



# The Shao Lin Chronicles: The Wisdom of Bodhidharma

*Dr. Don Giles*

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The Shao Lin Chronicles: The Wisdom of Bodhidharma is a fictional book based on the pseudo-historical account of Bodhidharma, who brought Chan (which became Zen) Buddhism to China, and his student Hui-k'o, nicknamed "Te" in this book. Specifically, Bodhidharma takes up residence in a cave near the famous Shao Lin Monastery. Te finds Bodhidharma and begins to visit him on a regular basis, along with maintaining his regular duties as a monk, including teaching the local students about the life of Buddha. Eventually Bodhidharma sends Te on a quest to retrieve living water flowing from the Mt. Niu-t'ou. On three separate ventures, young Te returns, only to have Bodhidharma scold him for not fulfilling his request, yet instruct him on the finer points of Buddhist philosophy and practice. However, on his adventures, Te encounters a young lady whose town is being controlled by an evil tyrant, a wizard and an eight-headed dragon, and a peaceful hermit. Eventually, Te must face the fact that even after learning so much and growing spiritually, he has not fulfilled Bodhidharma's request, and as a result, he has not attained enlightenment. The way in which Te's quest finally reaches its climactic conclusion is recognized in the Buddhist tradition as one of the most desperate, yet selfless acts on record. Eventually, Te paves the way for Bodhidharma to be introduced to the masters at Shao Lin. And Shao Lin, based on the teachings of Bodhidharma, eventually becomes the birthplace of martial arts and chi kung.

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