

Research Article

Qigong and its Representation in the Structure of Training Shaolin Kung Fu in Europe of the Czech Republic

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to explain the specific structure of training (not only in the Czech Republic), its characteristics and its principles. It will also be useful to include some new, hitherto carefully hidden – also to point out and highlight some as-yet unpublished inside information about some specific training concepts of this martial art. An integral part of this training is to develop the internal energy called Qigong and some specific techniques within the different levels of performance in Kung Fu. Qigong is an effective part of alternative and natural medicine (and not only) in Shaolin Kung Fu and contribution highlights the need for the necessary representation of Qigong in Shaolin Kung Fu. Part of the contribution is also an aspect of the philosophy of martial arts Shaolin Kung Fu and its relationship to other martial arts.

Key words: Qigong, Shaolin Kung fu, Training, Philosophy, Martial arts

Introduction

Shaolin Kung Fu is a comprehensive and orthodox Chinese martial art which has often been surrounded by many superstitions and misinterpretations. The number of possibilities for its actual use is huge. The authors want to point out some inaccuracies and misunderstandings that have been passed down about this martial art (eg in some of its terms or the content of its training), that may discredit its importance and value. The main objective is to explain Shaolin Kung Fu from the perspective of the basic structure of its training and its relationship to other martial arts, and also to point out and highlight some as-yet unpublished inside information about this martial art [1].

An important part of the contribution is the introduction of some as-yet unpublished inside information about the internal energy called Qigong and its representation in Shaolin Kung Fu in its various levels of performance in Kung Fu.

Qigong is an effective part of alternative and natural medicine (and not only) in Shaolin Kung Fu.

Since they have been around for millennia carefully concealed any information about Qigong (nature, content, structure and the effects of exercise to health - as well as combat), so today we have very little information about the nature of Qigong exercises. Even today it is evident effort to keep this secret.

The logical reason is not only the know-how, but also legitimate concern about possible misuse of Qigong. This post was because he wanted to, at least briefly informed about certain aspects of Qigong in the context of Shaolin Kung Fu [2].

Goal Post

The aim of the paper is to explain the specific structure of training (not only in the Czech Republic), its characteristics and its principles, and to introduce some new, hitherto carefully hidden – never before

published information about some specific training concepts of this martial art, including the training of internal energy called Qigong. A sub-task is to clarify the relationship of Shaolin Kung Fu to other martial arts in terms of its philosophy, including the elaboration of the concept of Kung Fu.

Kung Fu training permeates qigong. It is its integral part. The effects of Qigong are exceptional, both in terms of health, and in terms of use in the application of combat techniques. The Kung Fu is focused on the development of internal energy, which improves motor skills individuals need for effective performance of martial techniques [3].

Qigong Kung Fu has very severe health effects. It has a positive effect on the skeleton (muscles, joints). It is known that Qigong improve the circulation and functional disposition of the body and helps the overall regeneration.

Qigong Kung Fu is working with inner energy in the body. Qigong exercise techniques in Kung Fu, a gradual increase in the level of internal energy in the body exerciser and it can gradually better and more effectively regulated.

This leads to greater penetration and destruction of punches and kicks in combat techniques [4].

And it is also possible to redirect this energy in the fight in the required areas of the body, which can be attacked by enemy attack (kick, punch etc.). And also it is possible within recoveries strike or kick etc. it may send attacked by the location that is at the moment much more durable and stronger. It may be at this point much more durable and stronger (Bending metal rods called a sharp point, Cervical hollow when demonstrations, Qigong Shaolin monks during their performances etc).

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Qigong has in Kung-Fu an irreplaceable and important place. Likewise, it is very wide and varied and its usage within the health or martial aspects. Qigong exercise is a lengthy and difficult process. Each level of exercise is logically equivalent level of adequate exercise Qigong techniques.

Method

The main methods used were: the analysis and synthesis of the data investigated, a literature search of research sources, and the conducting of interviews with world leading experts in Shaolin Kung Fu:

discussion on October 17, 2012 with Chen Xiao Wang – the current world leader and Grandmaster, dedicated to Shaolin Kung Fu for more than 60 years – with respect to the supervisory style Chen Taijiquan.

Interview on April 21, 2012 with Grandmaster Chen Hong Hi, a student of Grandmaster Chen Xiao Wang and descendent of Chen, devoted to the Chinese martial art of Kung Fu for more than 40 years, including being a multiple international winner in China in sets (forms) of katachi and in contact warfare [5].

Basic description of the announced Qigong techniques is given in the individual degrees of skill levels in Kung Fu (see below). With regard to it regarding to it a full description of these techniques is very difficult and beyond the scope of this paper, therefore these techniques are described only briefly (title and general theme that exercise). It is a technology-oriented mainly on relaxation, meditation, exercise manifest external forces Techniques “soft and hard power.” For a general idea and representation techniques of Qigong Kung Fu however, it is sufficient [6].

Results and Discussion

The structure of the training Shaolin Kung fu and Qigong in Kung fu

The training program at the Northern Shaolin Kung Fu School can be divided into several ascending levels. The methods of training are carefully arranged in a precise, clear Shaolin educational curriculum that highlights different aspects of the student's skills in different levels. Before a student can proceed to the next level of training, he/she must be able to handle all the requirements of the previous level with a high degree of competence. Every stage and its corresponding number of techniques and exercises are precisely defined so as to ensure the most effective training and to avoid an unnecessary “flood” of students. The school curriculum is based on five basic styles that mimic the attack and defense movements of a tiger, dragon, leopard, snake and crane. They are later supplemented by other styles, such as those of monkeys or praying, etc [7].

Official training is normally 3 times a week, initially for 2 and then later for 3 hours per session. Over time, the number of sessions per week increases, and the training structure is extended to weekend training units, the so-called basic and special seminars [5]. The granting of technical degrees is well-established and very sophisticated with respect to its details and demands (e.g. the highest level, master, is awarded by the most qualified and best experts of the school and the state with the possibility of a continental supervisor) [8-10].

Entry Level (9-12 months): Students train intensively in the basic skills [11]. The main content of the course is primarily training positions, movements and maneuvers, as well as physical fitness training, relaxation and stretching exercises, acrobatics, breathing, basic blocks against covering, punches and kicks, and simple combinations of basic techniques. This level consists of three basic sets (forms), basic exercises with a partner, a simple partner form, and

other preliminary exercises.

Initial level (about 1 year): Students are intensively taught basic partner exercises and sets. The emphasis is on accuracy, speed and power at this level more difficult partner sets are taught, which practice estimating distance, accuracy, coordination, and the timing of mastered actions. Students are introduced to the elementary techniques of weapon setups. Part of this level is the mastery of the fundamental techniques of CHIN NA (techniques of using levers and controlling the opponent). Sets are performed in groups and individually, with instructions in the use of their individual techniques. The block is completed by teaching the basic techniques of relaxation and meditation. Intensive development of physical fitness and motor skills is a must. At the pre-intermediate level there are Qigong exercises to develop internal energy, and training with some special and multi-purpose exercises (eg YI YING YIN, BA GUA ZHANG)[12-14].

Intermediate level (2 years): Students at this level are trained in more-specialized hand, weapon and partner sets (with the basic weapons – stick, saber, sword, spear, and later supplemented with weapons like the chain whip, three section staff, Halberd and double sword). At this level there is intensive training in pairs, in free fighting techniques, the techniques of CHIN NA, SHAN CHUEH (methods for knocking down and throwing), the use of strategy, partner exercises and the 18 techniques of LOHAN. Qigong, static positions and YANG GANG GONG (exercises for the external show of strength) are taught at the intermediate level [8].

Advanced level (3 years): Students at the advanced level are taught more technically difficult sets with a strong emphasis on position, concentration, rhythm and inner strength from training, observation, speed and hardness, and estimation including that of the timing of fights. The teaching of all internal techniques achieves significantly higher levels in all areas of Qigong. At this stage, for example, the techniques of Yin Rou Gong (techniques of “soft power”) and the application of techniques in controlled and free contact fighting are taught. Training in physical fitness, relaxation and stretching exercises are an essential part of all performance levels. Advanced students can teach beginners (Dlouhý, Dlouhá, Slezáček, Pokorný, Kuhnová, 2013).

Master level: At this level, students fully understand the difficulties of the school. They understand the fundamentals of Shaolin Kung Fu and are able to teach students at all levels in every aspect. At this level the difficult master and partner weapon sets are taught. Special emphasis is placed on practical fighting techniques and their applications, courage, commitment and inner strength. Qigong instruction concludes [8].

Special additional level: This level contains special hand, partner and weapon sets which are normally included in school curricula to complement and further hone students' skills to the master level. These include special sets and techniques of fighting with bare hands against one or more opponents with weapons [9]. Methods such as Dim Mak or Tieh Hsueh (dianxue Biqi) belong to the category of secret techniques intended only for students of advanced level and apply to all aspects - not only combative but also spiritual and moral [10].

Grandmaster (GM) level: This is quite an exceptional level in every area and aspect in a school of Kung Fu, which among other things entitles one to teach students the master qualities.

The philosophy of Shaolin Kung Fu and martial arts

In order to understand the essence of Shaolin Kung Fu as well as its relationship to combat sports, it is necessary first to briefly define Kung Fu and its underlying philosophy. The philosophy of Kung

Fu is inextricably linked to Chan-Buddhism, which was brought to the Shaolin monastery by Bodhidharma (Long, 2002). "Kung Fu" includes not only martial arts and care for physical fitness, but it also includes philosophical and medical aspects (Long, 2009). In China it became a national tradition (Turneber, 1992) [11].

Kung Fu means mastery, skill acquired with great effort over a long period of time. It does not apply directly only to martial arts, and therefore one who has devoted many years of learning, practice and the sharpening of skills so as to become an adept Kung Fu – Master -- therefore is often also called a "perfect man." Achieving master level in Kung Fu is a long, demanding process of difficult training which lasts about 10 years, and sometimes even longer [2].

In Western countries, the term 'Kung Fu' is almost exclusively associated with the martial arts. Today this term is favored by the majority of Chinese masters living here, to distinguish the real, traditional martial art of Kung Fu from the sport of Wu Shu, which was established at a time when the Chinese leadership had declared all schools of warfare to be unwholesome for society (Qing Dynasty 1644-1911). Some masters refused to submit and continued to teach martial arts in secret or in exile. Other masters chose to compromise. They created Wu Shu, a kind of Kung Fu without fighting, but with sets using a lot of acrobatics and movements that are performed only as strenuous physical exercise. The application didn't have to lose its military significance, but it could be publicly performed and taught [12].

It is evident that the meaning of the concept of Kung Fu has sometimes been understood only in vague terms. Therefore the term Shaolin Kung Fu is used to make the meaning more clear (it is also known as Shaolin Quan; quan means fist, thus it can be translated as Shaolin fist arts, Shaolin boxing, or Shaolin fist). For purposes of translation this has stabilized the meaning of the term, which most of the recognized masters of the world currently tend to use – i.e., "Kung Fu" with respect to "Shaolin Kung Fu" [13].

The purpose of Kung Fu then is not to prove one's superiority, for example, in a competition and thus gain popularity, or in battle by defeating all opponents. Rather it is practiced for the way of life it offers. It is not practiced for the results of the work, but philosophically speaking, for the work itself. Orthodox Shaolin Kung Fu denies the kind of competition typical of European sports. In Kung Fu the emphasis is not only on the perfection of true combat skills (which have been precisely and practically proven in many historical milestones), but also on a spiritual level, the perfection of ethics, humanity and deep philosophy, and forbids any sports activities of a competitive (commercial) character. That is the biggest difference between martial arts and combat sports, which currently include sporting forms of fighting and competitive methods for overcoming opponents [4]. Fighting with an enemy is, of course, an integral and very important part of traditional Shaolin Kung Fu. But the point is to refine the fighter to perfection during extremely hard but very sophisticated and systematic training, and it is not acted out in the form of a sports match in public (Oyama, 1966). The main purpose of the original Kung Fu is not a showdown with an enemy, but the gradual overcoming of oneself. This is also reflected in the philosophy of Kung Fu, which says that the novice must put learning to overcome and control himself and his pain first, before his desire to overcome another (eg a teacher of Shaolin students in China, in one of his interviews with the Shaolin monk Grandmaster Shi De Kai, says that if the novice cannot remain in the low position *ma bu*, where the angle between the calf and thigh is around 100 degrees – in karate this stance is similar to that of a rider on horseback, called *Šiko-dachi* or *kiba-dachi* – for at least 1 hour, there is no reason to even start the exercise!) [14-16].

Novices in Shaolin monasteries were strictly forbidden to perform

the original ten points in a public fight and show off their combat skills. For these reasons, Shaolin Kung Fu does not appear in the sports arena in the aforementioned forms of sports matches. Many can ask, then how the "China Cup" can approve these "rules?" The answer is, it's part of the tradition of orthodox Kung Fu. Schools and their novices met (according to the opportunities of the time), to present to each other their abilities and skills, including intensive, hard contact matches and Qigong exercises, in order that Kung Fu would continually be perfected and undergo the maximum limit of constructive reflection, thus ensuring the highest development and perfection of the Shaolin arts. Kung Fu is qualitatively historical – a fact that is unquestionably verified, because in the past Shaolin monks often had to face a variety of aggressive social oppressions and warlike conflicts, or be otherwise involved in them, helping, treating, etc. the persecuted, weak, injured – and thanks to that arose the legends of their demonstrated exceptional combat skills and physical abilities (discussion on October 17, 1998 with Chen Xiao Wang – the current world leader and Grandmaster, dedicated to Shaolin Kung Fu for more than 60 years – with respect to the supervisory style Chen Taijiquan).

This tradition is now represented by, for example, exhibitions which are under the auspices of renowned masters, and meetings of individual schools – from here, then, it is close to being named as the unofficial "championship." All these forms differ from sportingly conceived branches of the main objective (despite the emergence of various competitions in Kung Fu, the main orthodox philosophical line of Shaolin Kung Fu opposes it and is not in agreement with it), whose task it is to emphasize the originality and permanence of traditional martial arts, martial qualities, moral values and the spiritual levels of Shaolin Kung Fu (interview on April 21, 2012 with Grandmaster Chen Hong Hi, a student of Grandmaster Chen Xiao Wang and descendent of Chen, devoted to the Chinese martial art of Kung Fu for more than 40 years, including being a multiple international winner in China in sets (forms) of *katachi* and in contact warfare).

Nowadays, the meanings of terms such as success, quality and mastery are often distorted by the pragmatic-consumerism of contemporary society and its specifically value-oriented structure. One's own success, whether or not it has any source, let alone the means to achieve it, is the main criterion for social success (Nakayama, 1966). Function and social status are often brutally given superiority over deeper moral and human values, regardless of the consequences of such behavior. These egoistic value shifts are also reflected in the contemporary implementation of the idea "the sooner and the more the better – the best" (Ming, 1982).

This also corresponds with the reason why a large proportion of physically active society is oriented towards combat activities instead of commercial sports. There the probability of success and commercial value is clearly greater and much faster (than in just the martial arts), along with lower demands for a higher level of long-term voluntary moral qualities, which are thus hidden by their own fleeting feeling of success and excellence. And so, under a veneer of quick superficial success is concealed a latent threat to society as a whole: value anarchy and tyranny, a lack of moral values or self-reflection on one's values, achievement by any means and self-centered value opportunism – all threatening the nature of the very foundations of human society [15,16].

Since they have been around for millennia carefully concealed any information about Qigong in Shaolin Kung Fu (nature, content, structure and the effects of exercise to health – as well as combat), so today we have very little information about the nature of Qigong exercises. Even today it is evident effort to keep this secret.

It is therefore very little information available and the authors

who are willing and able to bring more specific and more detailed information on this issue. For these reasons, the possibilities of this study, therefore, very limited. Among the major authors and their studies in this field are currently mainly Urgel (2010), Frantzis (2013), Long (2011, 2013) and Wenwei Ou (2015) [17].

Conclusion

Shaolin Kung Fu is an orthodox martial art. Its training and structure are designed to precisely match the balance of yin and yang in accordance with its chan-Buddhist philosophy, and it comprehensively shapes a student's development (Kit, 1996). For purposes of self-improvement, it is a journey of human development that is of extremely high quality, intensity and sophistication. In terms of its content, meaning and philosophy Kung Fu is an excellent pursuit, but it is not intended as a focus for sports and sporting forms of competition.

Qigong is an elementary principle and enforceable essence of Kung-Fu. Qigong is specifically and elaborately pervades all phases of training and individual skill levels in Kung Fu. Without representation qigong and its multidisciplinary overlap would not kung fu nearly as efficient and pleasant as well as health benefits. Qigong has Kung Fu multidisciplinary overlaps as well as its undeniable health benefits. Without him it would not Kung-Fu nearly as effective, efficient, unique and beautiful.

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