

# SHAOLIN KUNG-FU FOR AMERICAN KIDS

When Liow Kah Joon decided to produce his children's book on Shaolin kung-fu, he scanned the bookshelves and scoured the libraries to obtain all the information about Shaolin that he could get his hands on. But there was still something missing. Something that still stopped him from separating the truth from the myth. There was only one way to find out – a trip down to the very heart and soul of martial arts and Zen Buddhism. The 1,500 year-old Shaolin Temple.



So Kah Joon did just that. And he stayed there for weeks. But before he left, he made friends with a Shaolin Zen master who continues to be his source of information and inspiration for his book.

Now the book is ready. Called *Shaolin: Legends of Zen and Kung-fu*, or *Legends*, it will be launched at the Frankfurt Book Fair in October 2005. Produced for the North American and international markets, the book is targeted at children from 8 to 12 years old, and is complete with exciting content and attractive illustrations. It even comes with a DVD featuring an 8-minute animation story about Shaolin kung-fu. But why the mix of Zen Buddhism and Chinese kung-fu? Because, as Kah Joon explains, the two are inseparable.

## UP AND DOWN 1,000 STEPS

The book talks about the almost superhuman feats of the Shaolin monks and the arduous training they go through to achieve their prime condition. For example, at 5am every morning, the monks run up 1,000 steps up the mountain and then climb down on their hands and knees. But it is as much mental conditioning as it is physical. "When the monks practice the Five Animals martial arts form, they are not just imitating the animals' movements. They are actually striving to be one with the animals, to put themselves in the shoes of the animals and act and react like them. To achieve that, you need wisdom and mental strength. That is where the Zen Buddhism comes in," said Kah Joon.

"People react to a book not because you are telling them about another culture, but because it is something that fits directly into their lifestyle. To reach out to the West, you need to tell the story that fits into their culture, without losing the authenticity and accuracy of the content."

