



## **Question and Answer Series:**

Choy-Li-Fatt

**By Grandmaster Wong Kiew Kit**

## Question 1

It seems that waist rotation is an important part of Choy Li Fatt mechanics. Could a Choy Li Fatt specialist use the form of Choy Li Fatt to develop internal force, as Taijiquan practitioners do, without relying on a separate set of force training techniques as in other styles?

- Sifu Mark Blohm

## Answer

Yes, waist rotation is very important in Choy-Li-Fatt, without which it would not be fast and agile which is especially necessary in mass fighting.

However, Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners do not use their form, including waist rotation, to develop internal force. The key to internal force training is chi, usually induced by methodical breathing, as expressed in the kungfu saying “noi lin yit hou hei” (Cantonese), which means “internal cultivation is based on breathing”. Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners normally do not pay much attention to this chi aspect.

Hence, a separate set of internal force training methods is needed. Internal force training in Choy-Li-Fatt is the prerogative of masters; students seldom have this opportunity. What is commonly used is a set of triple-stretch movements, similar to those in our Triple-Stretch Set and Flower Set. However, most Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners merely perform the external form, missing the inner essence.

Those who still have access to classical methods use the Eighteen-Lohan Art. This is rare today. I have found only one Choy-Li-Fatt master in south China teaching this method. The exercises in his system, however, are different from those of our Eighteen-Lohan Art.

Most Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners use external methods for force training, like hitting sandbags and wooden men, and using traditional stone-locks or modern dumb-bells. Over many years of training, the external force of some Choy-Li-Fatt masters has become internal.

In our Choy-Li-Fatt course at the 2012 Winter Camp, we shall have a comprehensive introduction to Choy-Li-Fatt force training, including using triple-stretch, selected exercises from the Eighteen-Lohan Art and modern dumb-bells.

## Question 2

Sifu, I remember you mentioning at the last Winter Camp, that at the Choy-Li-Fatt course you plan to include internal force training with dumbbells. Could you please elaborate?

- Sifu Markus Kahila

## Answer

Yes, the Choy-Li-Fatt course at the 2012 Winter Camp in Norway will be very special. Course participants will learn what many Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners hope to learn but very few have the chance to.

As usual, other people would attack us for being arrogant. That is their business, not ours. Anyway, my answer here as well as the coming Choy-Li-Fatt course is not meant for them; it is meant for our own Shaolin Wahnam students. We have been very generous, even allowing other people to learn our secrets, but if they don't appreciate this gesture, we are not going to waste our time on them.

Choy-Li-Fatt is an external art. Only very few great Choy-Li-Fatt masters have internal force. These masters started with external methods, but over many years of dedicated training their external force became internal.

Hence, internal force is a highly desired ability in Choy-Li-Fatt – in fact in any art. It enables the practitioners to achieve what other people using external force cannot achieve, like sparring for a few hours without feeling tired or panting for breath, and having vitality in our daily life irrespective of gender, size and age.

Yes, I shall include internal force training in the course. The training methods, like triple-stretch exercises and exercises from the Eighteen-Lohan Art, were those used by Choy-Li-Fatt masters in the past. Our course participants need not train for many years to develop internal force; they develop internal force during the few days of the course itself! This is incredible, but true.

How do we know that our students have developed internal force during the few days? They are able to do what internal force enables one to do, like sparring for a few hours without feeling tired irrespective of gender, size and age. If they use external strength, they will be unable to achieve this.

Using dumbbells to develop force is external training. Many Choy-Li-Fatt students do this. This is nothing special in Choy-Li-Fatt, though it may be special for students of other styles. But we shall use dumbbell training in an internal way! This is special.

How do we differentiate that most other Choy-Li-Fatt students use dumbbell training in an external way, whereas course participants in our coming Choy-Li-Fatt course use dumbbell training internally? They use muscles, whereas we use chi. They become tired after training for 15 minutes, whereas we can go on training for an hour.

How do we know that what they develop is external force, whereas what we develop is internal force. Their force is limited by gender, size and age, whereas our force is not limited. For example, their female, smaller, and elderly students will be unable to match their male, bigger, and young students in force, whereas our female, smaller, and elderly students can be more forceful than the male, bigger, and young counterparts.

In the course, we shall let our students train dumbbells in an external way first like most other Choy-Li-Fatt students do. Then our students train dumbbells internally. In this way they can compare both the different training procedures and the different results.

Combat application, of course, is an important part of the coming Choy-Li-Fatt course. Many kungfu practitioners complain that they cannot use their kungfu techniques in combat because they have to wear gloves. This is an excuse. Even when they take off their gloves, they will be unable to use kungfu to fight.

Choy-Li-Fatt is an excellent art for fighting – with or without gloves on. Indeed, if all other things were equal, Choy-Li-Fatt is more effective than martial arts for combat in present-day free sparring conditions. Students who wish to take part in free sparring competitions or who wish to have friendly free sparring with practitioners of other martial arts but are unfamiliar with their ways of fighting, will find this course very useful.

### Question 3

Our Shaolin combat training, while being very effective for combat, also trains us to calmly and quickly make appropriate decisions. This has many applications outside of combat (negotiation, avoiding negative situations, etc). Since Choy Li Fatt was developed to be used for fighting en mass, could the mind-level benefits have even more application for today's modern, multi-tasking culture with stimulus coming from all directions at all times?

- Sifu Matt Fenton

### Answer

You have highlighted a very important point. While our combat training makes us very effective in sparring or real fighting, we place more value on its daily non-combat applications, like being righteous and courageous as well as being able to make right and fast decisions in our work and play.

Your question is very interesting here, but unlike other questions, including your other question above, where my answers are based on classical records as well as empirical evidence we have directly experienced, the answer here is based on my speculation as there I have no classical records or practical experience in this case.

If all other things were equal, the mind-level training of Choy-Li-Fatt would be comparatively less applicable for today's multi-tasking culture, compared to the mind-training of arts like Shaolin and Taijiquan. Please take note of the two terms "if all other things were equal" and "comparatively".

In real life, all other things are not equal. Secondly, here we compare Choy-Li-Fatt to the greatest of martial arts, Shaolin and Taijiquan. If we compare to other martial arts like Wing Choon and Karate, the result would be different.

Your conclusion is probably based on the similarity of Choy-Li-Fatt's handling of multiple attacks in combat and our modern culture of handling stimuli coming from all directions. The comparison, however, is invalid, and is due to confusing root with branch, or cause with effect.

Here the ability to handle multiple attacks in combat and multiple stimuli coming from all directions is the result, not the cause, of mental strength and mental clarity from mind-level training. The similarity or difference of the result, like the similarity of multiple attacks and multiple stimuli does not

affect the quality of mental clarity and mental strength. It is the other way round. The methods to develop mental clarity and mental strength affect the ability in handling multiple attacks or stimuli as well as other performance.

As Choy-Li-Fatt is an external art, there are no special methods involving special postures or movements to develop the mind. But because we in Shaolin Wahnam are trained in mind development, we can transfer the necessary mind-development skills to Choy-Li-Fatt movements to do so. These movements are those geared for fighting multiple opponents.

On the other hand, in Shaolin Kungfu or Taijiquan, there are special methods for mind development, like One-Finger Shooting Zen and Cloud-Hands. If all other things were equal, the comparatively quiescent movements of One-Finger Shooting Zen and Cloud Hands are more cost-effective for mind development than the comparatively dynamic movements of Choy-Li-Fatt. Hence the mind-level benefits of arts like Shaolin and Taijiquan are more applicable than those of Choy-Li-Fatt in meeting today's multi-tasking culture.

On the other hand, if we compare students learning Choy-Li-Fatt at the coming Winter Camp with most other students learning Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiquan elsewhere, our students will be more efficient in today's multi-tasking culture. It is because our students train their mind in Choy-Li-Fatt, whereas other students do not train their mind in Shaolin Kungfu and Taijiquan. For example, our students having better mental clarity will understand the answer here, whereas many other students may not know what we are talking about.

## Question 4

Since Choy Li Fatt was developed with combat in mind, and using external methods as a focus, are there any safeguards in place to prevent practitioners from becoming overly violent and aggressive (as seen in many Karate practitioners)?

- Sifu Matt Fenton

## Answer

Unlike internal arts, as an external art there are no in-built mechanisms in Choy-Li-Fatt to prevent practitioners from becoming overtly violent and aggressive.

This does not mean that Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners are violent and aggressive, or if they are not violent and aggressive at the start, they will become violent and aggressive as they progress. But if for any reasons, some Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners become violent and aggressive, there is nothing in Choy-Li-Fatt training to prevent, reduce or overcome the violent and aggressive feelings.

This is different in the case of internal arts. There are no factors in internal art training to make practitioners violent and aggressive. But if for other reasons, they start to become violent and aggressive, without doing other things but by just practicing their internal arts, they can prevent, reduce or overcome their violent and aggressive feelings. If they were already violent and aggressive in nature before practicing internal arts, their internal art training can reduce or overcome their violence and aggression.

On the other hand, some arts like much of the Karate, Teakwood, Boxing, Kick-Boxing and Muay Thai practiced today, aggravate violent and aggressive feelings. If these practitioners were not violent and aggressive before their practice of these arts, their training may make them violent and aggressive. If they are violent and aggressive, not only their training does not reduce or overcome their violence and aggression, but it also aggravates these emotions.

There are, therefore, three categories in this respect:

1. Martial arts that result in and aggravate violence and aggression.
2. Martial arts that do not result in violence and aggression but also do not prevent, reduce or overcome them if these emotions arise due to other factors.

3. Martial arts that do not result in violence and aggression and prevent, reduce or overcome these emotions if they arise due to other factors.

Why do different arts have different results in relation to violence and aggression? This is because of the different philosophy, nature and practice of these arts.

In arts like Boxing and Karate, the philosophy is to win at all cost, often without regard to the practitioners' own health and safety. The nature of their training is to tense their muscles and work themselves up in a frenzy. In practice, they pay much attention to hitting their opponents, and little attention to their own self-defence. All this leads to an increase of violence and aggression.

In external arts like Choy-Li-Fatt, Wing Choon and Praying Mantis, the combat philosophy is safety first. Although many practitioners tense their muscles, they do not purposely work themselves up in a frenzy; they attempt to be as relaxed as possible. In practical fighting, they pay much attention to their own safety, knowing well that just one strike, on themselves or on their opponents, can be fatal. This does not lead to violence and aggression, but may not prevent, reduce or overcome these emotions if they arise.

In internal arts like Taijiquan and Baguazhang, their philosophy paces cultivation over combat in terms of priority. The nature of the arts is chi flow. Hence, not only the practice of these arts does not lead to violence and aggression, but also it will prevent, reduce or overcome violence and aggression if they arise due to other reasons.

In our school, however, we practice Choy-Li-Fatt as well as Wing Choon and Praying Mantis as internal arts. Will the Choy-Li-Fatt taught at the coming Winter Camp be like the orthodox Choy-Li-Fatt taught elsewhere today?

The answer is both yes and no. The forms are the same, but the way we practice and apply it, is very different from the Choy-Li-Fatt most students practice today. Most Choy-Li-Fatt students practice it as an external art, but we do so internally. Even when we leave aside the external-internal difference, most Choy-Li-Fatt students use Boxing and Kick-Boxing in their combat application, but we use typical Choy-Li-Fatt techniques.

But when we compare to what Choy-Li-Fatt masters practice, ours is the same. The masters started their Choy-Li-Fatt training as an external art, but over many years of dedicated training it has become internal. The difference, however, is in the time-frame. Our students at the Winter Camp course do not need to practice for many years. They would attain the internal aspect of Choy-Li-Fatt in just a few days.



As usual, some Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners and other people may be angry. Whether they are angry or happy that I have revealed some secrets that may benefit them, is their business, and we are not going to argue with them. The answer here is for you and our students in Shaolin Wahnam, as well as other people who believe in us.

## Question 5

As an art that specialises in mass combat and multiple attackers, it is said that Choy Li Fatt is relatively weaker in high-level individual fighting. Generally, is it correct to say that one who can handle multiple armed assailants would have no difficulty in dealing with even a skilled individual opponent?

- Sifu Zhang Wuji

## Answer

The first statement is correct, but the second statement is not. Of course, the answer carries the condition that all other things were equal.

The core reason for both situations is that the philosophy, skills and techniques in fighting multiple attackers are different from those in fighting a skilful individual opponent.

Choy-Li-Fatt is geared towards multiple fighting where opponents are normally not of a high combat level. If they are of a high combat level, they would not, in fact do not want to, group together to attack one individual.

It is not just a sense of fairness. For a high-level fighter, fighting alone is more effective than helped by a group in defeating an opponent because the other group members often come into the path of his continuous attacks, or interfere with his combat tactics or strategies.

A skilful fighter fighting a group of attackers will choose long-reaching techniques as they are more effective than short-range techniques. On the other hand, long-reaching techniques are more exposed, but the group attackers, being of a low combat level, do not know how to exploit these weaknesses. Even if they knew, the skilful lone fighter would be able to neutralize them.

The situation is different when he fights with another high-level opponent. If he is used to long-reaching techniques in multiple combat and applies them on a high-level opponent in solo combat, he is exposing himself unnecessarily. He may be able to neutralize the counter-attacks of the high-level opponent, but this does not negate the fact that he is giving his opponent unnecessary advantages.

Moreover, while long-reaching techniques are useful in fighting multiple attackers, when fighting with just one opponent, short-range techniques are a better choice, even when we leave aside the question of exposure and even when the lone opponent is not of a high-level. For example, a short inch-punch is more effective in hitting an opponent than a long swinging fist.

On the other hand, a high-level exponent skilful in solo fighting may have much difficulty fighting in mass attack if he is not trained for the purpose. This is expressed in the kungfu saying, “seong kuen pat tik sei sau” (Cantonese), which means “two fists are no match against four hands”.

Such a situation was well illustrated in a special course a few years ago. Even our advanced practitioners were initially at a loss when facing multiple attackers. But once they had learnt some important strategies, they could handle multiple attackers easily – even when they used weapons. It was amazing to see the transformation that took place within an hour! You may have a glimpse of such a transformation if you make a search for the appropriate videos on my home page.

In this respect of solo fighting and multiple combat, Wing Choon and Choy-Li-Fatt are an interesting contrast. Wing Choon Kungfu is geared towards high-level solo combat, whereas Choy-Li-Fatt is geared towards fighting against multiple attacks. Even a high-level Wing Choon master may have difficulty when confronting multiple attackers, whereas a Choy-Li-Fatt master, unless he can make the necessary adjustment, will be in a comparative disadvantageous position meeting another high-level master. Hence, our Choe Family Wing Choon practiced in Shaolin Wahnam, which combines the best of Wing Choon and Choy-Li-Fatt, is an excellent answer to this intruding topic.

## Question 6

Choy Li Fatt has many wide, swinging movements with straightened arms. Can these characteristic movements become technical disadvantages in combat since swinging movements take longer to arrive, telegraph the strike and may leave the exponent vulnerable to certain qinna attack?

- Sifu Zhang Wuji

## Answer

Yes, if all other things were equal, these characteristic Choy-Li-Fatt movements leave the exponent in various disadvantageous positions, like what you have said. If both combatants are of equal skills, the one using these characteristic Choy-Li-Fatt movements would expose himself to the other person, irrespective of the latter's style.

These disadvantages would be aggravated if the other combatant is of a higher level. On the other hand, if the Choy-Li-Fatt exponent is more skilful, and especially if he has powerful arms, he would rain his swinging attacks on his opponent.

I vividly remember teaching "Three Rings Round the Moon" in a Shaolin Tantui class. These "Three Rings" movements are similar to long-range movements of Choy-Li-Fatt. An exponent swings his two strong arms, like iron rods, systematically in high speed at an opponent.

It would be difficult for the opponent to defend himself. If he tries to block a powerful, fast swinging arm, his arm may be broken. Even if he succeeds in blocking or warding it off, the next powerful, fast swinging arm would hit his head or body, followed continuously by non-stop powerful swinging arms.

If the opponent tries to counter with a pinch or a kick, the exponent's swinging arms would rain on the opponent's arm or leg as well as head or body. Trying to use felling techniques or qinna would be worse. Continuously swinging arms would rain on the opponent before he could even position himself for the felling or qinna counter.

If the opponent retreats, the exponent would swing his powerful arms, like the blades of a fast-moving electric fan, on him. It is difficult for the opponent, if he is not well trained, to respond such fast, powerful Choy-Li-Fatt attacks.

Yet, when everyone was overwhelmed by such fast, powerful swinging attacks at the Tantui course, I demonstrated some sophisticated counters, and the attacker had no chance at all to respond. The same techniques and skills can be applied to Choy-Li-Fatt attacks.

On the other hand, a Choy-Li-Fatt master would be able to counter effectively if an opponent tries to exploit such Choy-Li-Fatt swinging attacks. In other words, the Choy-Li-Fatt master would turn the tables around. The secret is body-movement.

In the coming Choy-Li-Fatt course at the Winter Camp, I shall first show how to use these formidable Choy-Li-Fatt movements. Next, I shall show how to counter these formidable movements. Then I shall show how to turn the tables around against the sophisticated counters. It is going to be very interesting.

## Question 7

How has Choy Li Fatt evolved since its conception? Does it have techniques, methods or tactics that are truly unique or is it more a specialization within southern Shaolin Kungfu?

- Tapio Raevaara

## Answer

I believe the First Patriarch of Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu, Chen Harng, did not set out to invent a new style of kungfu. As he had learnt from three Shaolin masters, namely Choy Ah Fook, Li Yau San and the Venerable Cheng Chao, he spontaneously combined the best of these three styles in his training, which resulted in Choy-Li-Fatt.

This is like what is happening in our school today. I did not consciously pick patterns from the kungfu of Sifu Ho Fatt Nam and Uncle Righteousness and combined them to invent Wahnam Kungfu. In my training I spontaneously selected the best of what I had learnt from my two masters without a conscious effort to combine the two styles. I also selected the best from the Wuzu Kungfu and Wing Choon Kungfu I had learnt from my other two masters, Sifu Chee Kim Thong and Sifu Choe Hoong Choy. We call our style Shaolin Kungfu. It is only other people who call it Wahnam Kungfu.

The answer to whether Choy-Li-Fatt has techniques, methods or tactics that are unique, or is it a specialization within Southern Shaolin is “yes” and “no”.

On the whole, Choy-Li-Fatt is unique. It is different from Choy-Ka Kungfu, Li-Ka Kungfu and Fatt-Ka Kungfu, from which it evolved. In other words, if a group of practitioners perform Choy-Ka Kungfu, Li-Ka Kungfu, Fatt-Ka Kungfu and Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu, an informed observer can tell which is which.

Yet, all the movements in Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu can be found in Choy-Ka Kungfu, Li-Ka Kungfu and Fatt-Ka Kungfu. Actually most of Choy-Li-Fatt patterns are from Fatt-Ka Kungfu, which in turn was evolved from Lohan Kungfu. Chen Harng did not invent new patterns to compose Choy-Li-Fatt. It is an example of the whole is more than its parts.

We can find an interesting parallel in our school. The Shaolin Kungfu we practice in Shaolin Wahnam is quite different from the Shaolin Kungfu practiced at the southern Shaolin Temple in Quanzhou (which I learned from

Sifu Ho Fatt Nam), and also different from the second southern Shaolin Temple on the Nine-Lotus Mountain (which I learned from Uncle Righteousness). Yet, the Shaolin patterns we practice in Shaolin Wahnam are taken from the Shaolin patterns at the two Shaolin Temples at Quanzhou and Nine-Lotus Mountain.

There is a third important influence in the Shaolin Kungfu we practice, and it is from Taijiquan. Our Shaolin Kungfu is more internal and more flowing than that at Quanzhou and Nine-Lotus Mountain. Nevertheless, Taijiquan evolved from Shaolin.

## Question 8

Sifu what specifically does one stand to attain from the Choy-Li-Fatt course, besides the obvious multi-opponent combat advantage and the opportunity to learn the form from an internal perspective. This is in relation to other styles already ingrained in Shaolin Wahnam.

- Sean

## Answer

In relation to other styles and courses already taught in Shaolin Wahnam, the following are specific benefits one can attain from the Choy-Li-Fatt course at the 2012 Winter Camp in Norway.

### 1. Training with dumb-bells.

One remarkable improvement I had when I learned from Sifu Ho fatt Nam after I had learnt from Uncle Righteousness was a tremendous increase of force. I felt I was not very forceful in my kungfu performance, so during a chit-chat I asked my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, how I could increase my force.

He told me to practice Thirty Punches with stone-locks. He did not have to show me how to do it as he had earlier taught me Thirty Punches (with empty fists), but he explained how to make stone-locks using cement, iron bars or strong cane.

It was amazing. After practicing Thirty Punches with stone-locks for only a few months, my force increased so dramatically that when I performed a kungfu set I caused “khuen foong”, literally “fist-wind”, or audible vibrations in the air. I was very happy as it was described in kungfu stories that only high-level masters could cause “fist-wind”.

Stone-locks are quite clumsy. In the Choy-Li-Fatt course we shall use more elegant dumb-bells, which I believe can even produce better results. It will be the first time in Shaolin Wahnam history that I teach using dumb-bells to increase force.



## 2. Internal Approach to External Method

Practicing with dumb-bells to increase force is an external method. We in Shaolin Wahnam are very special. After teaching students the external method so that they can have some experience of it, I shall teach them how to practice the same method in an internal way using chi flow. The students will then have a comparison between the external and the internal approach of the same method. They will also be amazed at the result.

## 3. Technique of Whirl-Wind Fists and its Counters

Imagine you are holding two iron rods and swinging them methodologically on an opponent. If he attacks you, you hit their attacking arms with your iron rods. If they retreat, you swing your iron rods on his head or body. Now you use your arms like two iron rods, which is actually more versatile. This is a famous technique in kungfu but is little understood because it requires some subtle movements to make it effective. It is known as “foong chei khuen fatt” or the “technique of whirlwind fists”, and is very formidable if you arms are powerful and you know the subtle movements which will be taught at the course.

Now suppose your opponent uses “whirlwind fists” on you. How would you defend yourself? Many people would be at a loss facing two powerful swinging rods. Students at the Choy-Li-Fatt course will learn effective counters against these “whirlwind fists”.

## 4. Finer Points of Choy-Li-Fatt

Choy-Li-Fatt is a very formidable art against most opponents, but there are some innate weaknesses, and a high-level master could exploit these weaknesses. However, not many people know these innate weaknesses, and less know how to exploit them. (When you realize how many free offers people hand out in free sparring today, and how seldom their opponents take up these free offers, you would not be surprised at the above fact.)

At the course students will learn about these innate weaknesses, and how to exploit them. Does this mean the end for Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners? No, if they also know what the innate weaknesses are, and how to respond when opponents exploit them. This is what Jeffrey Segal called the chess aspect of kungfu. The Choy-Li-Fatt course is going to be very interesting.

## Question 9

How does a Choy Li Fatt master's external force become internal? Is it therefore possible for modern external martial artists (i.e Boxers, kickboxers) to develop internal force at some stage?

- Ish

## Answer

When a master practices an external force training method long enough, the force will naturally become internal, though the method remains external.

For example, punching a sand-bag is an external method. It will develop muscular strength. But if you continuously punch a sand-bag over a long period of time, when your knuckles have developed callous to prevent you feeling any pain on contact, and your muscular strength sends the sand-bag flying away readily, the repeated movements of your arms will generate energy flow that develops into internal force.

Actually, although the techniques may be different, the principles in internal force training are similar. The difference is that internal practitioners do not have an obstacle (like a sand-bag) to block their physical movements, and do not tense their muscles to block their energy flow in repeated actions.

I remember years ago I read about Karate masters saying that students could develop more force punching into the air than onto a sand-bag. I guessed the Karate masters did not know the underlying reasons, though I knew they were correct.

I also did not know the reasons then. It was only years later that I discovered the secret while teaching chi kung. And I applied the secret successfully to kungfu teaching, with the result that our students could develop internal force in days when it normally took other people months or years.

Yes, external martial artists, like Boxers and Kick-Boxers, can develop internal force if they practice their external methods for a long time. In fact some advanced external martial artists have internal force in this way, though they may not realize it. A tell-tale sign is that these advanced external martial artists are relaxed. If they tense their muscles, they will block their chi flow and negate their internal force.

## Question 10

Would the way a Choy-Li-Fatt exponent use Eighteen Lohan Art be different from how a Mantis practitioner or Eight Immortals practitioner train Eighteen Lohan Art? If so, how??

- Chia Hua

## Answer

Again, the answer can be yes or no.

Theoretically, the answer is “No, the way a Choy-Li-Fatt exponent uses the Eighteen-Lohan Art is not different from how a Praying Mantis or a Eight Immortals practitioner trains it, because it is the same art.”

In practice, the answer can be “Yes, they are different because the different practitioners practice different kungfu styles which can effect how the Eighteen-Lohan Art is practiced and the results they get.”

Choy-Li-Fatt is harder than both Praying Mantis and Eight Immortals. This will affect the choice of patterns for practice. Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners may choose harder patterns like “Big Bird Spreads Wings” and “Shoot Arrows at Mystical Gate”, whereas Praying Mantis and Eight Immortals practitioners may prefer softer patterns like “Lohan Worships Buddha” and “Rhinoceros Looks at Moon”.

Even if they choose the same patterns, Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners may perform the patterns in a harder manner than Praying Mantis and Eight Immortals practitioners do. The result will then be different.

Because of its long history, there are also different versions of the Eighteen-Lohan Art. An important cause for these different versions was practitioners of different kungfu styles emphasizing and modifying different patterns of the Art.

## Question 11

Is Choy Li Fatt related to Great Northern styles like Da Lohan, Tan Tui or First Emperors Long Fist?

- Sifu Roland Mastel

## Answer

The answer, as is common in our school, is “yes” and “no”, depending on one’s interpretation.

If we interpret the relationship historically and over a fairly long period, yes Choy-Li-Fatt is related to the great Northern Shaolin styles like Da Lohan, Tan Tui and First Emperor Long Fist.

Southern Shaolin Kungfu, the style of Shaolin Kungfu practiced at and issued from the Southern Shaolin Temple, evolved from these Northern Shaolin styles. Some of the patterns of these northern styles, like the upward swinging arm of Da Lohan, the chopping fist of Tan Tui, and the long-reaching thrust punch of First Emperor Long Fist, are also found in Choy-Li-Fatt.

But if we interpret the relationship over a shorter period, with emphasis on their present forms rather than their origins, the answer is no. Choy-Li-Fatt is related to Southern Shaolin styles, and not Northern Shaolin styles. It is evolved from Choy Ka Kungfu, Li Ka Kungfu and Southern Lohan Kungfu, Although some Choy-Li-Fatt has some patterns similar to those of the Northern Shaolin styles, on the whole Choy-Li-Fatt patterns are characteristically different.

As an interesting analogy, we may consider Choy Ka Kungfu, Li Ka Kungfu and Southern Lohan as brothers of Choy-Li-Fatt, and other Southern Shaolin styles like Hoong Ka and Wing Choon as cousins. On the other hand, Da Lohan (or Big Lohan from Northern Lohan), Tan Tui and First Emperor Long fist as distant relatives.

## Question 12

Often Choy-Lee-Futt may be regarded as a style which is more dominantly trained by practitioners of Christian religion, yet many Kung Fu practitioners may regard rightly or wrongly Choy-Lee-Futt as a Christian style. Could you please give us some insights of your point of view on that?

- Sifu Roland Mastel

## Answer

While it is true that many Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners are Christian, it is not true that Choy-Li-Fatt is a Christian style.

Like all other styles of kungfu and chi kung, Choy-Li-Fatt is non-religious. There is no mention of any religious dogmas in Choy-Li-Fatt. It can be practiced by people of any religion without affecting his religious belief.

There is an interesting parallel in our school. Because I have been teaching our arts in the West, I believe there are more Christian now in Shaolin Wahnam than Buddhist, Taoist, Muslim, Hindu or any other religion. But our arts remain non-religious. And we are proud that, to quote Lee Wee Joo, not only we tolerate other religions we actually celebrate with them.

The reason why many Christians practice Choy-Li-Fatt is due to historical co-incidence, and not due to religion. The founder of the Chinese Republic, Dr Sun Yat Sen, was Christian. Many Choy-Li-Fatt practitioners supported Dr Sun Yat Sen in his revolution to overthrow the Ching Dynasty. Many Choy-Li-Fatt masters also became Christian.

## Question 13

As Choy Lee Fatt is a school of kung fu well-suited for self defense against multiple assailants and your Shaolin Wahnam school also has methods used for this purpose in level 11 and 12 of the Shaolin Kung Fu Training Program, which are "Single Unarmed Against Multiple Unarmed" and "Single Unarmed & Armed Against Multiple Armed" respectively, how might the tactics and philosophies of Hoong Ka and Choy Lee Fatt differ comparatively when dealing with multiple opponents? What are the similarities? In one on one combat?

- Sunwukong

## Answer

There are a lot of similarities between Hoong Ka and Choy-Li-Fatt because they came from the same source, Southern Shaolin. The differences are due to different emphasis the two schools place on techniques. Hoong Ka focuses on straight stances and straight punches, whereas Choy-Li-Fatt on diagonal stances and diagonal strikes.

In other words, a typical Hoong Ka attack is to move forward in a Bow-Arrow Stance and drive a level fist or a vertical fist into an opponent, as in "Black Tiger Steals Heart". A typical Choy-Li-Fatt attack is to move diagonally forward and swing an upward fist or a downward fist at an opponent, as in "Throw Ball in Waves" or "Whirlwind Smashes Waves". Please note that all these patterns are found in both school.

A colloquial saying sums up the difference in tactics, "hoong ka chet yap, choy li fatt chou chak moon" or "Hoong Ka enters straight-ahead, Choy-Li-Fatt enters from a side". This is expressed in their different philosophies, "hoong ka kuen fatt kong meng loui lok, choy li fatt seng yu chi chui" or "Hoong Ka techniques are clear and direct, Choy-Li-Fatt techniques win with strategies".

Hence, a manifestation of a Hoong Ka practitioner in kungfu or in life is "If I beat you, it is because I am better than you", whereas that of a Choy-Li-Fatt practitioner is "If I beat you, it is because I am cleverer than you". In kungfu stories, a Hoong Ka practitioner would rather die fighting against odds than escaping using tricks, whereas a Choy-Li-Fatt practitioner when faced with odds would choose to escape rather than fight. One represents courage, the other represents wisdom. In Shaolin Wahnam, we value both.

Hoong Ka and Choy-Li-Fatt have different philosophies regarding fighting single-handedly against multiple armed or unarmed attackers. I clearly remember learning these two important philosophies from my siheng (elder kungfu brother), “Iron-Armed” Chiu Shi Khern when I was just a small boy learning kungfu from Uncle Righteousness. A Hoong Ka practitioner would adopt “pui sheng yong jin”, which means fighting courageously with your back against a wall so that others could not attack you from your back. A Choy-Li-Fatt practitioner would adopt “fu lok khuen yeong” which means you fight like a tiger moving about swiftly in a flock of sheepish attackers.