

Demythologizing the Shaolin Monks

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Myth and pseudohistory plague this ancient Chinese school. Is there any truth left?

by [Brian Dunning](#) [Skeptoid Podcast #516](#) April 26, 2016

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“New abilities, some of them apparently superhuman, began to appear in the rewritten sacred texts. Suddenly the Shaolin martial artists were resisting spears thrust into their necks. They were standing on one finger. They were breaking bricks and sticks and stones with their heads. They were walking on fire and laying on beds of nails. They were resisting the most savage blows to every part of their anatomy, from punches, kicks, and sledgehammers. They were even doing all kinds of things with their testicles.

Without exception, all of these amazing feats are stage show tricks, performed all around the world in many different cultures. Martial artists call them [bullshido](#). There’s no need to go into each of them here, if you’re curious about any of them — breaking the spear against the neck, for example — Professor Google will show you how you can do it too.”

Check out Skeptoid Podcast #516 here: <https://skeptoid.com/episodes/4516>

More on Bullshido: <https://skeptoid.com/episodes/4189>

Rare Photographs of the Shaolin Temple before it was Destroyed in 1928: <http://www.chandao.co.uk/rare-photographs-of-the-shaolin-temple-before-it-was-destroyed-in-1928.html>



One of several photographs of the Shaolin Temple before it was destroyed in 1928. [Click for more.](#)