

Midori Yama Budokai: *Hanshi's Corner*
Written by Ron Rogers *Hanshi Meiyo Kyoju*
February 2014
Ichigo, ichi e: One life, one meeting

Bodhidharma and the Eighteen Hands of the Lohan

Bodhidharma, or Da Mo in Chinese, is alleged to have initiated three sets of exercises around the year 600 AD: the Book of Muscle-Tendon Changing (Yi Jin Jing), the Book of Bone Marrow and Brain Washing (Xi Shui Jing) and the Eighteen Hands of the Lohan (Lohan Shi Ba Shou). From these three, a set of self-defence techniques was developed and the Shaolin fighting arts (Quan Fa) are thought to have been born. "Lohan" is the Chinese spelling for "Arhat", which is an Indian word for a highly developed spiritual person. Historically, these legends did not appear until hundreds of years after this event was said to have occurred, and there is no mention at all from India or Persia that Da Mo ever existed. What's more, written records show Shaolin as having fighting monks protecting its grounds before Da Mo's said arrival (the temple being in operation since the late 300 AD). Ba Tuo, the Indian monk who founded Shaolin thirty years before Da Mo was said to have arrived, had two disciples, Hui Guang and Seng Chou, who were noted for their fighting skills. Archaeologists found ancient manuscripts that pre dated Shaolin by many years and which contain illustrations that closely match those of Yi Jin Jing and Xi Shui Jing! One of China's oldest martial arts is Shuai Chiao, which involves grappling, punching, kicking, throws and joint locking techniques. The Shaolin Eighteen Lohan Hands were and are fundamental chi kung exercises. The crucial difference between chi kung exercise and physical exercise lies not in the outward form (which can be the same for both types of exercise), but in the internal dimensions of energy and mind. There are many versions of the Eighteen Lohan Hands being taught today. The following Eighteen movements are used by some of today's Shaolin exponents. Most of them, in some form, are done by all Chi Kung practitioners. In fact, the majority, with different names and some slight variations, were done as "warm up" exercises by Booth Sensei as forms of Yoga.

1. **Lifting the Sky** is a very fundamental Chi Kung exercise and is excellent for promoting a holistic chi flow throughout the body. It works on the Triple Warmer meridian and harmonizes the upper, middle, and lower energies. It is practiced by beginners and masters alike. Interlock the fingers and breathe in gently through the nose as you lift the arms, keeping them fairly straight but comfortable. As they reach overhead, the palms are turned up. Pause, at the top, and then breathe out gently through the mouth as you lower the arms and pause again at the bottom.
2. **Shooting Arrows Left and Right** is the "One-Finger Zen" hand form. It is an excellent way to massage the Lung and Heart systems. It can improve the skin, strengthen the arms, clear depression, and help with all respiratory issues. The arms are crossed in front of the chest as you breathe in gently. Hands are in the "one-finger Zen position and you are standing in a parallel stance. Step out to the side in a horse-riding stance, sitting low. "Pull the bow" while breathing as though saying "shhh" in a soft voice. As you step back into a parallel stance, breathe out through the mouth with a soft "haaa" sound. The hands are not in the form of a fist with one finger sticking out, but the four fingers are curled lightly downward.

3. **Plucking Stars [Changing Galaxies]:** This exercise is excellent for the Spleen and Stomach systems, i.e. the digestive system. Consequently, this exercise is good for digestive or gastrointestinal problems. Chinese medical theory contends that good digestion is a prime ingredient for good health and vitality. Hold the ball of energy as you breathe in, and then pause. The right arm is above the left and parallel to it, palms facing each other. Swing the bottom (left) hand up, and the upper hand (right) downward. The upper hand (now the left) faces palm up, and the lower hand (now the right) faces palm down. Traditionally, you “press the sky with one hand and the earth with the other” as you breathe out gently through the mouth. Slowly turn the head to the right “open” side and pause. Turn the palms to face each other, this time with the left arm on top and the right arm beneath. Hold the ball of energy, and repeat on the other side.
4. **Turning Head [Pulling Tackles Turning Wheels]** is used literally to cleanse your head, spine and nervous system. It also helps to prevent against colds and flu. All movements are done gently and slowly. First, turn the head left and right, then tilt the head up and down. Finally, circle the head clockwise, then counter-clockwise. Physically, this is similar to the familiar “neck rotations.”
5. **Thrust Punch [Punching with Eyes Wide]** in addition to developing powerful punches for martial arts, this exercise massages and strengthens your heart, intestines, and eyes. In addition it is also a productive way to release anger and tension. Hold two fists at your waist, chest gently open, and step into a horse riding stance. Punch out with some gentle force and a loud "hite!!" Correct breathing and making the appropriate sound are necessary for obtaining the desired effect. Punch left and right, turning and twisting the fists. Jump up when finished. This resembles the karate training for *choku zuki*.
6. **Merry-go-Round [Big Turning of the Cosmos]:** In some schools this form precedes the thrust punch. It stimulates your “water” energy at your ming-men, or “gate of life,” thereby giving your body an energy boost. It is also nourishing for the Stomach, Liver, Pancreas, and Kidney meridians. Step out to a horse riding stance as you clasp the hands together without force. Turn the torso clockwise in a big circle, then counter-clockwise in a big circle. Jump up as you breathe in, then breathe out and relax. Physically, it resembles “trunk rotations.”
7. **Carrying the Moon** makes you look and feel young, and enhances your nervous system. For these benefits you must generate a shower of chi or vital energy throughout your body. It cleanses away negative energy in the body, especially the nervous system, by stimulating an internal shower of energy. Ancient masters said that this exercise can eliminate 100 illnesses. Move from your center. Breathe in gently through the nose as you raise the arms and arch the back. Pause in an arched position as you hold the moon. Straighten the body, and then breathe out gently through the mouth as you lower your hands, pausing at the completion.
8. **Nourishing Kidneys:** Ask a Chinese physician, and he will tell you that your kidneys have everything to do with sex. The Chinese medical term generally used to describe sickness related to sex is “shen-kui” which means “kidney injury.” However, Shaolin monks did this exercise to enhance their intellectual and general vitality. Besides improving sexual function, this exercise also enhances the intellect, helps with sciatica, and relieves lower back pain. Bend forward and touch the toes,

with the neck and arms relaxed. Breathe in as you come up and again arch the back. Hold the kidneys with the palms [some styles massage this area]. Straighten the body and breathe out through the mouth with a gentle "haaa" sound as you lower the arms to the sides.

9. **Three Levels to Ground (or Earth)** can make your legs strong and flexible. As a chi kung exercise, it can strengthen your heart system, generate better energy flow, and increase your vitality. Step out roughly shoulder width, arms gently floating up your sides as you breathe in. Squat down as you breathe out gently through the mouth.. Breathe in through the nose as you stand up as. Keep the neck relaxed throughout the exercise. The arms are extended, palms down. Some styles extend them to the side; others to the front.
10. **Dancing Crane [Divine Crain Begins to Dance]** helps you to channel vital energy to your legs. As the body is interconnected by countless meridians (our energy matrix), channeling better energy flow at the legs helps to solve problems in other parts of the body. The "Dancing Crane" exercise may help someone with kidney stones or with slow thought processes. Step out wide, arms floating up your sides. This would be similar to taking a very deep forward leaning stance with the arms extended diagonally, palms down. The (slightly) higher arm is toward the bent knee; the (slightly) lower arm is toward the extended leg. Breathe out gently through the mouth. Come back up as you breathe in gently through the mouth, lowering the arms by the side.
11. **[Second Son] Carrying Mountains** build powerful arms. This exercise can also help with chronic pain in your back. Arms float up (they are raised slowly). Turn to one side as you breathe out gently and pause. Turn back to center as you breathe in and pause. Physically, this is similar to "trunk twists. The arms are extended to the sides with palms down.
12. **[Lohan] Drawing Knife** ("Qi jing ba mai" or the "eight wondrous meridians") is an effective exercise to generate energy flow to these eight wondrous meridians. To "draw the sword," refers to reaching over the shoulder with one arm and up the back with the other to "hook" the fingers of the hands together. Breathe out gently as you turn to the open side (facing the side on which the arm is at the back) and look at your heels. Breathe in gently as you come back to center. Repeat on the other side.
13. **[Green Dragon] Presenting Claws** is reputed to help those who suffer from diabetes, have trouble with the digestive system or feel worried or anxious. It is also used to develop the "Art of the Dragon's Claw" in Shaolin Ch'uan Fa. Hold your claws at chest level and step out to a horse stance. Turn to a left bow arrow stance (forward stance) as you present your right claw forward and your left claw backwards and breathe out gently through the mouth. At the completion of the movement, look toward your heel. Bring your claws and stance back to the starting position as you breathe in. Present your claws in the other direction. This is done as the fifteenth movement in some styles.
14. **[Fierce Tiger] Pushing Mountains** may help in overcoming rheumatism while developing internal chi (ki) for the martial arts. It also may freshen your mental faculties and enhance your sexual drive. Don't use strength. Push and pull in an ellipse like a treadmill with no pauses and remember to open the chest gently.

Breathe out gently through the mouth as you push out and breathe in gently through the nose as you pull in. This is the thirteenth movement in some styles.

15. **[Green Dragon] Separating Water** is an excellent exercise for the heart and the lung systems and will also give you powerful arms. It is believed especially useful for curing clinical depression. Open the chest and push out to the sides as in Pushing Mountains and rotate the palms. Open the chest as you breathe in gently. Close the arms as you breathe out gently. Some styles do this as the fourteenth movement.
16. **Big Windmill** If you perform this exercise correctly and sufficiently, you can develop enough internal force to break a brick without any other conditioning. Those with diabetes, or problems related to the Liver and Spleen systems, will also find this exercise useful. Breathe in gently through the nose as the hand goes up to the apex. Breathe out gently through the mouth as the hand comes back down. Pause at the bottom. This is similar to “arm swings,” but only one arm at a time is swung. When you do so, twist the trunk in the direction of the swing.
17. **Deep Knee Bending [Lift Heels Bend Knees]** is another excellent exercise for the lower body as it opens up the meridians in the legs. When this is done, negative energy from other parts of the body can be efficiently drained out of the body and into the ground. Breathe in gently as you lift up the heels and the hands. Breathe out gently as you squat down, lowering your heels and hands. Breathe in gently as you come back up. Booth *Sensei* had us do a modification of this one. Our arms were crossed in front of the chest, and we “bounced” three times, before coming back up.
18. **Rotating Knees [Divine Crane Rotates Knees]** may help to overcome sex problems, or enhance sexual performance and enjoyment. Strong, healthy knees, obviously, ensures that you will still be agile at eighty and beyond. Rub the palms to generate the heat of healing chi (ki), and. place your palms on your knees, opening the knees. Close the knees and rotate the clockwise then counter-clockwise.

Miscellaneous

Kan means intuition. This refers to a level of experience from which the exponent may flow through a situation by acting on deeply learned lessons with a minimum of conscious thought. This would be analogous to a well-trained driver avoiding an accident without having to think about what to do. The well-trained martial artist would react to danger with the same intuitive level.

Kan ken futatsu no koto, means “the eye and heart both see during danger.” This is a warrior maxim referring to “seeing” danger with the heart (intuition), rather than with the physical sight.

Any or all of this information may be copied for students if desired. All that's asked is that acknowledgment of authorship be given.