tiger Steals Heart and Fierce Tiger Speeds through Valley.

However, the Combination Sparring Set is effective for confirming the application of a particular feature after a practitioner has trained it. For example, after training the stickers of a dragon form, he may confirm its application with the Combination Sparring Set.

The following list gives an example each of a feature and how it is trained using a pattern from the Five-Animal Solo Pattern Set.

Strike — Golden Leopard Speeds Through Forest
Kick — Crane Stands Amongst Cockerels

Felling — Green Dragon Shoots Pearl
Qin-Na — White Tiger Presents Claws
Dim-Mark —Swimming Dragon Plays with Water
Dragon Essence — Dragon's Chi Across Stream
Snake Essence — Poisonous Snake Shoots Venom
Tiger Essence — Hungry Tiger Catches Goat
Leopard Essence — Golden Leopard Watches Fire
Crane Essence — Well-Fed Reincarnated Crane
First Defence Then Counter — Single Tiger Emerges from Cave followed by
Black Tiger Steals Heart
Defence-cum-Counter — White Snake Crosses Valley
No-Defence-Direct-Counter — Crane Drinks Besides Stream
Sound East Strike West — Golden Leopard Speeds through Lotus
Tempt Opponent to Emptiness — Poisonous Snake Strikes Vital Points
Go Along the Bridge — Fierce Dragon Across Stream
Force Method — Fierce Dragon Descends Mountain
Flow Method — Spiritual Dragon Rises Towards Sky
Triple Stretch Method — Single Dragon Emerges from Sea

Yes, the force training methods we use in the Five-Animal Set in Shaolin Wahnam are similar to those used in the two southern Shaolin Temples at Quanzhou and on the Nine-Lotus Mountain. The force training methods in Shaolin Wahnam are those I learned from my four sifus — Uncle Righteousness, Sifu Chee Kim Thong, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam and Sifu Choe Hoong Choy. The lineages of my four sifus are traced back directly to the two southern Shaolin Temples. Some of what I learned from Sifu Chee Kim Thong and Sifu Ho Fatt Nam can also be traced to the northern Shaolin Temple at Henan,

Yes, we may have a glimpse of the force training methods. We can use the three force training methods mentioned above as examples.

The Force Method was learnt from Uncle Righteousness, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam and Sifu Choe Hoong Choy. When I learned Black Tiger Steals Heart from Uncle Righteousness (I used the vertical fist then instead of the level fist), I learned to consolidate internal force at my fists. When I learned Siu Lin Tou from Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, I learned to consolidate internal force at my palms.

The Flow Method was learnt from Sifu Chee Kim Thong and Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. When I learned San Zhan from Sifu Chee Kim Thong, I learned the Flow Method. My siheng, Sifu Chee Boon Leong who taught me San Zhan on behalf of his father, constantly reminded me not to use muscular strength. When I learned the Seven-Star Set from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, I learned the Flow

Method. The nature of the set was such that the movements were flowing and I did not use muscular strength.

When I learned San Zhan from Sifu Chee Kim Thong, due to my ignorance, I did not have internal force because I lacked the necessary skills though I had excellent techniques. It was later when I could develop internal force after learning from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, especially in One-Finger Shooting Zen, that I could transfer the necessary skills to develop internal force using the techniques of San Zhan.

When I was learning the Seven-Star Set from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, I had not crystallised the concept of flowing force. I had flowing force practicing the Seven-Star Set, though I did not understand its underlying philosophy then, because of my skills in performing One-Finger Shooting Zen. It took me many years to formulate the underlying philosophy, but students attending the coming course of the Five-Animal Set will take only a few days to learn and apply the philosophy to develop flowing force and other types of internal force.

When I learned the Flower Set, the Triple Stretch Set and the Dragon Strength Set from Uncle Righteousness, I learned the techniques of Triple Stretch Method, but I could not develop internal force yet. It was after I had the necessary skills learning One-Finger Shooting Zen from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam that I could develop internal force using the Triple Stretch Method. It took me many years to do so, but students attending the Five-Animal Set course will be able to do so in just a few days!

I don't know whether moving meditation or sitting meditation is more effective in training the dragon spirit, i.e. mind or shen, for combat. But I believe that if all other things were equal, sitting meditation is more effective. I recall my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, telling me that to reach the highest attainment in mind training, one must practice sitting meditation. I also recall that one of the greatest Japanese swordsmen, Yagyu Tajima no Kami, was invincible in combat not by practicing his sword techniques but by practicing sitting meditation.

But all other things are not equal. Our Shaolin Wahnam students, I believe, are more skilful in mind training than other practitioners. Moreover, our students understand the underlying philosophy of both meditation and combat, and apply it in their training. So our students have better results using standing meditation than other practitioners using sitting meditation.

I agree with you that although we may be more cost-effective, old scholar-warriors were more combat efficient than us because they invested more

time than us in their training, but not necessary that they practiced both sitting and moving meditation and we practice only moving meditation.

There are a few good reasons why we do not practice sitting meditation. One important reason is that our purpose and need of our training are different from those of old scholar-warriors. We do not aim to nor is it necessary for us to fight like what the old scholar-warriors did. The purpose and the need of our training are to enrich our daily life, fortunately almost never without actual combat. We also have enjoyment, like watching kungfu movies, which old scholar-warriors did not have.

Question 10

How are traditional sets like the Dragon Strength Set, the Flower Set and the Triple Stretch Set related to the Five-Animal Set? Which of the five animals are represented or dominant in the traditional sets mentioned?

Sifu Roland Mastel

Answer

If the traditional sets are from Southern Shaolin Kungfu, they are related to the Five-Animal Set because the Five-Animal Set is representative of these Southern Shaolin sets. If the traditional sets are not from Southern Shaolin Kungfu, like the 12 Sequences of Northern Shaolin Tantui, the Five Elemental Fist of Xingyiquan, the 50 Sequences of Eagle Claw, the Eighteen-Collection of Praying Mantis, the Drunken Eight Immortals of Taoist Kungfu, the 108-Pattern Yang Style Taijiquan Set and the Sun Style Taijiquan Set, are not directly related to the Five-Animal Set though there may be indirect influence.

The internal force of Tantui, for example, came from Eighteen-Lohan Art of Northern Shaolin Kungfu which later influenced the development of the Five-Animal Set in Southern Shaolin Kungfu. Much of Yang Style Taijiquan adapted the snake form and the snake spirit which were crystallised in the Five-Animal Set. The examples of traditional sets you mentioned, namely the Dragon Strength Set, the Flower Set and the Triple Stretch Set, are from Southern Shaolin Kungfu, and are therefore closely related to the Five-Animal Set.

It is worthy of note that unlike the Eighteen-Lohan Fist which was the prototype of Northern Shaolin Kungfu, the Five-Animal Set was not the prototype of Southern Shaolin Kungfu, although the Five-Animal Set contained the characteristics of Southern Shaolin Kungfu. As Southern Shaolin Kungfu evolved from Northern Shaolin Kungfu, we may also say that Eighteen-Lohan Fist was also the prototype of Southern Shaolin Kungfu, though Southern Shaolin Kungfu has evolved so much in its long history that a typical Southern Shaolin kungfu set is very different from an early version of Eighteen-Lohan Fist.

In other words, the first Shaolin Kungfu set from which countless other kungfu sets evolved from in its long history, was the earliest version of Eighteen-Lohan Fist. Over many centuries, countless other kungfu sets evolved, but these sets were built upon the structure and designs of other

earlier sets which eventually led back to the first kungfu set of Eighteen-Lohan Fist. When Yue Fei, for example, invented the 50 Sequences of Eagle Claw, he did not start from scratch. He based his Eagle Claw Kungfu on kungfu sets he had learnt from his teacher, Zhou Tong, and these kungfu sets eventually led to the first Shaolin kungfu set which was Eighteen-Lohan Fist.

In the Dragon Strength Set the dominant Shaolin animal is, of course, the dragon — in both form and essence. But the other animals are also present, especially in their essence if not in form. This is to be expected as the Dragon Strength Set is a typical traditional Southern Shaolin set, and the Five-Animal Set is characteristic of Southern Shaolin Kungfu.

There are not many other animal forms in Dragon Strength besides the dominant dragon form. The snake form is represented by such patterns like Circulating Soft Bridge and Beauty Looks at Mirror though the term “snake” is not used in the pattern name. The tiger form is represented in patterns like Black Tiger Steals Heart and Fierce Tiger Pushes Mountain. The leopard form is represented in patterns like Reverse Head Hand Sweep and Hide Flower in Moon. The crane form is represented in patterns like Yellow Bird Drinks Water and White Crane Flaps Wings.

What is more important is the essence of the Shaolin animals. The most important, of course, is the dragon spirit in the training of mind. The spirit of the other Shaolin animals in the circulation of energy, developing of internal force, speed and elegance of form and movement are found throughout the set.

All the Shaolin five animals, especially their essence, are also found in the Flower Set. In terms of form, the two most dominant animals are the snake and the crane. You will notice that the snake and the crane are the softest of the Shaolin five animals.

Taijiquan, especially Yang Style Taijiquan, is also dominated by the snake and the crane. Yet the outward form as well as inner essence of Taijiquan and Flower Set are quite different. Both Flower Set and 108-Pattern Yang Style Taijiquan Set are soft and flowing, but relatively the Taijiquan set is more so. This is because of the frequent presence of the dragon in the Flower Set.

In the Flower Set, the dragon form is represented by patterns like Single Dragon Emerges from Sea and Swimming Dragon Plays with Water. The snake form is represented by patterns like Beauty Looks at Mirror and Leak-Hand Hand-Sweep. The tiger form, which is less frequent, is represented by patterns like Big Boss Offers Wine and Black Tiger Steals Heart. The leopard

form is represented by patterns like Golden Leopard Enters Rock and Lift Pot Offers Wine. The crane form is represented by patterns like Phoenix Flaps Wings and Double Continuous Kick.

As in all great kungfu, it is the inner essence of the Shaolin five animals that is more important than their outward form. As in all great Southern Shaolin kungfu sets, in the Flower Set all the five types of essence crystallised as training of mind, circulating of energy, developing of internal force, speed and elegance of form and movements are found in the set, with the predominance of flowing energy and elegant movements.

This is also an important reason why any kungfu practitioner should not miss the course on the Five-Animal Set. He (or she) will learn how to apply the outward forms of the set to develop all these five types of essence, which he can use for any kungfu sets or to enrich his daily life.

While the Flower Set is soft and flowing, the Triple Stretch Set is hard and consolidated. These features are, of course, relative. There is also much hardness and consolidation in the Flower Set, and much softness and flow in the Triple Stretch Set, whereas others who are ignorant of these features, which is the great majority of kungfu practitioners, only perform the outward forms of these sets for demonstration, and use Kick-Boxing for sparring. More significantly, we transfer these features to enrich our daily life.

The dominant Shaolin animals of the Triple Stretch Set are the dragon and the tiger, manifested in both their outward form and their inner essence. The form and essence of the other Shaolin animals are also present, though less frequent.

The dragon form in the Triple Stretch Set is represented by patterns like Double Dragons Emerge from Sea and Double Butterflies Flying. The snake form is represented by patterns like Beauty Looks at Mirror and Immortal Points the Way. The tiger form is represented by patterns like Single Tiger Claw and Black Tiger Steals Heart. The leopard form is represented by patterns like Hungry Leopard Charges at Fire and Comet Chases Moon. The crane form is represented by patterns like Phoenix Flaps Wings and Lazy Man Waves Fan.

It should be noted that assigning a particular animal form to a particular pattern, like saying that the crane form is found in the pattern Lazy Man Waves Fan, is arbitrary. When we are skilful we can use the same pattern to develop other types of essence, like using Lazy Man Waves Fan to train mind, in which case we may assign the dragon to this pattern, or use the

same pattern to circulate energy, in which case we may assign it the snake.

Even when a particular pattern is characterised by a particular animal form, like White Crane Flaps Wings, we may use it to develop the essence of other animals. We may, for example, use White Crane Flaps Wings to train mind or to circulate energy. In this case we have the outward form of a crane but the inner essence of a dragon or a snake. Not many people have this high level of skills, or even the knowledge.

As expected, all the different types of essence as symbolised by the Shaolin five animals are present in the Triple Stretch Set, with the dominance of mind training and internal force as the essence of the dragon and the tiger.

Would someone who has no knowledge and experience of these external forms and internal essence gain from these benefits as manifested by the Shaolin five animals? In other words, if a practitioner does not know the philosophy and does not have the skills as manifested by the Shaolin five animals be able to train his mind, circulate his energy, develop internal force, have speed and elegance in his performance by practicing the Triple Stretch Set or any traditional kungfu set?

No, he would not. In fact, the great majority of those who practice kungfu do not even know how to apply their kungfu for combat, which is the basic benefit of practicing kungfu. Some kungfu practitioners may be able to perform their kungfu fast and elegantly if they have practiced for a long time, but it is most unlikely they will enhance their mind power, be able to manage their energy or develop internal force.

On the other hand, we in Shaolin Wahnam are very lucky. Those who attend the course on the Five-Animal Set will learn the philosophy, techniques and skills to derive the benefits manifested by the Shaolin five animals, and in a very short time.