



Shaolin Collection - 1

The History of the Shaolin Temple



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Introduction

This is the first in a series of documents, which are in my opinion considered essential for studying Shaolin Gong Fu.

About this Library

Most of these documents are translations of historical texts which are just now (2003) beginning to emerge. For this library, only the texts considered as core by the author to the study of Shaolin were selected. While some of the readers might question some of the texts in this collection, please bear in mind, that Shaolin has a different meaning for every person studying the art.

Shaolin Collection - 1

One of the most important aspects is history. In the opinion of the author, history defines the future. Therefore, the first document contains the Shaolin History as conveyed to the author by the Da Mo Yuan, and confirmed by Grandmaster Shi Weng Heng and Grand Master Chi Chuan Tsai from Taiwan.

Note: *The images included are from my private collection and some are courtesy of the Shaolin Perspective website under <http://www.russbo.com>.*

The Shaolin Temple History

Northern Wei Dynasty 386- 534

The construction of the temple was in honor of the Indian Deravada monk Batuo (Buddhabhadra), he was in 464 one of the first Indian monks that came to China. Buddhabhadra means 'Man with a conscience'. In China he is also known under the name 'Fotuo'. In India he traveled together with 5 others. Together they searched for enlightenment in Buddhism, but only his 5 comrades achieved this India. He lost all faith and his comrades advised to go to China in order to search for enlightenment there. After traveling to many countries he indeed ended up China where he was noticed by Emperor Xiao Wen. This emperor warmly welcomed Buddhist monks coming from India. The Emperor gave him a special status.

Batuo traveled later with him to Luoyang. It is said that during this time Batuo achieved enlightenment. People say Batuo liked to isolate himself in the woods surrounding Songshan Mountain.

The Emperor saw this and decided that a the Shaolin temple should be built for him. Construction began in 495 and in 496 Monk Buddhabhadra established the Shaolin temple on the northern slope of Shaoshi Mountain. Some say that officially opened on May 23rd, 495.

Only a basic temple was build at that moment, no other buildings and the temple didn't have any lands. The is state provided for the daily needs of the monks. Story goes that right in this period Buddhabhadra became a Buddha too.

At the Shaolin temple Batuo of practiced Hinayana Buddhism, a early school of Indian Buddhism that laid emphasis on freeing oneself from the inside out. Pilgrims from afar looking for Hinayana Buddhism ended up in the Shaolin temple. Buddhabhadra translated Buddhist scriptures and other monks assisted him. They elucidated the Huayan Doctrine, Nirvana, the Weimo Doctrine, the Shidi Doctrine and other Buddhist sutras.

Some say that the martial arts were already present in the temple at the time of Buddhabhadra. They talk about a brilliant student Seng Chou who separated two fighting tigers with a staff, in reality it is almost impossible to say when the martial arts started in Shaolin. Seng Chou was born in Julu, his lay surname being Sun. When he was 28 he vowed to be a Buddhist devotee in the Jingming in Julu. He made a pilgrimage to the Shaolin temple and became Buddhabhadra disciple. Later he became the abbot of Songyue temple east of Shaolin.

Later Buddhabhadra moved to Luoyang in the company of Emperor Xiao Wen. Some call him the first abbot of the temple, but if he really was the abbot as such, than it is strange that he later followed the emperor.

Bodhidharma (483 - 532)

Bodhidharma (Puti Damo in Chinese, often just Damoor Tamo) visited the temple in the sixth century. His teachings based on meditation and yoga formed the basis of a new Buddhist philosophy named Chan, famous worldwide under the Japanese name of Zen. He taught the monks breathing and physical exercises so that they better handle the strict religious life they were leading. Monks were sitting still for long periods of time, because of this their bodies were in bad shape. The exercises Damo taught them can be seen as the fundamentals of the martial arts, for which the Shaolin temple grew to be famous for.

Damo was a mysterious figure, both in the world of martial arts as the Buddhist world. Many Zen sects in Japan, where his name is written as Bodai Daruma: Daruma, see in him the patriarch, but at the same time others ignore him totally. His roll in the martial arts is even more mysterious. He was never recognized as a formal leader of the Shaolin temple, but his influence is big and he is always directly affiliated with the temple.

According to legend was he the son of the King of Kanicipura (Xing Chi) of a small tribe from the South of India. He was born around the year 483 and died between the years 526 and 536. Some sources call him Bodhitara or Tarabodhi, but his most common full name is Bodhidharma Sardili. He was born in times of turmoil, this was the case as well as in India as in China. At that time India was attacked by the Huns from the North and loitered the country. Born in this time and being a member of a royal family he had to have had a military education and training on order to one day succeed his father. He was probably a member of the Ksatryas (military) caste. If he really was a member of that caste then he must have been trained in the Indian martial art of Kalaripayat. The area he was born in is especially know for its martial arts. Kalaripayat includes techniques for armed as well unarmed combat. Despite this, or maybe because of this, he came in contact with Buddhism and became a pupil of teacher Prajnatara, and from that moment on he followed the Buddhist Sarvastivada (Existential Reality). Prajnatara was the 27th Buddha after Mahakasyapa, the first disciple of Sakyamuni Buddha. Prajnatara was a teacher of the Sarvastivada school, this was a of the proto-Mahayana schools that emerged from the Deravada school. It propogated ideas that differentiated from the other schools, for example ideas about: essence of being, the elements, what did and what didn't caused karmic activity and other interesting problems. Bodhidharma received his name from his teacher and was send to China by him. Maybe to succeed or assist the well known Bodhiruci, who lived in the same time period as Damo. Because Buddhism came from India, that country was, according to the Chinese, the spiritual center of the world. Many of the Chinese Emperors send priests to India to study and take back religious books. They also invited Indian priests to come to China to preach. The whole Chinese society and law were based on Buddhist beliefs.

Damo in China

At the time that Damo came to China, (people say 527 n.Chr., however this only 3 years before his probable year of death was) Buddhism was already very popular. Emperor Wu Di (Emperor 502 - 549, Liang Dynasty 502 - 557) was a fanatical Buddhist. He had already found and invited other Buddhist teachers.

The legends tell us this about Damo's arrival in China: Damo traveled for 3 years and arrived in Guangzhou and was received by the governor Xiao Ang. Emperor Wu Di also called Damo in Jinling (present Nanjing) to appear before him. The emperor told Damo about his achievements and dedication to the Buddhist religion. He talked about temples build by him, sutra's published by him, etc. It was long list, but he finally ended. Damo was not impressed Surprised by Damo's lack of interest he asked Damo: "All these things taken into account, which merits have I achieved?"

Damo frowned his forehead and answered: "None what so ever, your majesty".

The emperor was astonished by this answer, but he asked another question: "What is the basic principle of Buddhism?"

The second answer of Damo was: "Far reaching emptiness."

The second answer flabbergasted the emperor as well, and he desperately asked him he who he thought who he was. Damo's answer was: "I've got no idea whatsoever", after which the conversation ended. Damo excused himself and left. He knew that this emperor wouldn't support his interpretation of Buddhism and left for Luoyang, which was at that time the Buddhist center of China.

Damo at the Shaolin temple

After all this he arrived at the Shaolin temple, which isn't far from Luoyang. Supposedly he arrived at Shaolin between 520 and 527. After Buddhahadra, Bodhidharma is the second important Indian that went the Shaolin temple.

He stayed there nine year and introduced the Indian Buddhist therapeutic movements and exercises (Raja Yoga and Prajna Yoga), which would later be used as the basis on which martial arts were going to be developed.



Damo or Tamo

Legends tells us that Damo sat in meditation for nine years to listen to the 'screaming of the ants'. Because of this long period of meditation in China he is also known as "Holy man facing the wall".



The Damo Cave entrance.

In front of the gateway there are three Chinese characters; Mo Xuan Chu, meaning Where mediation leads to wonder, in the handwriting of a court literator named Hu Bin. On its reverse is written; Dong Lai Zhao Ji, meaning He came to this eastern mountain and left his merits, written by Du Jinxi. Both inscriptions are decorated with Two Dragons Playing a Pearl and other geometrical designs.



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The nine years of mediation were spend in a cave, near the Shaolin temple. The cave can still be visited; a walk there will take about 2 hours. The cave is simply know as 'Damo Tong', which means Damo's cave. Because he spend such a long time in the cave his shadow was 'engraved' in a rock, so they say. The rock was later removed from the cave and taken to the Shaolin temple where it is displayed in the Guanyin Dian.



The famous rock with the “engraved” shadow

Once he fell a sleep while meditating. He was so angry over this that he cut his eyelids and threw them on the floor. From his eyelids grew a teaplant, which the monks until this day use to keep awake during meditation. In the nine years that he stayed in the temple, he taught his disciple Hui Ke Buddhism according his views and created in doing so the Mahayana school of Buddhism in China. He noted down his vision in the Lankavatara sutra and left the temple.

What happened with Damo after this is unclear. Some say he was poisoned (in Shaolin) by a jealous monk, others say that he traveled to central Asia, and some say that he even traveled to Japan.

The most frequently heard story is that he died on the banks of the Luohe river at the age of 150, after being poisoned for several times. He was buried on Xiong'ershan (Bear's ear hill), where now stands a small nunney.

Three years after his death Song Yun, a lay Buddhist, met Damo in the mountains of Turkestan (Cong Ling), while returning to China after doing business in the West for the Chinese empire. Damo was wearing only one shoe. Song asked Damo were

he was going, his answer was: 'To the Western Paradise' (meaning India). Damo also said that the Emperor of China just died. By the time Song arrived in Luoyang he heard that the Emperor indeed had died. He told his story to the new Emperor, who ordered that Damo's grave was to be opened. Besides one shoe, the grave was empty. It was taken out of the grave and brought to Shaolin temple where it was kept as a holy object. Since that time, Damo can be seen on pictures and paintings wearing only one shoe. Chinese shoemakers adopted Damo as their patron and every year celebrate his birthday.

During his time in China Damo didn't attract much attention; the first records mentioning him date from one hundred later. In this work he is only mentioned as a meditating monk. Later on stories became more and more fantastic, and in the end he was elevated to the post of first patriarch of Chan Buddhism. The masters of later periods needed a heritage, and Damo was used for this role. The problem with Damo is that many of his teachings were sometimes contradictory to the later Chan teachings. For example relying on sutras. The Lankavatara sutra emphasized meditation, but the masters of later periods were totally against this. Jesuit scholar Heinrich Dumoulin said that Damo's teachings differ in nothing from what is preached in the Mahayana sutras.

The doctrine Damo preached

The Buddhism that Bodhidharma practiced differs in a large degree from the Buddhism that Buddhahadra preached. It became known as Chan or Dhyana, which in Sanskrit means 'getting rid of distracting thoughts'.

Buddhists from that time period always contributed great value to the Buddhist doctrines, the sutras, which they recited endlessly. According to Buddhist scriptures, Buddhists must bind themselves to Buddhist doctrines, chant Buddhist scriptures and always relieve themselves from worldly attractions.

But Chan of Bodhidharma wasn't the same as the already existing Chan from India or as the one developed in the North of China represented by Seng Chou (Chan like ideas already existed in China before Damo came to China). It differentiated through cleansing of the spirit in order to accept the doctrines of Buddhism. The theories of Chan are based on Madhyamika, which differs a lot from the Hinayana of Buddhahadra. In many ways Chan can be looked upon as a form of Buddhism with strong Taoist influences. The Taoist elements of Chan are:

- 1 Emphasis on spontaneity and naturalism; and an aversion of everything that's artificial;
- 2 Emphasis on the fact that Buddha-nature is present in all things, which is congruent with the Taoist idea that the Dao (Tao) is immanent in all things;
- 3 Buddhism as well as Taoism both emphasize teaching without relying on words, harmony of the contrasts, abstinence and the mystical appreciation of nature;
- 4 Pedagogical methods are related; although both use everyday language in everyday life, they both use sudden surprises and enigmatical expressions which are supposed to bring about mental short circuits;
- 5 Under the influence of Taoism, Chan masters dissociated themselves from the Indian independence of holy scriptures, liturgy, sacred objects and speculative theology. Their path to enlightenment is direct, concrete and practical, consequently their use of language

is never abstract but normal everyday language.

Damo left four volumes of Lengjia Scriptures to his disciples. The Dhyana it preached was a reformation on the old Chan prevailing in Northern China. As soon as it emerged, it met all kinds of slanders, even bodily persecution. However there were people, though few in number, who believed in it, among them were Hui Ke and Dao Yu. Damo was moved by their fidelity and taught them how to face the wall with pure mind. Later on he passed his cassock and alms bowl to Hui Ke.

Since present Chan doesn't rely on holy scriptures, holy portraits or even Buddha himself, some people wonder whether Chan has anything left to do with Buddhism. Chan masters claim that they are Buddhists, and that they pursue enlightenment and that scriptures, portraits, ritual actions etc. are only means to an end, but that they in no way present enlightenment itself. And because they understand this, they say that they are the only true Buddhists.

Jin Jing, Xi Sui Jing, and the 18 exercises of the Luohan

It is said that Damo wrote the two following manuscripts: The Yi Jin Jing and the Xi Sui Jing. Inside the Yi Jin Jing one can find 18 exercises of Luohan. These three are called the three jewels of Damo. There is no way of verifying if Damo really did write these manuscripts, because the versions that exist today all come from later periods. Especially the Yi Jin Jing is contributed to Damo. More important is influence of both manuscripts on the Martial Arts. The exercises noted, in detail, in these books are static and rhythmical postures. If one would really assume that Damo introduced these exercise to the Shaolin Temple, even then they are far removed from the Martial Arts exercises.

The Yi Jin Jing taught the monks to maintain they health and to change their bodies from weak to strong. These exercises were later combined with fighting techniques, which consequently became more effective. The Yi Jin Jing has had a big influence on Shaolin. Many ways of hardening different body parts are derived from the Yi Jin Jing, like Iron Palm, Iron Body and Iron Head. In fact, all body parts could be conditioned and even up to present day this is still being done. Also in the Yi Jin Jing are the 18 exercises of Luohan, also called 18 Fist techniques of Luohan. The movements have the following names:

- 1 Crane Dance
- 2 Dragon Dance
- 3 Pressing and lifting
- 4 Single Phoenix Dance
- 5 Tiger looking askance
- 6 Body Turning
- 7 Circling
- 8 Advancing and retreating
- 9 Drawing the bow
- 10 Boy worshipping Avalokitesvara

- 11 Beauty sporting with lotus
- 12 Bear looking back
- 13 Abrupt lifting
- 14 Fairy crossing palms at the back
- 15 Welcoming a guest
- 16 Elephant standing on the hind legs
- 17 Single pheasant Dance
- 18 Crane standing on one foot

According to legend Damo came up with these movements after he saw that the monks of the temple were in bad physical condition. This was partly caused by long hours of (Chan) meditation. The exercises loosened their joints and eventually improved their healths. Through long term practice and constant enrichment, a complicated series of martial arts came into being. This is a popular explanation as to the rise of the Shaolin martial arts.

The name 'Luohan' is a well known one in common Buddhism and the martial arts. Luohan comes from the Sanskrit Arhat. The Chinese transformed this name via A Luo Han to Luohan. In Japan the same Chinese characters are pronounced as Rakan. Luohan (Kung Fu) is being looked on as the basis and the beginning of the actual development of the martial arts within the temple. Later the name Luohan was used for other series of movements and sometimes a style got the name Luohan. In Indian Buddhism, a Luohan is a person who aims his daily life on reaching Nirvana, without special concern for his environment. This in contrast with a Bodhisatva, who gives up Nirvana to help others achieve enlightenment. In Chinese Buddhism, a Luohan is a monk that reached enlightenment, but hasn't entered Nirvana in order to help others in this world.

In China the first 16 disciples are regarded as Luohan. Beside the 16 there are 2 others who are looked upon as Luohan; they are the first 2 disciples of Damo. Altogether there are 18 Luohan. The number 18 is an important number in Buddhism because the number 9 is a magical one. Within Buddhism and martial arts many numbers are multiples of 9: 18, 36, 57 and very often 108.

The name Luohan can not be separated from Buddhism and the Shaolin temple in particular. This is also the reason why there are who use Luohan for the name of their martial art, sometimes with and sometimes not in combination of Shaolin. Often Luohan and Shaolin are synonyms and therefore interchangeable.

The Xi Sui Jing is said to teach the monk how to purify their bone marrow and blood, enhance their immune system and make better use of their brain capacity, which would help them achieve Buddhahood. Especially the last usage was and still is surrounded with much mystery. The two classics were caused a revolution among the Chinese Buddhists and as with many revolutionary ideas it found a lot of resistance, in this case from the traditional Buddhists. Because of the training methods of Damo, this Buddhist school separated from the traditionalists. However, the methods of Damo were kept inside the Buddhist society, but even so, the traditionalists refused to use them. The most important reason for not using them was that most

monks believe that the physical body is not as important as the mental part of the body. They believe that the mental part is the part you need to develop in order to enter Nirvana, so why would you spend time on training the psychic part?

Another important reason is that the exercises in the Shaolin temple were used to develop martial arts. Many monks were of the opinion that all exercises with the aim of injuring or killing people were by definition evil.

Hui Ke (487-693?)

The monk Hui Ke was besides Dao Yu his most important student and became his successor. A popular legend about the way Damo accepted Hui Ke as his student goes as follows:

Hui Ke was born in Wulao, with the family name of Ji. His original given name was Guang (Light) which he himself later changed into Shenguan: the light of God. During his childhood he read the classics and loved traveling in mountains. One he visited a monk in a temple called Xiangshan in a place called Longmen. He studied the 'Mahayana' and later the 'Hinayana' schools. When he was 40 years old he had a divine impulse to visit Songshan mountain to study under Damo. The first couple of times that he looked for Damo's attention he saw him facing a wall from early in the morning until late in the evening.

To show his determination and loyalty he decided to stand in the vicinity of where Damo meditated daily during the night of 8 December. That night it snowed heavily and when the sun rose the snow reached his knees. Damo saw this and out of pity he asked Hui Ke whether he could do anything for him. 'There is nothing you do besides accepting me as your student', was Hui Ke's reply. Damo answered: 'What I teach asks many sacrifices. It will be hard for who hasn't got the will and isn't loyal; for him it will be nothing else than aimless suffering. Right then and there Hui Ke, through Damo words, reached enlightenment. Without replying, Hui Ke took out a sharp knife and cut his left arm off and presented it to Damo. Damo accepted Hui Ke as a student. It is this legend is the reason for building the Lixue Ting (Standing in Snow Pavilion) inside the temple and the Yang Bi Tai (Healing arm Pavilion).

But the probably true story of his life goes as follows: Hui Ke, also known as Sen Ke, was born into the Ji family in Xinowang. He read many Buddhist sutra's and some say that he was an ex- Confucianist. At the time he was 40 years old he met Damo, who was traveling in the surroundings of Luoyang and Songshan mountain area. He became his student and studied under Damo for 6 years. After Damo's death he lived a solitary life near the Luohe river. After some time had passed, monks started visiting and consulting him and Hui Ke started to comment on sutra's and explaining them. His teachings spread fast around the empire and he traveled to the capital of Ye(de?) of the Eastern Wei dynasty (a place east of present Anyang in Henan province). At that he had quite a reputation. Dao Heng was Hui Ke's contemporary and influential in the north of China. He was of the opinion that he was preaching the one and only true Chan and Hui Ke teaching was deviating from it. He send his disciples to Hui Ke to make trouble. But all the disciples Dao Heng send were converted by Hui Ke and didn't return to Dao Heng. He was infuriated by this and planned an assault on Hui Ke. Hui Ke didn't die after the assault, but did lose his left arm. The rest of his life he lived as a beggar.

In a book of Sung (in 'Tsi'ing-te tsj'oan-teng-lu' (Pinyin) it says that during his stay in the Shaolin temple Damo summoned four disciples and asked them to show him what they achieved so far. (The Zengaku Yokan published by Segawa Shobu, Japan, in 1907 also tells this story.) The first disciple is said to have said:

'In my view we cannot rely solely on words and letters, neither can we totally ignore them. Damo replied: "You reached my skin".

After that a non stepped forward and said: "The way I see it, is the Truth is a glance into Buddha's paradise; one sees it only once and never again." Damo replied: " You reached my flesh".

The third disciple said: " The four big elements are empty and the five Skanda's (those being: body, feeling, perception, willpower and consciousness) do not exist." To this Damo replied: "You reached my bone". The last disciple was Huike. He only bowed for his master and said nothing.

To him Damo replied: " You reached my bone marrow". (Damo's answer was a citation from Nagarjuna).

Damo choose his successor in this manner.

Damo's and Huike's Buddhism became very popular in the south of China. Some people say that Huike brought it there himself; others say that it was a monk called Sen Jie.

Northern Zhou 557 - 581

After Damo's creation of Mahayana Buddhism the political and spiritual circumstances in China changed.

During the Northern Zhou discussions were held on Daoism and Buddhism and in 574 Emperor Wu Di decided to ban Buddhism and Daoism altogether. The emperor accepted the philosophy of Wei Yuansong and ordered every Buddhist and Taoist monastery abolished and destroyed. Wei Yuansong was a turncoat monk who in 567 AD denounced Buddhism to proclaim a "universal church", with the Emperor as "Buddha". This of course attracted the attention of the new Emperor.

Consequently, many monks of Shaolin deserted the temple. Holy scriptures and pictures of Huike and a monk called Lin were secretly kept. When Emperor Di Jing took over power, Buddhism was quickly reinstated and the temple was inhabited and got a new name: Zhigu Temple (some say Zhihu Temple).

Sui Dynasty 581 - 618

Like everything else, Shaolin martial arts developed slowly and gradually attained its perfection through practice. By the time of the Sui and Tang Dynasties, it had become widely known.

In an attempt to support the newly founded dynasty Yangjan, emperor of the Sui dynasty, decided to promote Buddhism. At the feet of all of the five famous mountains, Taishan, Huashan, Northern Hengshan, Southern Hengshan and Songshan, monasteries were to be build. Consequently in the eighties of the 6th

century, the Shaolin temple regained its original name and gained 100 ding (about 667 hectares) of land in Baiguwu (located about 25 kilometers Northwest of Shaolin). During this time several halls and pavilions were built in the vicinity of the temple. The wealth of the temple was growing fast. Large amounts of land and property were given to Shaolin temple by the supreme feudalistic rulers, which laid the material foundation of a monasterial manor. Emperor Wendi gave more lands to the temple, in order to protect the new treasure of the community the temple created a militia of 'warrior monks'. It is believed that they weren't real monks, but laymen dedicated to the martial practice under the monks' direction.

In the late twenties of the sixth-century (during the reign of Emperor Yang Guan of the Sui Dynasty) China was in a chaos. The wealth of the temple attracted people from the surrounding villages that attacked the temple. Heavy fighting between the monks and villagers broke out during these attacks and all the buildings belonging to the temple were destroyed. Only one pagoda was saved. This was the first of many attacks on the temple during its 1500 year history. Maybe it was this attack that started the development of martial arts in the temple. The poet Cheng Shao wrote during the Ming Dynasty that the goal of the martial arts inside the temple was to defend peace and create order out of chaos.

But another story tells us another origin of the (armed) fighting monks of the Shaolin temple. Because of the gift of land the temple got in early Sui dynasty, it became the biggest temple in the region. So big that it was seen as, and it acted as a big landowner. The poor peasants living in the direct vicinity were exploited by the Shaolin temple, as were monks with a low status. By doing so it the temple became richer and richer. Besides exploitation by labor, the temple had another means to control the villagers: religion. At the end of the Sui Dynasty they no longer accepted it and started an uprising. In order to stop the uprising, the temple leaders decided to train 100 monks, led by Tan Zong, who learned the stick fighting from a fire-monk in the temple, in the art of stick fighting, so they could control the villagers. A poet from the Tang Dynasty said this about the martial monks of the temple:

"The temple was given land, so they could assist in arresting bandits, killing of demons and purifying holy land. This is the real reason behind the armed martial monks of the Shaolin temple."

Tang Dynasty 618 - 907

In the history of Shaolin temple, Tang Dynasty was important for its development and prosperity. It was a period monks of ages were proud of. In fact, the fate of the Shaolin temple was closely bound with that of the Tang Dynasty. The supreme leaders showed special concern for the temple, regarding it as an important center of Buddhism, and often paid visits to it. The unusually intimate relationship between the imperial court and the temple originated from the historical fact that, at the time Li Yuan (the first Tang emperor) and Li Shimin (son of Li Yuan) founded the Tang Dynasty, they had great support from the monks in the war against Wang Shichong (a local despot belonging to the defeated Sui Dynasty crown). The grants by the Tang emperors played an important role in the consolidation and development of the temple.

The story of Li Shimin and the Shaolin temple goes as follows:

In May 614 the Sui Dynasty ended and Emperor Yang You made room for Li Yuan and the Tang period started. But there were still people who wanted to restore the Sui. One of these attempts took place in the vicinity of the temple and the monks of the temple turned out to be a decisive factor.

Former garrison commander of nearby Luoyang, Yuan Wendu cooperated with general Wang Shichong to overthrow the newborn Tang. In April the year after founding the Tang the new Emperor Yua Wangtong was dethroned and Wang Shichong made himself emperor instead and founded a new country which he called 'Zheng'. The new 'emperor' sent troops to Luoyang and Songshan Mountain to secure the area. The manor of Baiguwu, which was given to the Shaolin temple during the Sui dynasty, was also occupied. This place was of strategic importance. From Baiguwu Wang Shichong led his forces against the troops of the Tang dynasty. Tang prince Li Shimin sent his troops, after winning battles with Song Jingang and Liu Wuzhou and having conquered the area's of Mingzhou, Bingzhou and Xiaxian, to Wang Shichong to fight him. By the time Wang had the Songshan-Luoyang district under control and also ruled over Yinzhou, Dengzhou and several other cities. On top of that Tian Zan, a military officer of the Tang, defected to Wang, which further contributed to his military strength. In April 621 Prince Li Yuanji fought Wang Shichong, but was defeated. At this critical moment, Zhi Cao, head priest of Shaolin temple, leading armed monks, appeared suddenly at the mountain pass and gave Wang a surprise attack from the rear, which threw Wang's army into confusion at one blow. In the battle, Wang Renze, nephew of Wang Shichong was captured alive and sent to the Tang camp. This military operation offered great support and encouragement to the army of the Tang Dynasty.

In his edict to the Shaolin temple, Li Shimin (then named Emperor Taizong) highly cited the monks for their meritorious deeds in the battle. He granted audience to the leading monks (during the fights 13 monks stood out, amongst them were; Jin Cao, Hui Yong and Tan Zong) and awarded them. The Emperor wanted to award them personally, but they refused. Only the leader (should be Zhi Cao) received the military title of Da Jiangjun (regent/regent-marshal/supreme commander).

Later the temple was endowed 40 qing (267 ha) of land. It is also said he gave the temple official permission to train a small army of martial monks. On top of that he sent a gift of wine and meat and gave them permission to eat meat and drink alcohol.

Since that time the monks of the Shaolin temple drink alcohol and eat meat. Because of this, many traditional Buddhists don't like the Shaolin temple.



A Mural of the previously described battles located in the White Robe Hall (Baiyi Dian)

In 728 a tablet was erected, which told the events. The text was once dictated by emperor Taizong during his visit to the temple. This visit took place on the 30th day of the 4th lunar month in the 4th year since the commencement of the Tang Dynasty (621). The text was engraved on the upper part of the front side of the tablet. The words were written in 38 lines, each of 8 Chinese characters. In the fifth line there is the name "Shimin" autographed by Li Shimin himself. The text praised the monks who helped him in defeating Wang Shichong. Under the text are carved the name of the tablet Shaolin Temple of the Imperial Tang, written by Pei Cui. The inscription that follows describes the historical events relating to the Temple from its initial stage to the reign on Emperor Xuan Zong (712-742). On the back of this tablet is carved the Inscription about the Imperial Bestowal on Shaolin Temple autographed by Emperor Li Shimin. The meaning is basically the same as that on the front side. Below it are the imperial documents concerning Shaolin temple promulgated respectively in 621, 625, 632 and 723. The tablet can still be seen near the bell tower of the temple.



The original tablets



The tablets near the bell tower today encased in a protection wall

With Emperor Li Yuan (618-627) peace came to the country. A monk with the name Shan Hu (he was a member of the team who fought at Baiguwu) wrote the emperor after he saw the state the temple was in and asked him for funds for restoring the temple. This remarked the beginning of Shaolin temple's rebuilding project with the support of the imperial government. From 726 to 650 the work continued. Flourishing of Shaolin temple in the Tang dynasty was chiefly shown in three aspects:

- 1 the reconstruction and increase of monastic buildings
- 2 the visits and grants by emperors and empresses
- 3 the appearance of large numbers of eminent monks and the multitudinous followers of Buddhism.

In the Tang Dynasty famous monks came forth in large numbers, many of whom had direct links with imperial families. Emperor Li Xian conferred the title of 'Monks of Great Virtue' to a group of ten in the temple. And this ten member group of honored monks was to be kept for ever. If there should be a vacancy, it had to be filled with another monks from the same temple, for a vacancy was not allowed.

Among the famous monks of the early Tang were: Shan Hu, Zhi Cao, Tan Zong and Master Ming. In the reign of Emperor Li Shimin there were Ming Zun and Ci Yun. In the later years of the 7th century, there was Master Fa Ru who was the first to return to Shaolin temple after the Chan Sect moved to the south.

Another influential monk was Tong Guang, who preached Buddhism in Shaolin temple for 20 years and was very popular among Buddhist followers, "both Chinese and foreign" (from a tablet inscription).

During the Tang Dynasty China was visited by many foreigners, like Koreans and Japanese. The name of Korea's national martial art, Tang Soo Do, got its name from the Tang; it means the method of the hands of Tang. The Japanese martial art Shorinji karate got its name from the Shaolin temple: it is the Japanese pronunciation of Shaolin temple; the characters are the same.

"The Abolition of Buddhism" was installed by Emperor Li Yan (or Wu Zong) (reign 841-847). Monks were scattered far and wide and their martial arts were lost. Maybe this gave rise the development of martial arts outside the temple, based on Shaolin practices.

The Five Dynasties 907-960

The Five Dynasties Period though rather short in China's history, left rare cultural relics and materials valuable for the study Shaolin temple. For example pagoda's which have inscriptions which tell about the life of monks and details about the Shaolin temple. During the "The Abolition of Buddhism" about 4600 big and 40.000 small temples were destroyed. The Shaolin temple too was, once again, in a bad condition. 30 years after ending the abolition the head of the temple Fa Hua collected funds for a repair that would last 3 years and the monks returned once again.

From this time on to the early Song Dynasty, Shaolin martial arts developed again side by side with the revival of Buddhism.

The Song 960-1279 and Jin 1115-1234 Dynasties

The Shaolin temple still maintained its comparatively large dimensions during the Song and Jin Dynasties. Structures of this period have the characteristics of this time and are well worth studying. Especially structures in Damo Pavilion and some pagoda's.

The confluence of the three religions - Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism, began as early as in the Tang Dynasty. The carved images of Sacred Founders of the Three Main Religions on the monument kept at the Entrance speak well for themselves. The carving was made at the reverse side of 'Tablet for the inscription by Empress Wu Zetian of the Tang Dynasty'. On the upper part is an eulogy by Emperor Li Heng on the three religious saints. According to the eulogy, these three religions could be traced back to the same origin. Below the eulogy is a drawing of the three saints - Sakyamuni on the middle, Confucius on the left and Lao Zi on the right. At first glance it seems that Confucius and Lao Zi were attendants of Sakyamuni.

The picture was made in the Song Dynasty and the stone carved in the Jin Dynasty.

Zhao Kuangyin (the first emperor of the Song Dynasty) was fond of martial arts. Many hand positions were created by him. For example Chang Quan of 36 sections and his monkey boxing of 6 steps.

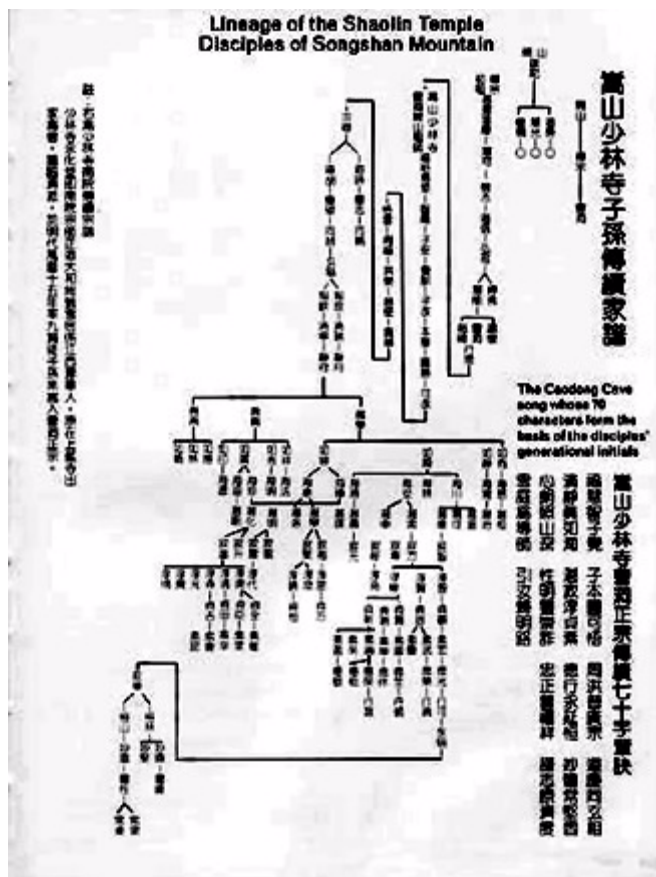
He once had his books concerning martial arts preserved in Shaolin temple.

Great development of Shaolin martial arts started at the end of the Jin and the beginning of the Yuan Dynasty.

It was said that Yue Fei, a famous Chinese general of the Song Dynasty, once reformed the '18 exercises of Luohan' and changed them into Ba Duan Jin (Eight Graceful Movements), which has often been used for elementary training in Shaolin temple so far.

A monk Fu Yu became abbot at the beginning of the Sung Dynasty. He wrote a poem consisting of 70 characters. Each one of those characters was to represent a generation of monks in Shaolin; Fu Yu's lineage continues unbroken to this day. For example, the current abbot Yongxin is of the 33rd generation. Accordingly, Yong is the 33rd character in this poem. Currently the oldest surviving generation is Su (30th) and the youngest is Chang (38th).

Fu Yu invited the best martial artists to come and share their knowledge while training at the Shaolin temple. Three times, for a period of three years each time, martial artists from many places came to the Shaolin temple to share their knowledge. The Shaolin monks recorded the forms and techniques which they observed into a library which was kept at Shaolin.



The Poem of the 70 characters, also known as the Caodong Cave song

Yuan Dynasty 1279 - 1368

In the Yuan, Ming and early Qing Dynasties the social status of the Shaolin Temple was further raised. It was respectfully called 'Shaolin Temple, The Birthplace of Buddhism' or 'The Great Shaolin temple'.

Not a few famous scholars left stone inscriptions for the eminent monks of the temple. Some of the monks held important positions in the government in addition to their high prestige in the Buddhist circle. Yu Gong, for example, had over a thousand disciples and was respectfully called 'Great Master'. Emperor Xian Zong (reign 1246 - 1249) once asked Yu Gong to join the discussion on state affairs. Emperor Shi Zu (reign 1260 - 1295) conferred the honorable title of 'Luminous Successor to Buddha' on him. Later the emperor granted him the official title of Da Si Kong, which was at ministerial level.

Emperor Shi Zu asked Yu Gong to take charge of the temple and repair the temple which was badly damaged during the last war. This was the third large scaled revival of the temple after Buddhism had been forbidden twice. After he died he was posthumously awarded the title of 'Jin Gou Gong, the luminous master'.

Some of the important inscriptions in Shaolin Temple were written personally by famous officials of the imperial courts. In this period, famous monks emerged in large numbers; men like Yu Gong the Great Master, Master Xi An, Master Feng Lin and the Japanese monks Shao Yuan (Shoogen).

Japanese monk Shoogen (1295-1364) religiously named Gu Yuan the Superior by Chinese monks. Back in Japan he had been an abbot. He arrived in China in 1327 on board a merchant ship. Possible in 1336 he came to Shaolin and became an executive monk there, assisting Abbot Xi An. Another monk from Japan lived in Shaolin in the late Yuan and early Ming Dynasty and more followed later. A monk named Da Zhi came to the Shaolin Temple from Japan. After he studied Shaolin martial arts (bare hands and staff) for nearly 13 years (1324 A.D.), he returned to Japan and spread Shaolin martial arts to the Japanese martial arts society.

Later, in 1335 A.D. another Buddhist monk named Shao Yuan came to Shaolin from Japan. He mastered calligraphy, painting, Chan theory, and Shaolin martial arts during his stay. He returned to Japan in 1347 A.D., and was considered and regarded a "Country Spirit" by the Japanese people. This confirms that Shaolin martial techniques were imported into Japan for at least seven hundred years.

During the Song Dynasty Shaolin continued to gather more martial skills from outside of the Temple. They blended these arts into the Shaolin training. A number of famous boxing masters paid great attribution to summing up the had positions and imparting their skills to younger monks. Among these masters, Bai Yufeng, Jue Yuan and Li Sou played important roles.

Jue Yuan had been a layman taking fancy to martial arts. Having become a monk at Shaolin temple, he devoted himself to the study of boxing positions and diligent practice. Soon, the Shaolin temple once again became widely known for its martial arts. With admiration many people came to the temple to learn from him. But Jue Yuan was a man of self knowledge. He politely refused them, and then, having disguised himself as a layman, started on his way on search of other famous masters. In Lanzhou (of Gansy province), he met an old man named Li Sou, from Henan, who was skilled in martial arts.

Having made acquaintance, they came back to Luoyang in company. With the recommendation by Li Sou, Jue Yuan knew Bai Yufeng, the Great pugilist of the Shaolin School and his son. The Buddhist name of Bai Yufeng was Qiu Yue Chan Shi. Bai was then about 50 years old, but still appeared majestic. Jue Yuan respected Bai as his master and learned from him very modestly. He was so pious and ambitious that Bai Yufeng and Li Sou were deeply moved. They returned to Shaolin temple together, where they worked as one on the Shaolin martial arts for ten years.

Bai Yufeng developed the '18 exercises of Luohan', increasing the number of forms from 18 to 72, then to 173. He collected fragments of almost neglected patterns, put them to order, and perfected them. The Luohan style would later see over 170 variant forms. He also created the Five Imitations Boxing in the light of the Five Animal Exercise invented by Hua Tuo, a very famous doctor during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-265). The Five Animal Exercise was a kind of body building exercise by imitating the actions of tigers, deer, bears, apes and birds; while the Five Animal Boxing of Bai Yufeng was a kind of Chinese shadow-boxing that mimicked the movements of dragons, tigers, leopards, snakes and cranes.

The Five Boxing were considered the best of Shaolin Quan.

Li Sou, too, was very skilled at martial arts, especially at the Do Hong Quan and Xiao Hong Quan (Great and Lesser Red Boxing) and cudgel stunts. His arts were also much taught in Shaolin temple.

Later on, a number of famous pugilists of Shaolin martial arts emerged, among them were Hong Yi, Yi Guan, Deng Yin and Du Zhuang.

A fire raged toward the end of the dynasty and many buildings again met with serious damage.

Ming Dynasty 1368 - 1644

At the beginning of the Ming, large scaled renovation was under way, with the overall layout of the temple and the principal palatial structures as we see them today. Among the restored buildings were Cang Jing Ge, Qian Fo Ge and Li Xue Ting. Of the hundreds of ancient pagodas and tablets in the temple, those built in the Ming Dynasty take the largest proportion.

At that time, the influence of the school represented by Cao Dong, respected as 'The Orthodoxy', grew at an unprecedented speed. The head priest of the temple must be chosen under imperial edict. An administrative set-up in the imperial court was established to manage affairs concerning monks. A tablet says: 'The Ming Dynasty united China' and 'An office in charge of monks' affairs has been set up to unify Buddhist teachings'.

Famous monks from this time are: Monk Song Ting, Master Yue Zhou, Master Xiao Shan and the reverend Master Wu Yan Dao Gong all had strong influences. The Ming and the beginning of the Qing saw thriving martial arts in Shaolin temple.

In the early years of the Ming Dynasty, armed Japanese pirates often made troubles along China southeastern coast. To cope with the situation, on the one hand the Ming government negotiated with the Japanese government, and on the other, it strengthened defense along the coastal areas. During the reign of Emperor Jia Jing (12th emperor of the Ming Dynasty) Monk Yue Kong of Shaolin temple answered the official call and less a group of over 30 armed monks to resist the pirates in Songjiang. In one battle they bravely fought and killed many intruders; later, when rescuing the local people, Yuekong and others fell into an ambush laid by the Japanese pirates. After a fierce battle, the 30-odd armed monks including Yuekong were outnumbered by the enemy and finally sacrificed their lives.

Others say that not all of them died, but were severely wounded on their legs and stayed in the area and taught Shaolin martial arts. These martial arts were then later developed into the Southern Shaolin martial arts.

This and other fighting incidents have been recorded in the Forest of Stelae and the Forest of Pagoda's. During the reign of Wu Zong (11th emperor of the Ming Dynasty) Monk San Qi was sent by the emperor to garrison Shanxi and Shaanxi.

In 1553 another Shaolin monk, Can Gong, was dispatched to command 50 other monks in battle, and won praise by the emperor. Besides, monks like Wan An and Bian Gong also rendered meritorious service in the fights for the imperial court.

It is believed that during the reign of Emperor Wanli of the Ming Dynasty the Reverend Xiaoshan led an army and for three times fought against the foreign pirates. And Sanqi and Changong, another two monks from the Shaolin, went to the borders for many times in guard against the enemy.

However, the armed monks of Shaolin also took part in suppressing peasants' uprisings.

Qing Dynasty 1644 - 1911

In the early and middle stages of the Qing Dynasty Shaolin temple remained on a fairly large scale. The imperial court exercised administration and control over monks by means of a special office and head priests chosen by imperial orders. Special funds were often allocated to build and repair monastery structures under the directives of officials specially appointed by the government.

The emperors paid so much attention to the rebuilding of the temple that even the projects were personally examined by them. Emperors Kang Xi and Qian Long personally autographed the horizontal inscribed boards for Tianwang Hall, Chu Zu Dian, San Shi Fo Zu Dian (Third Saint Hall), Pilu Hall and Damo Pavilion. When Emperor Qian Long visited Songshan Mountain in 1750, he stayed in the temple and inscribed a poem to be set up as a memento.

A lot of halls and pavilions were built or rebuilt in the early Qing. The most important reconstruction was conducted in 1735, after Governor Wang Shijun submitted a memorial to the emperor suggesting that the monarch choose an official to supervise the project. He also included a general reconstruction plan in the memorial. Finding that some of the bedrooms for the monks were a little too far away from the centre of the temple, Emperor Yin Zheng (reign 1723-1735) ordered that all the bedrooms must be near the central halls, so as to keep the monks under control conveniently. In order to meet the needs of timber, trees from a large area of woods opposite the temple were felled, which made the mountain bare. The cypress trees were planted by Dao Gong, a monk in the Ming Dynasty, and the wooded slope was then called 'Cypress Slope' by later people. There used to have been thousands of cypresses.

Among the influential monks of Shaolin in the Qing Dynasty were Master Bi An Kuan, who was made the 28th Head priest by imperial order, Monk Shun Gong, Lin Gong and Jou Ru.

In the late Qing Dynasty the temple was on the wane. There are points we can make out of the proclamations concerning the temple, promulgated by the government then:

Firstly, due to the abbots' failure in exercising effective leadership, the temple was often harassed or robbed by officials, soldiers, or even bandits and local bailiffs often went to the temple to extort money.

Secondly, some of the monks behaved badly and committed all kinds of outrages. The proclamation made in March 1842 disclosed facts to deterioration of the temple. It demanded that Shaolin temple as a time honored famous monastery observe Buddhist monastic disciplines and scrupulously abide by Buddhist regulations. However, the proclamation went on, the head priests there often collaborated with

the despotic gentry and sheltered scoundrels. They invited each other either to drink or gamble. They went as far as to harbor prostitutes and gang up in lawsuit scandals etc.

The deterioration of the temple ignited on a few people's emotion. Shi Yizan sighed in his poem 'Visiting Shaolin temple with my Friend'; 'Who is there to know the doctrines of our Founders? For long the fine tradition of the temple has been abandoned. The enchanting martial arts are without their spell, to speak less of Buddhist doctrines being expounded!' What is more, a large number of treasured historical relics suffered great damage.

When Manchuria took over China and became the Qing dynasty, in order to prevent the Han race (pre-Manchurian) Chinese from rebelling against the government, martial arts training was forbidden. Some say that in order to preserve the arts, Shaolin martial techniques spread to layman society. All martial arts training in the Shaolin Temple was carried out secretly during this time. Moreover, the Shaolin monk soldiers had decreased in number from thousands to only a couple of hundred, all trained secretly.

The Republic 1912-1949

From the late Qing to the period of the Republic of China (1912-1949), Shaolin temple remained in a depression state, especially after a chaotic was in 1928, the temple was even more desolate; halls and pavilions were dilapidated, debris could be seen everywhere, and almost all the walls of the courtyard fell to the ground.

During the war of 1928, there was a battle in the area of the Shaolin Temple. Warlord Fang Cheng Xue used the temple as it's base and the temple was burned for the last time by Warlord Shi You San's army. The fire lasted for more than 40 days, and all the major buildings (The Three Big Halls) were destroyed. The most priceless books and records on martial arts were also burned and lost.

During this period, though there were only dozens of monks left in the temple, they owned a great deal of land and wooded mountain areas. The great majority of peasants in the vicinity worked as tenants of the temple, suffering from oppression and exploitation. In the mountains nearby, uncountable bandits looted passers-by, which made people afraid of coming.

In 1944 when the Japanese invaders invaded Henan, they burnt houses, killed people and plundered property around Songshan Mountain. They not only destroyed historical relics at will, but also violated women right in front of the entrance of the temple in broad daylight.

They committed one unpardonable crime after another, filling people with greatest wrath. General Pi Dingjun and his men were sent by the Chinese Communist Party to Songshan Mountain with his Western Henan Anti Japanese Detachment sweeping into these mountain areas. He also visited the Shaolin temple.

The People's Republic 1949 -

After the war in 1949, during the Land Reform Movement the of land and wooded mountain areas were taken away from the temple and under communist rule, all religions were forbidden. Naturally, all Shaolin training was also prohibited.

They say that monks that wanted to stay, were allowed to stay in the temple and were given a small share of land to work on. Although during the Cultural Revolution it was almost impossible to be a monk as the Red Brigades roamed and controlled the country and destroyed anything connected with the feudal past of China. Countless lives were lost and a big part of China's historical artifacts were destroyed during this destructive period, and the Shaolin temple wasn't spared.

But there are reports that even during this difficult time, there were still, a handful, monks living inside, or in the direct vicinity of the temple, keeping the essence burning and even accepting new apprentices. These apprentices are the new generations. One of these monks, Shi Yan Ming, now living in New York:

"When I was five my parents, being Buddhists, took me to the Shaolin Temple because they were worried that I had been so sick. It wasn't anything like the movies or what you imagine. It was right in the middle of the Cultural Revolution and Mao had outlawed all religion. There was no abbot wearing the red and yellow robes with the shaved head and the long white beard. Nobody wore the monk's uniform until around 1980 after the end of the Cultural Revolution.

They took me to see the head monk, Shi Shing Jen. At that time there hadn't been an abbot in three hundred years. He was eventually appointed abbot in 1986 but died only seven months later and there has not been on since his death. I called him Sigong, my Grandmaster; he was my Sifu's Sifu (master's master). It was he who accepted me. I didn't have to do any Kung Fu, he just had a look at me and he knew. When you are at a very high spiritual level you can read people's faces and know them immediately. The Chinese say "yuan fen"; in English you say "destiny". My parents were very happy to leave me in the hands of Buddha.

My name was changed as soon as I entered the Temple. My name at birth was "Duan Gen Shan". Once I entered the Temple my Grandmaster and masters renamed me Shi Yan Ming. All Buddhist monks take the family name "Shi" as in Shakyamuni, the founder of Buddhism, because we follow Buddha. "Yan" means "34th generation" at Shaolin Temple. "Ming" means "perpetual" like the cycle of the sun or moon, or infinite, like the Dharma wheel, which never stops.

There were only 16 or 17 monks at the Temple at the time and I was by far the youngest monk there. Most of the other monks were in their seventies. Five is very young for some people to be away from their parents but not everybody is the same. My grandmaster, masters, and kung fu uncles took care of me like parents. They loved me very much and I loved them very much. Also, it was not safe to stay at the Temple all the time because Mao's Red Guard had absolute power and they could do anything they wanted anywhere at anytime. Therefore none of the monks could live there all the time and I got to see my parents quite often even though they lived about 200 miles (approx. 300 km) from the Temple. Sometimes I even had to go back and live with them because the Temple was so dangerous.

My masters were Liu Shin Yi and Shen Ping An. They taught me different styles - kung fu and acupuncture. They were Shaolin disciples, not monks, that lived outside the Temple. At that time because there were no walls, the Temple was completely open - many people came and went. I lived at the Temple but all my masters didn't always live with us. I had other masters outside the Temple that taught me how to read faces and palms."

In 1974 the entrance of the temple was reconstructed, and following that the government allocated more fund in 1979 in launching an all round renovation project, which continues until this day. The 1000 Buddha Hall, the Di Zang Hall, the Li Xue Ting, roads and steps and the Pagoda Yard were renovated in the beginning of the eighties. Also a 'highway' from the county seat of Dengfeng to the temple has been paved, which greatly shortens the trip.

In 1930 there were 700,000 temples and monasteries in China; in 1980 30,000 of these were still standing. From 1980 onwards, religious practice was allowed again and from that time the Shaolin temple began to flourish again.

In 1985, the government and its committee then proceeded to name a new Abbot of the Temple called Yongxin. At 25, he is probably the youngest head Abbot ever to be appointed at the Shaolin temple. He replaced an older Abbot named Xingzheng who reportedly taught him the Shaolin arts and scriptures. The Picture on the left is the former Abbot Xingzhen (1914-1987). Nowadays the Shaolin temple is mainly developed as a tourist attraction, as most temples in the country were restored in order to develop national tourism. Trained athletes, dressed as monks, show modern Wushu and Qigong exercises. All the 'monks', even the legitimate ones, are working for the Party. Wushu in Shaolin is a mixture of traditional Shaolin and modern Wushu from Beijing. People say that 'authentic' Shaolin martial arts have long disappeared from Shaolin temple, and if we look at the history of the temple, this seems more likely than not.

At present, the various constituents of Shaolin martial arts in vogue include; Liu He Quan, Da Hong Quan, Xiao Hong Quan, Xin Yi Quan, Tong Bei Quan, Pao Quan, Luohan Quan, Step-drill, Chao Yang Quan and Chang Quan.

For fundamental skill practicing there are the Ba Duan Jin and Xin Yi Ba (Concentration Move). Some of the items, like the Da Xiao Hong Quan, maintain their old names. Others have been renamed and reorganized.

Of the various weapons the Shaolin School boxers use, the cudgels are seen most. Among these are the Shaolin cudgel, the Fengbo (wave-making) cudgel, Liuhe cudgel, the 'Five tigers surrounding sheep' cudgel, the 'curling dragon' cudgel and the monkey cudgel. Besides there are single and double swords, Chunqiu (Spring and Autumn) swords, the plum blossom swords and some other sword plays. Speaking of the spear skills there are Shaolin spear play, the Shiba Ming Qiang (18 stunt spear play), 21 stunt spear play, 48 stunt spear play and other items.

Among the weapons the modern Shaolin boxers use there are 'Damo's walking sticks', double sticks, nine section sticks, single whips, handy spades, rapiers and double blade-rings.