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# the jmas newsletter

SHORINJI KEMPO:

ITS HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY AND TECHNIQUE



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\*\*\* REPORT ON THE SEPTEMBER 21, 1986 GENERAL MEETING \*\*\*

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SHORINJI KEMPO: ITS HISTORY  
PHILOSOPHY AND TECHNIQUE

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Our Society held its fourteenth General Meeting on September 21, 1986, at the Waseda University Gymnasium (Waseda Shin Budokan) from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M. Mr. Ellis Amdur, a founding member and former member of the Board, kindly accepted the task of serving as M.C. on very short notice. First, he introduced JMAS Vice President, Dr. John B. Hanson-Lowe, who presented a review of our June, 1986 General Meeting. He recalled various subjects related to the important role that modern concepts and methods of physical conditioning and "fitness training" can play in our martial arts training.

Next the M.C. introduced the topic of Shorinji Kempo, a Japanese budo form that is said to have its roots in the "Shaolin Temple" martial arts of China. Our main speakers were Sakuyama Yoshinaga sensei and Atsumi Shinichi sensei, two of today's most experienced instructors in Shorinji Kempo. Both sensei were fortunate to experience very long and direct relationships with the founder of Shorinji Kempo, So Doshin, having trained for many years under So at the art's Headquarters Temple on Shikoku Island. JMAS Member Mr. John Rogers did an outstanding job as interpreter for the presentation. Mr. Rogers also has a long training history and is active in Shorinji Kempo in the Tokyo area.

Our guests had rearranged their presentation, changing it somewhat from their original plan as announced in our last Newsletter. Mr. Rogers began with a reading of a short outline history of Shorinji Kempo in English. The two sensei then gave a demonstration of four embu. These are routines or series of techniques composed by the participants as a means of formally displaying the art. Next, they began their lecture, covering the history of Kempo. Here we heard some of the early background of the life of the founder So, and the path that lead him to develop the art which he named after the Chinese monastery fighting styles popularly known as "Shaolin Temple boxing". Much emphasis was placed on the meaning of the Kempo philosophy of life. This is especially important since, officially, Shorinji Kempo is recognized as a religious practice at its highest levels, and its administration is that of a religious order and not that of a sporting organization. After the main portion of the lecture was completed, the two guest speakers presented another series of demonstrations designed to break down the art and explain how it has been systematized in an orderly fashion for instruction. Those present were encouraged to take part by attempting to apply Kempo movements to their neighbor's wrist or body in order to "get a feeling for the techniques" of Kempo.

Unfortunately, due to various reasons, our speakers had decided not to introduce the new forms of "embu" which they have spent a long time in developing. The new embu combinations are said to be both innovative and unique enough to actually open up new directions for Kempo as a whole.

As is our custom, the events of the September General Meeting were closed after a question and answer period during which the two sensei graciously replied to enquiries from our audience.

SHORINJI KEMPO: ITS HISTORY, PHILOSOPHY AND TECHNIQUE

by  
Sakuyama Yoshinaga Sensei and Atsumi Shinichi Sensei

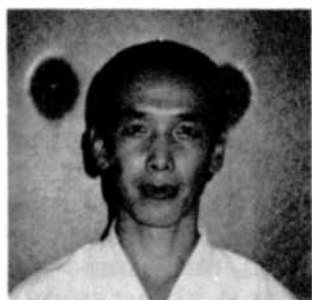
Interpreted by  
Mr. John Rogers  
(Transcribed by Jamie Redman and Arranged by Larry E. Bieri)

A CAPSULE HISTORY OF SHORINJI KEMPO

Presented by John Rogers

Like the statues of two Deva guardian kings that are traditionally located in front of Buddhist temples in Japan, Shorinji Kempo's origins lie in ancient India. There it was used by Buddhist followers as a method to vanquish evil and bring about justice. The famed monk Bodhidharma left his native India in the fifth century A.D. and travelled to Henan province in China where he settled at the Shaolin Temple and began to spread the true teachings of the Buddha. There he also taught a fighting art as a form of spiritual development, complimentary to *zazen*, seated meditation. Begun as a method of spiritual perfection, his art of **kempo** ( 拳法 , fist-method) began to take on the spirit of the times and gradually emphasized the martial aspects. This art was first known as **kalaripattu**, the fighting art of India, almost one thousand five hundred years ago and over the ages developed into the famous Shaolin **wushu**, ("Shaolin martial arts", **wushu** is the Chinese reading for *bujutsu*). Unfortunately, it also began to lose its significance as a means of personal development and degenerated into the present day martial arts of China.

In the late 1920s, a Japanese man named So Doshin set off for China in hopes of being able to help his people. So Doshin was to become the founder of Shorinji Kempo. In China, he had the opportunity to master and later become successor to one of the northern styles, the *Ii Ho Chaun*, or the "Righteous and Harmonious Fists" school, of Shaolin **wushu**. However, compared to the Shorinji Kempo of today, the techniques were few, unrefined, and in disarray. Moreover, they had lost all their religious significance. Therefore, So Doshin himself had no intention of introducing the art when he returned to Japan.



Mr. Sukuyama



Mr. Atsumi



Mr. Rogers

However, with the defeat of Japan in Manchuria in 1945, in the midst of severe depression, and under Communist rule, So realized that it was not politics, power, religious belief, or law that made the difference and influenced the shape of the future. It was, rather, the qualities and personalities of the people involved that made the real difference. With this in mind, he returned to Japan hoping to help rebuild his country by educating its people. Arriving in postwar Japan, he found that the Japanese people had lost their sense of unity and, in a way, their very will to live. In the midst of this chaos, So realized that the only way to rebuild Japan was to create a group of young people who had confidence, bravery, and compassion -- young people with spiritual strength, plus strong, healthy minds and bodies, who would work to build a new, peaceful Japan. Therefore, he began what he named "Kongo Zen" ( , gold-hard zen) in Tadotsu, a small town in Kagawa Prefecture in southern Japan, about 170 kilometers south of Osaka. His purpose was to teach a message of self-development and living in harmony with others, while making a positive contribution to society. At the center of this philosophy was the art of Shorinji Kempo, a way designed to unify the mind and the body, and which So had created out of the arts he had mastered during his stay in China.

Regretfully, the founder passed away in 1980 as the age of 69. 39 years after founding Shorinji Kempo and the philosophy of Kongo Zen. Currently, the essence of Shorinji Kempo as a method of spiritual development and harmony is preserved under the guidance of his daughter, current Chief Abbess of the Shorinji Temple and leader of some one million practitioners of Shorinji Kempo in Japan and around the world.

At this point, Sakuyama Sensei and Atsumi Sensei presented a fine demonstration of embu, the method of prearranged sparring and throwing practice designed as a way of displaying Kempo to the public. In Shorinji Kempo, there are no set kata training forms which are regularly practiced. Instead, the basic techniques are learned separately, and then the trainees are allowed to put them together in any combination they like for practice or demonstrations. This kind of training is called embu.

#### HISTORY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SHORINJI KEMPO Presented by Sakuyama Yoshinaga Sensei

You have just seen a demonstration of embu, and the techniques of Shorinji Kempo. While they may have been very interesting for you, I would now like to give you an overview of what Shorinji Kempo is really all about.

### Ancient History

From recent research on budo in Japan, it has become clear that the roots of Japanese martial arts go back to China and some, to a certain extent, go all the way back to India. Since this history spans some one thousand seven hundred years, it is hard to say with any certainty exactly which arts came to Japan from India and which were directly imported from China. Still I would like to share with you our own understanding of our history. We trace Shorinji Kempo back about one thousand five hundred years to the Shaolin Temple in China which is famous for the martial arts. There is a legend which tells us that the Indian monk, Bodhidharma (菩提達磨, see insert), walked from India to China. Although some claim he was a legendary figure, many scholars accept this theory and the majority of Japanese scholars consider him to have been a historical person. Not only was he the founder of Zen Buddhism, but he is said to have taught a martial art to the Buddhist monks as a method of spiritual development and self-defense. This, too, we in Shorinji Kempo accept as historical fact.



Bodhidharma

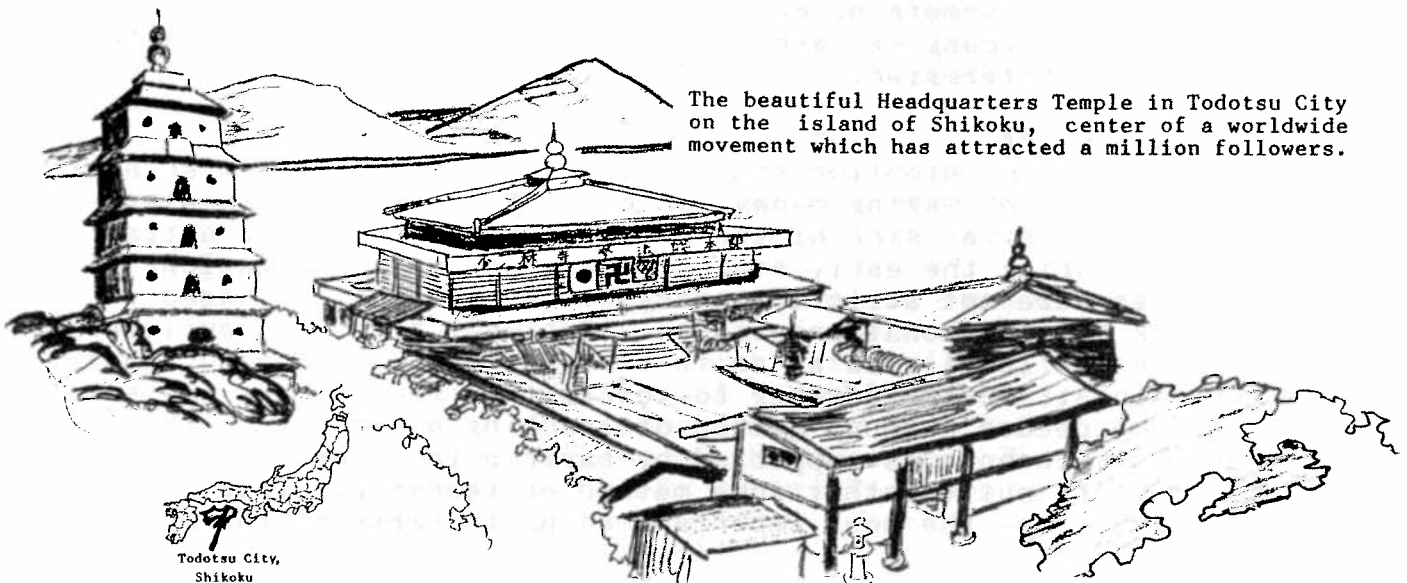
In recent research, the British Broadcasting Corporation has confirmed that there was an ancient martial art in India dating back some five thousand years. They further discovered that the center of this art was very, very near to the village which is said to be the birthplace of Bodhidharma. This and other evidence seems to indicate that Bodhidharma did exist, travel to China and transmit a martial art there after his arrival. Over the years, the art came to be spread to many different parts of China, diversifying into a wide variety of martial styles, the "chuan" (拳, "fists"). Since throughout the world, every culture possesses its own, unique forms of martial or fighting arts, we can imagine that China, too, had arts before the arrival of this Indian influence. Thus, there may well be arts or elements of arts in China that do not trace their history back to Bodhidharma or India. These would be the truly indigenous martial arts of China.

### So Doshin in China

As followers of Shorinji Kempo, although we are interested in the technical history of our art, it is not our main concern. For us, our art starts with a single Japanese man who was sent to China by the Japanese army on a secret mission. Although he was very young at the time, his job with the army was a very important one. He lived in China for seventeen years and during that time had many opportunities to see and study Chinese martial arts and to meet with the masters of these arts. This young Japanese man was later to return to Japan and found the art now known as Shorinji Kempo. His name was So Doshin.

In China, for various reasons rooted in Chinese culture, the practice of martial arts was not open. There were periods in Chinese history when the arts were suppressed. For example, the Boxer Rebellion was an uprising of a particular group of martial artists and shows that they were often involved in political disputes that brought them into conflict with the government. Nonetheless, while he was in China, So Doshin had the chance to study many of the arts and became a successor

to one of the styles. At that time, the techniques were not arranged and clearly organized as they are now. While in China, So went to many masters and studied their particular techniques, gathering them together. While this is important, I think rather than discuss the technical side of So's art, it's more important to look at the real reason that Shorinji Kempo was started here in Japan. This is because the basis of Shorinji Kempo does not lie in its technical content, but rather in the philosophy which was born out of the experiences which So had in wartime China and after his return to Japan.



During the war, So was involved in various underground activities in China for the Japanese army. After the defeat in 1945, So decided to return to Japan where he found the people suffering from very hard times. So discovered that although world events are influenced by war and politics and economics, all of these factors are in turn influenced by the nature of the people involved. Through this, he realized that a peaceful world could only be created by creating better people. This was a certain type of enlightenment, based on his observations of the world around him.

#### Postwar Japan

Back in Japan, the defeat had so completely discredited former ideals and beliefs that children could no longer believe their parents and teachers, nor accept other symbols of authority. Young people became apathetic, and demoralized. The adults, meanwhile, tended to give themselves over to hedonism, living by an "enjoy the present, forget about tomorrow" attitude. Of course not all Japanese people suffered this way, but it was a trend of the times.

So realized then that the political unit called "Japan" had lost the war, not the Japanese people. He realized that each individual was not defeated, only the national entity. As long as people were alive, they were not defeated, he thought, recalling his old teacher's words. He felt a great desire to encourage individual people, especially the young. However, times were hard and people had little inclination to listen to someone preach about how they should run their lives. So

decided on a different approach. He openly challenged the young people in his area to a fight. When the young men took up the challenge, and tried to strike So, he would use his techniques to throw them to the ground. He would then scold them, "You don't even know how to fight. If you don't want to listen to what I want to say, that's fine. But at least come to my place and I'll show you how to fight". There was no actual dojo building at that time. He simply taught at his house. In this way, he caught the attention of the local young people and came up with the idea of using the arts which he had learned in China as a medium of conveying something deeper. So had been very interested in fighting arts as a young man and he assumed that other young people would be equally interested.

#### Establishing the Art

Initially, he had no intention of teaching a fighting art per se nor did he see it as a way of making money, or opening a chain of schools. He considered the physical side of the art as a kind of bait to attract people. Thus during the early stages, there was no organization. Even the techniques were not strictly arranged. Everything was based completely on So's personal experience. But over time, So developed a reputation in the local area as an interesting man and a good fighter. This helped in attracting further followers. As the numbers increased, So realized he needed a sound method of teaching based on an organized system of basic techniques supported by basic principles. At the same time, he tried to put together some method of teaching. This forced him to consider what was the most important thing in terms of the philosophy that people lived by.

While in China, he had had a number of important experiences and after considering them, he decided that the teachings of the Buddha were the most appropriate for his ends. So decided to use the teachings of the Buddha as the basic core philosophy of his art. The techniques became a method of teaching a philosophy.

So had studied Japanese martial arts as well and he combined these with what he had learned in China. It is important to understand that Shorinji Kempo is not the same as the Chinese arts associated with the Shaolin Temple. Of course, there is some technical influence but the purpose is quite different.

In Shorinji Kempo, the purpose is to cooperate with your partner in order to create a single entity, a form in harmony with the two people training. This was probably the first time that anything like this had been done. Of course, in this approach there exists certain problems. If you don't practice properly, there is a danger that our embu will become something like what you see in the martial arts movies, a meaningless show. On the other hand, if you rely only on strength the art itself degenerates into violence. This is useless in trying to build people and develop their spirit. In Shorinji Kempo, then, you do not train by yourself, you always train under a teacher, following a special program. It is impossible to learn Shorinji Kempo from a book or by a correspondence course. The physical techniques are not the art itself. The teachings of the Buddha form its core teachings and so it is the life-style of Shorinji Kempo that is important. In order to train in Kempo, you have to change your life-style.

Many of you may have been interested in aspects of Shorinji Kempo other than its philosophy, but for dedicated followers of Shorinji Kempo, it is this philosophical content that is the true essence of the art. We feel that this philosophy is not only the cultural roots of Kempo, it is in fact the center point and focus of our intention. Thus, when asked why Shorinji Kempo was started, the above explanation is our usual answer.

In Japan, there are many, many martial arts and So had no intention of creating merely another form of martial technique. The basic way of thinking of Shorinji Kempo, and the founder's basic thought on this was that he wanted to teach a way of life that would attract like-minded people and create a group dedicated to building a peaceful Japan. From there he hoped that his movement would spread to build a peaceful Asia and eventually a peaceful world. This was So Doshin's vision and forms the basic goal of all true Shorinji Kempo practitioners.

#### Goals of Kempo

Today there are many sporting organizations and even martial arts organizations which place primary emphasis on competition and winning prizes. Many of the martial arts which were originally too dangerous to become sports have been sportified by organizing rules, competitions, and prizes. However when the competition is over and someone has won a prize, what effect does that have on that person's life? What has been contributed to society as a whole? Certainly, these sports organizations understand the common human desire to win, to struggle and to be strong. But what is the importance of such success?



Shorinji Kempo patch

You may have noticed that the Shorinji Kempo uniform has a crossed emblem, called manji in Japanese, on the left lapel. This is the symbol of Shorinji Kempo. It is an old Indian symbol which was adopted by Buddhism. Representing harmony, it dates back well before it was rudely co-opted by the Nazi movement. We wear it as a representation of harmony between apparently opposite principles or things. The vertical and the horizontal lines that make up the main cross work together in harmony to form this symbol. They represent dichotomies -- left and right, up and down, male and female, plus and minus -- all of the apparently opposing principles found in the universe. In this symbol, they are unified and cooperate to form a single unified form in spinning motion.

In Shorinji Kempo, we have a motto which goes, "Jita-kyoraku" ( 自他共楽 ) and literally means "Mutual pleasure between the self and others". This can be seen as a major pillar of our philosophy. It means having happiness together, rather than gaining happiness by defeating others or at others' expense. Nor does it mean leaning on or relying on other people for one's happiness. In order to not have to rely on other people, we have another slogan which says "Jiko-kakuritsu" ( 自己確立 ). This encourages us to work on "building up ourselves", on establishing within, the foundation for being a productive and happy human being.



### Shorinji Kempo Today

Next, I'd like to add a little about Shorinji Kempo today. In Japan alone there are about two thousand branches of Shorinji Kempo around the country. Our dojo are called **do-in** (道陰), a special term which hints at the religious content of the practice that takes place there since the character "in" is often used to indicate a monastery or convent.

It may be interesting for you if I were to use a little time to describe a typical practice session that takes place at these do-in. Although there may be some variation between the different do-in, Shorinji Kempo has a basically standardized form of training used during every practice session. Practice is usually held in the evenings beginning at about 7:00 and runs until about 9:00. In most do-in, students train two or three nights a week. Training begins with a period of seated meditation. We call this **chin-kon gyo** (鎮魂業, calm-spirit practice). It is meant to foster a settled mind and spirit, and the proper attitude for Kempo training. Next, the entire group practices basic techniques, the **kihon** (基本) which we consider to be the building blocks of more advanced movements. Then comes practice of actual techniques.

Shorinji Kempo encompasses over six hundred different techniques. With so much to learn it is necessary to have some organized approach. This is provided by the **kamoku hyo** (科目表), a specified, detailed program that sets out what you will learn on what day and at what level. It spans a training career of about 10 years and takes the trainee up to the level of fifth dan. Of course, this is only a ten-year program and anyone who really wants to truly master the techniques must invest a lifetime.

During each training session, the group is divided according to rank into different sections. At the beginning of class, everyone practices together doing the most basic movements and then the basic techniques, moving on through the curriculum. At each progressively higher stage, those who have not yet reached that stage, break off from the main body and go off to repeat the techniques that they have learned up to that point. In this way, everyone practices all of the techniques that they have learned. During this time, the trainees also work on their embu performances or they may practice one of two types of **randori** (乱取り), "free" and "limited", during which they train for more spontaneous application of basics. These activities occupy the main part of the class. When the highest level trainees have completed their workouts, the class moves into the next stage, which is physical conditioning including various strengthening exercises. Then the class finishes.

### Ranking Systems

Let me now close with some comments on the ranking systems in Shorinji Kempo. There are three separate systems used. One is called the **bukai** (武階, martial rank) system of kyu and dan ("white and black belt") grades. This system is used to grade the individual's technical performance. Next we have another system called **hokai** (法階, the doctrine-rank). This method is designed to evaluate the spiritual and intellectual development of the trainee, although it does have some technical content. Finally, we have a somewhat unique and special form of rank which is the **sokai** (僧階, priesthood-rank). These are the actual rankings within the priesthood. They are, of course, a

completely voluntary part of Shorinji Kempo but sokai ranking is open to anyone who is qualified. In order to open a do-in, however, one must have a priesthood, or sokai, rank.

At this point, our speakers began to prepare for their second demonstration. While doing so, they pointed out the interesting features of their training uniform, the hoi (法衣, a priest's robe). John Rogers explained that the heavy looking belt is actually very soft and flexible, and serves to pad the back and the hips during breakfalls and rolls.

### TECHNICAL ARRANGEMENT OF THE SHORINJI KEMPO SYSTEM Presented by Atsumi Shinichi Sensei

There are three broad categories of technique in Shorinji Kempo. They may be outlined as follows.

#### GO-HO, 剛法, "HARD METHOD"

These include the punching, kicking, and blocking techniques seen in Shorinji Kempo and often thought of as karate-like actions.

#### JU-HO, 柔法, "SOFT METHOD"

This group covers the throws, locks and pins, freeing techniques and other moves often associated with jujutsu.

#### SEI-HO, 整法, "HEALING METHOD"

Here we have the most advanced group that involve methods of resuscitation, bone adjustment, and the like.

These three groups of techniques interact in much the same way as the three forms of the hands used in the universally known childrens' game of "Stone, Scissor, and Paper", all three combining to form a continuum that makes Shorinji Kempo a single, unified and integrated system.

For purposes of teaching, these are further divided into subgroups. For example, the go-ho are broken down into jo-dan, chu-dan and ge-dan -- attacks to the head and face, the midsection, and the legs and groin areas of the body, respectively. Each of these is then broken down into what types of attacks are possible at that level of the body and our responses are trained to these possibilities in an organized and systematized fashion. First, we learn to defend the head and face, then the torso and so on. The same approach is used for the other two types of techniques.

Ju-ho techniques are those that most clearly display the Buddhist origins of Shorinji Kempo because they teach methods of defensive response to aggression. In Shorinji Kempo, we are not allowed to attack first, and so it is necessary to have methods to defend and escape without totally destroying an adversary, as is likely if one only knows aggressive punching and kicking methods. This is considered an essential part of the art from a philosophical, as well as a purely technical, standpoint. Ju-ho freeing techniques, throws, pins, and locks provide this content. They also give training in the use of the body's natural levers and teach us to make the most of any movement through rational use of strength. Moreover, ju-ho is considered important for yet another reason -- the physical contact between the trainees that is

possible when one person has grasped the other. The concrete, physical interaction is vital in learning to "get a feeling" for the other person or to "feel sympathy" for others. It heightens the mutuality of practice and encourages the trainees to learn to work together in mutual cooperation and pleasure as is idealized in our motto "Jita kyoraku".

Of course the value of sei-ho in any dangerous fighting system is obvious. Another aspect to be mentioned is that most of the ju-ho and go-ho techniques make use of the body's weak, "pressure points" (kyusho, 急所), at some point in their application. This is important and often overlooked in arts that stress only the use of power. It is also



◀ 1. Using a traditional prayer-like gesture, Mr. Sakuyama and Mr. Atsumi greet each other in a show of reverential gratitude that is performed before and after any Shorinji Kempo training. Here they display the hoi, a priest's habit that is worn by more advanced members over their normal karate-style uniform.

3. Rounder, more flowing responses to grasping attacks characterize the ju-ho part of Kempo. These "soft principle" or "flexible method" techniques include joint twisting and locking, pinning, and throwing actions. Here in response to a wrist grab, Mr. Atsumi first stabilizes his balance by fixing his arm to his center. Delivering a flick to the eyes enables him to move into the arm bar shown in the last photo. The lock attacks a nerve center at the back of the elbow as well as the joint itself. Use of pressure points (kyusho) is emphasized to amplify the effectiveness of techniques in both Kempo methods. Advanced students eventually study the healing applications of kyusho and similar "acupuncture points" through special seminars in sei-ho methods. ▶

part of the relevance between the sei-ho portion of the curriculum and the other more combatively oriented techniques.

The simple basic moves and tactics taught in this tiered fashion are then combined into short sequences for the purpose of training. Eventually the trainee will begin to string together a range of techniques and movements from the go-ho and ju-ho in order to construct the embu forms which are usually displayed before the public. It is important to realize that these three subunits are all integral parts of a single Kempo, although the sei-ho is taught only at special seminars to more advanced practitioners.

2. The synthetic nature of Shorinji Kempo is clear from its broad ranging technical content. Movements include straight line or percussive actions like the punching and kicking associated with the so-called "hard styles" of Shaolin wushu. These are taught in the go-ho portion of Shorinji Kempo, embodying this "hard principle" or "hard method".



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## QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON SHORINJI KEMPO

**Question:** You mentioned briefly that there was some Japanese martial arts influence on Shorinji Kempo. Would you explain a little about what elements of Shorinji Kempo came from traditional Japanese arts?

**Answer:** I can't answer in concrete terms, but the founder had studied jujutsu, kendo and judo. More specifically, I heard that So's grandfather, So Shigeto, was an instructor of these three arts. It was in Fusen Ryu, a style of grappling taught by his grandfather, that So Doshin studied jujutsu. Thus the founder had learned a little about the techniques of jujutsu. He was very critical of them. So told this story about his grandfather. One day the old man appeared with a terrible bruise around his neck. When questioned by So, his grandfather explained that he had been practicing by hanging himself. He said that this form of training would make him more resistant to the strangle hold techniques used in jujutsu. So Doshin felt that, while some people might be interested in this sort of thing, for him it appeared to be pure nonsense.

Here is another story that occurred many years later, after Shorinji Kempo had become popular. A student approached So and said that he had learned what to do when someone punches or kicks, but this young man wondered what he was supposed to do if someone had a pistol or a gun. Since So was the acknowledged master, the student apparently expected to be taught some sort of secret technique to dodge bullets. So's reply was to raise his hands in the universal gesture of surrender. He then explained that if the attacker has a knife or a club, you have a chance, but if the person has a gun, there is nothing to do but give up. The student persisted, however, and asked what to do if the person should pull the trigger even though he had indicated his resignation. So said that the natural human response would be to die. This somewhat comic story still contains a deep comment on the philosophy of Shorinji Kempo. The meaning is that as a human being, we should do everything we can under whatever circumstances we may find ourselves. However, when or if we reach a point where nothing can be done, then we should accept the fact and accept our fate.

There seems to be no end to the number of stories that we have about So Doshin and there is much to learn from each of them.

**Q:** Much of what you displayed and explained seems to be very similar to things I have seen in jujutsu or aikido. How are Shorinji Kempo techniques different?

**A:** We are not jujutsu trainees and so we should not comment on what they do. Of course, the human body is a finite system with only a limited range of possible movements and weak points. It is natural that similarities should exist between fighting or defensive systems. For a weaker person to defeat a stronger one it will be necessary to make use of this kind of knowledge. Probably, the principles are very old and may even be universal to mankind. Similarities are natural.

Q: I seem to recall seeing a demonstration about 10 years ago of Shorinji Kempo techniques with a long staff. Do they still exist?

A: We have what is called the **shaku-jo den** ( 錫杖伝 ), a series of techniques using the two meter long staff often carried by Buddhist monks and topped by a metal head with a number of loose-fitting rings forged through it. These are still practiced, although they are not a part of the usual curriculum. They are considered to be very advanced and are transmitted only to top teachers.

There are many forms of weapons arts in Japan, as you know. In fact, weapons training is very interesting and exciting; so much so that it is very easy to lose sight of why one is training. In Shorinji Kempo, we are most concerned with the personalities and spirits of our trainees. Thus, the personal interaction that is possible in ju-ho training, for instance, is much more important to reaching the goals laid out in our art.

Q: Are the sei-ho techniques taught as a part of the regular training?

A: There are four different groups of practices in sei-ho. One is very similar to chiropractic medicine. Thus you can see that healing and injuring are separated by a very thin line. Often the same vital point can be used to cause injury or induce health merely by applying pressure to it from a different angle. There are resuscitation methods as well. These and the rest of sei-ho are not taught in the general classes, but through special seminars at the Headquarters.

In this regard, So Doshin had a bad heart and was rather in despair about his condition while in China. One of his teachers noticed this and asked about the problem. When So explained his ailment, the teacher scolded him for his depression saying, "as long as a human has life, he will never die". That teacher then treated So and taught him how to use these sei-ho methods. Thus we know that sei-ho is part of the art that came from China. Doctors had not expected So to live for more than a year or two after his condition was noticed and, indeed, So was plagued by his bad heart all his life. Often he had his students use sei-ho on him when he had a relapse. He lived to the age of 69, which attests to the effectiveness of the methods which he taught.

自他共楽

"jita-kyoraku"



自己確立

"jiko-kakuritsu"

So Doshin  
Founder of Shorinji Kempo  
1911 - 1980

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FEATURES

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SO DOSHIN -- Historical and Biographical Background Brief

Compiled by  
Larry E. Bieri, Editor

The founder of Shorinji Kempo has long been known by his Chinese-style name, So Doshin. But, as a native of Japan, he was born with a Japanese name and background. It may be useful to look at the historical situation surrounding So's early life, and to briefly present some facts about him from the days he became known for Shorinji Kempo.

According to Donn F. Draeger's Modern Bujutsu and Budo, So Doshin was born Nakano Michiomi in Okayama Prefecture in 1911. His father, a customs officer, died when he was young and Michiomi moved to Manchuria to live with his grandfather. This was significant for his later life.

Here, some historical background may be useful. During the 40 year period from the Russo-Japanese War (1904 - 05) through World War II, Japan was politically and militarily active on the Asian Continent. At the time of Nakano's youth, Japan controlled Manchuria through a puppet warlord regime, a remnant of political maneuvers for control over continental territory that had been growing since Japan defeated the Czar in 1905. Japan had also gained concessions like the enclave around Port Arthur, and Japanese people in general tended to feel that effective Japanese control over Manchuria was a natural recompense for the 100,000 lives lost during the war with Russia. Korea's becoming a Japanese colony in 1910 further strengthened Japan's Manchurian claims, since it meant there were large numbers of Japanese "Imperial subjects" living in Manchuria, mostly Koreans. The entire area had tremendous economic importance to Japan and was viewed as Japan's lifeline on the continent.

Meanwhile, the Japanese army, working to establish itself as a de facto independent power in northeast China, was acting more and more without reference or concern for the Tokyo government's policies or directives. The generals established local armies in areas under Japanese control, like the Japanese Kwangtung Army, and were actively working with pro-Japanese, and right-wing factions to expand Japanese control over other parts of China. Japanese capital investment in Manchuria accounted for 75% of all foreign investment there. Most of this went into the South Manchurian Railway Corporation which had become a major vehicle for Japanese activities in northeastern China. The army's independent policies overtook this railroad with the so-called "Manchurian Incident" of September, 1931. As a pretense to starting open war with China, the Japanese generals schemed to have a bomb planted under the tracks near Mukden. The explosion was blamed on the Chinese and the Japanese army responded with a full-scale attack against Chinese forces in that city. World War II in Asia had begun.

Draeger states that Nakano Michiomi's grandfather worked for the Southern Manchurian Railway. If so, contacts made there might explain how the younger Nakano could have become involved in undercover activities in northern China on behalf of the Japanese military and certain pro-Japanese organizations. It was during his wanderings in northern China in the late 1920s and the 1930s that Nakano gained his experience with Chinese fighting arts.

Political events had a great influence on people prominent in the development of the modern Japanese martial arts during the 20th century. Without trying to imply any ulterior motives, one can speculate on what sort of connections may have been involved behind the scenes, considering the complexities of the political situation in those days.

In 1924, aikido's Ueshiba Morihei traveled to Manchuria and Mongolia with Deguchi Wanisaburo of the Omoto religion in order to establish an utopian religious community there. With the cooperation of other new religious sects in Korea and northern China, peace was to radiate outward to span the globe based on Deguchi's ideas of "Imperial Way" (Kodo) Shinto, and his personal insights into the spirit world. Considering that Deguchi was on parole at the time for crimes against the state, it is rather surprising that he, Ueshiba and the other members of their group were able to get out of the country. Once on the Asian mainland, they had "contacts" that made it possible to wander around relatively freely and they actually got as far as Mongolia. There they became embroiled in the dangerous conflicts raging between warlord armies and were captured. Japanese government officials only barely saved them from execution and finally had them repatriated. Similarly, Nakano Michiomi was able to move freely around Northern China up to World War II.

Nakano returned to Japan in 1946, and Draeger states that he then began to study the Hakko Ryu, a modern Japanese jujutsu. Hakko Ryu was founded in 1938 by Okuyama Yoshiji. Okuyama based this art on his studies under Matsuda Hosaka of Daito Ryu jujutsu. The Budo Ryu-ha Daiji-ten, an encyclopedic listing of martial traditions compiled by Watatani Kiyoshi, records that Matsuda was awarded an Instructor's License in Daito Ryu in 1928. Thus it would seem that Nakano had considerable exposure to the type of jujutsu techniques taught by Takeda Sokaku of Daito Ryu, and now often referred to as "aiki-jujutsu". This connection helps to clarify the question of outward similarities between the ju-ho techniques of Shorinji Kempo and the joint locking and other techniques found in Daito Ryu and in the aikido of Ueshiba Morihei, who was also a student of Daito Ryu (see JMAS Newsletter, Vol. 1, No. 2 and Vol. 3, No. 4).

Getting away from purely technical concerns, it is clear that some Japanese people did hold a universalistic view of mankind and world peace well before 1945, however nationalistically it may have been defined. Even the official militaristic platform after 1932 was one of unifying Asia for the sake of peace and "mutual prosperity". The defeat in 1945 somehow resulted in a major shift of emphasis, or perhaps a reinterpretation of these ideas on a grander scale. By the early 1950s, Nakano, then known as So Doshin, as well as Ueshiba and a number of other budo teachers were promoting their respective arts and religious ideas with the goal of improving the spiritual state of all mankind.



## THE SONGSHAN SHAOLIN MONASTERY -- BIRTHPLACE OF SHAOLIN WUSHU

by  
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For the benefit of our readers I would here like to offer a short but concise introduction to the Songshan Shaolin Monastery where Shaolin Wushu originated and from whence the Shorinji Kempo of Japan is said to derive.

It is commonly thought that on the Chinese mainland only the Songshan Shaolin Monastery concerned itself with Shaolin martial arts but this is not correct. Historical documents state that two others also existed and still may be seen today. These are the Quanzhou Shaolin Monastery, located on the outskirts of Quanzhou in Fujian Province on the coast of the East China Sea, and the Honglong Shaolin Monastery, situated at the foot of Mount Zigai in the northwest of Jizian County, Hebei Province, on the North China Plain.

The Songshan Shaolin Monastery, the oldest of the three, was first constructed in the 19th year (495 AD) of the reign of Emperor Xiaowen (Taihe) of the Northern Wei Dynasty. Located in Dengfeng County, Henan Province, Central China, at the western foot of the Songshan Mountains (Central Mountains), it was not only the birthplace of "kung fu", but more importantly, the stronghold of the Chan (Zen) sect of Buddhism, one of the strongest of the ten sects of this religion in China. Once during the rule of Emperor Wendi this monastery underwent a name change when it was called Zhihu Monastery. It was not until the Tang Dynasty (618 - 907) that its original name was restored.

The Songshan Mountains comprise of two main mountain groups which are located about 8.5 kms apart. In the east are 36 peaks of the Taishi Mountains, and the west, the 36 peaks of the Shaoshi Mountains.

Because of its terrain and geographical features Henan Province was always viewed as one of the most strategically important areas of China. Control of this province meant not only control of Central China but also the whole of China itself. Further, the Songshan Mountains also offered a naturally strategic command over Henan Province by dominating the passes between Kaifeng (the ancient city of Bianliang) which lies to the east and served as the ancient capital of the five dynasties, and Luoyang which lies to its west and was the ancient capital of the nine dynasties.

The Songshan Monastery is chronicled as having been ravaged by three major fires as a result of military actions. The first was in the Sui Dynasty (590 - 620), the next in the period of Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty (1644 - 1911), and the third, was during the early years of the Chinese Republic. During this latter conflagration the monastery is said to have underwent its greatest destruction, burning for 45 days and completely destroying 16 halls and temples, and valuable sutra collections, together with the block-printed history of the monastery and many ceremonial implements.

History was not always dark for this monastery, though. It thrived and prospered most during the Tang Dynasty. At that time the monastery was authorised by Emperor Taizong to maintain a contingent of 500 soldier-monks, and over 1,000 monkhood-initiated followers. The land and property amassed by

that age included more than 2,000 acres of cultivated land, and more than 1,000 terraces and towers. During this period the monks were given total freedom in practicing the martial arts, as well as other liberties.

On visiting the Songshan Shaolin Monastery today, one first passes through the main entrance, called the Mountain Gate. This was not a part of the original plans but was added during the 13th year (1735) of the reign of Yongzheng of the Qing Dynasty. Written high above the gate, in gold Chinese characters is "Shaolin Monastery" (少林寺, read as "Shorinji" in Japanese) in the brush strokes of the Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty. This gate stands before one of the Shaolin Monastery's natural defences, Yu An (Imperial Desk) Peak, the main peak of the Shaoshi range. Outside of the Mountain Gate the monastery is ringed by two enclosures.

Behind the gate is a broad passageway layed of bricks, intended for persons of distinction. It is sided by two smaller horse-ways which were used by servants and attendants. Irregularly erected on the lawn separating these major and minor walkways, is the Stone Tablet Forest. Here, over 50 stone tablets were erected during the Tang and other dynasties. Each is inscribed with calligraphy by the most outstanding calligraphers of their day. "The Stone Tablet of the History of the Shaolin Monastery" summarises the complete history of the Shaolin Monastery from its establishment to the 27th generation leader of the Chan sect.

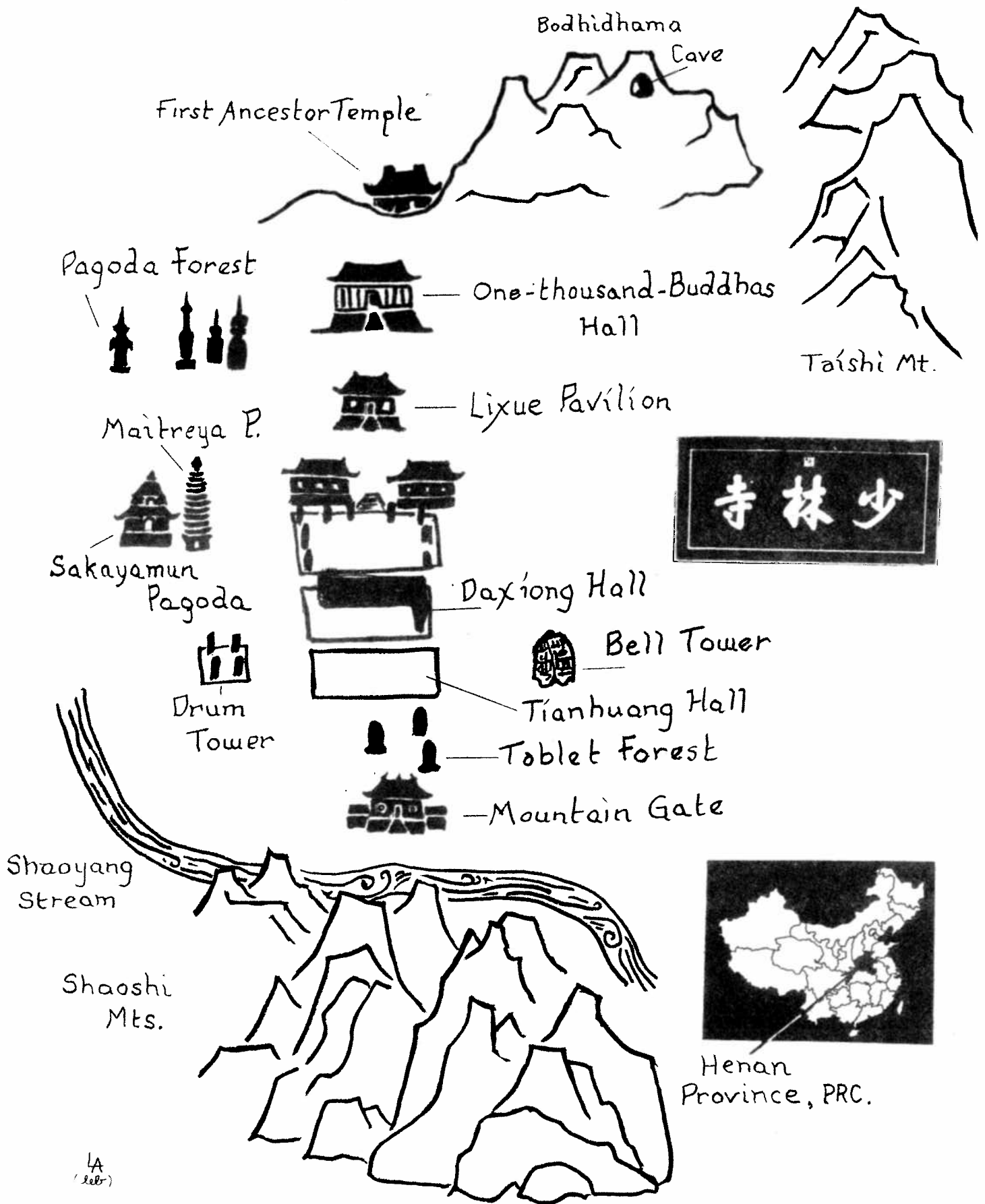
About 50 metres to the north of the Stone Tablets, a flight of steps leads onto the ruins of Tianhuang Hall, which was the most magnificent building in the whole monastery complex before it was burnt to the ground in 1928 by Shi Yousan during the Chinese Revolution. Now only twenty-six foundation stones remain. Here too are remnants of the Bell Tower on the east side and the Drum Tower on the west. Both of these towers, built in 1300, stood the same height. When their signals were sounded they could be heard 15 kms away. Set in a bamboo grove to the west of the Drum Tower stand two pagodas dedicated to the creator of Buddhism, Sakyamuni. These are the Maitreya Pagoda and the Sakya Pagoda.

To the north of the Tianhuang Hall, through a grove of trees and up some steps, are the ruins of the Daxiong or Main Hall of the Shaolin Monastery. This was also destroyed in 1928. Some of the artifacts still exhibited give us an idea of the scale of operations that was once normal daily routine. An iron cauldron casted in 1576 measures 91 cms in height, 165 cms in diameter, and 3 cms in thickness. Weighing 650 kilograms, it was regarded as a "small" cauldron for cooking vegetables. The stone mill used by the monks to grind flour needed three mules to rotate it and could process 500 kgs of grain per day.

The ruins of Vihara, the Buddhist Scripture Library, lies to the north of the Daxiong Hall, at the top of a flight of stairs. Destroyed by fire in 1928, it was a depository for precious Buddhist documents and sutras, and held such artifacts as a slab of stone depicting Bodhidharma's sitting shadow.

North of Vihara, is the Abbot's Chamber. It was also known as the Guest's Chamber and the Dragon Chamber. Houses around the courtyard were the residences of the monks. Further to the north, is the Qing Dynasty Bodhidharma Pavilion, also called the Lixue (Standing in the Snow) Pavilion. It houses images of Bodhidharma and his disciple Hui Ke.

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At the end of the Imperial Avenue leading north from the Bodhidharma Pavilion is the One-Thousand-Buddha Hall. Standing at the highest point in the monastery it was first constructed in 1588 and rebuilt in 1733. It is the largest hall on the premises and was built on a platform measuring over one meter in height. The inside, the back, east and west walls are covered by immense frescos measuring a total area of 300 square meters. These frescos preserve actual scenes of Shaolin martial arts. Here too, one finds four rows of depressions sunk to a depth of 20 cms. The 24 pairs of tracks are spaced about one meter apart and were worn into the stone floor by the footwork training of generations of monks. Leading off from the One-Thousand-Buddha Hall are perhaps what can be described as two of the most mysterious places in the monastery. These are the Baiyi (White Robe) Hall on the east side and the God of Earth Hall on the west.

The Baiyi Hall is also known as the Hall of Martial Arts, and the Goddess of Mercy Hall because of an image of this goddess enshrined here. Built in the Qing Dynasty, it consists of five sections. On the walls are many frescos of martial arts training, and fighting scenes and battles. On the southern wall are drawings of monks practicing wushu exercises and sparring in pairs, while the scene on the northern wall is about their weapons practice. Such weapons as the broadsword, spear, sword, and halberd are featured. The back wall frescos record other events, including two legends of the "martial monks" of Songshan Monastery.

Within the monastery's boundaries are three temples. Of these, the one of most historical value sits on a hill to the west and is called the First Ancestor Temple. Constructed in commemoration of Bodhidharma, it includes a main hall, a One-Thousand-Buddha Hall and pavilions on either side. Built in 1126, it is the oldest wooden structure in Henan Province.

Located about three hundred meters west near the Shaoyang stream which runs around the monastery, the Forest of Pagodas faces south towards the Yu An (Emperor's Desk) Peak. It is the burial place for the successive generations of the monastery's abbots. To its west is the Second Ancestor Temple, and to its north, are the First Ancestor Temple and the Bodhidharma Cave. The pagodas average 15 meters in height and have either a three, five or seven storey configuration. There are more than 200 pagodas preserved at the Shaolin Monastery ranging from 791 AD to 1803. It is one of the largest pagoda forests in China.

Even today Shaolin martial arts are practised and it is said that open challenges are still accepted during demonstrations and meets held in the temple ground. Despite the government's nationalization of wushu for diplomatic purposes, it is hoped that in the country, the old arts and ways of training are being carried on in a more quiet but more traditional manner.

The major reference source used in this article was, "Shaolin Kung-fu" written by Ying Zi and Weng Yi, translated by Wan Siu Yin, and published by Kingsway International Publications Ltd in 1981.