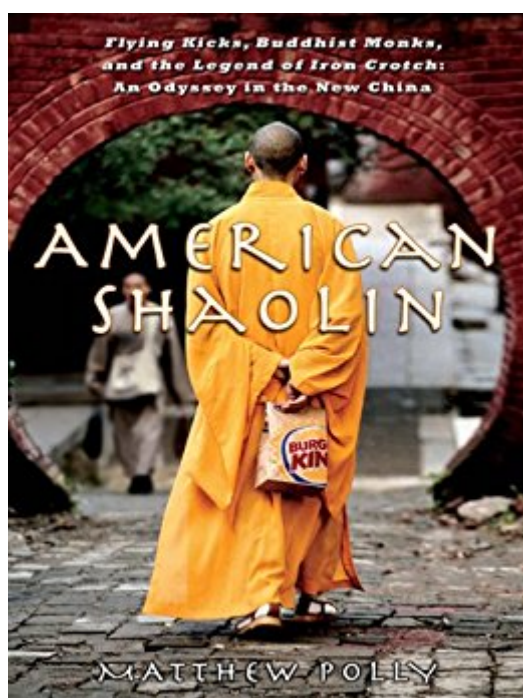


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American Shaolin: Flying Kicks, Buddhist Monks, And The Legend Of Iron Crotch: An Odyssey In The New China



Synopsis

The raucously funny story of one young American's quest to become the baddest dude on the planet (and possibly find inner peace along the way) Growing up a ninety-eight-pound weakling tormented by bullies in the schoolyards of Kansas, Matthew Polly dreamed of one day journeying to the Shaolin Temple in China to become the toughest fighter in the world, like Caine in his favorite 1970s TV series Kung Fu. American Shaolin is the story of the two years Matthew spent in China living, studying, and performing with the Shaolin monks. The Chinese term for tough training is chi ku ('eating bitter'), and Matthew quickly learned to appreciate the phrase. This is both the gripping story of Matthew's journey and an intimate portrait of the real lives of the Shaolin monks, who struggle to overcome rampant corruption and the restrictions of an authoritarian government. Laced with humor and illuminated by cultural insight, American Shaolin is an unforgettable coming-of-age story of one man's journey into the ancient art of kungfu-and a poignant portrait of a rapidly changing China.

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Customer Reviews

In the early 1990's, Matthew Polly dropped out of Princeton and did what a lot of young men only dream about: he traveled to China and studied kung fu with the monks of the Shaolin Temple. A victim of bullying with issues of self confidence and a heaping helping of teenage angst, Polly is transformed by his experiences. He gains faith in his own abilities, but also exposure to a China on the cusp of its current rise, and he is shaped by both the profound and equally mundane aspects of the people he meets, befriends and alongside whom he trains. This is not a book about a weak soul who finds deep meaning in his life through the otherworldly depth of foreign clerics. Rather, it is a story about growth from a bratty, impulsive teenager blind to many of his own advantages, into a young man who better understands the world around him, who conquers some of his fears, and who gains an understanding that, at the end of the day, people like the monks of Shaolin are just that: people. Polly's memoir is an easy read, spiced liberally as it with bawdy events and characters, hair-raising experiences, and lots of self-effacing humor. "American Shaolin" is likely to be most warmly received by practitioners of Asian martial arts, who will find some level of common experience with the author. That said, it also has broad appeal as a coming of age story and a unique travelogue. Recommended.

Very insightful and entertaining book. I thought it to be very well written and an easy read. Would recommend it to anyone interested in doing something crazy like running off to China to study martial arts for an extended period of time or if you just enjoy martial arts and are content with reading about someone who has already done just that. I was surprised how much I learned from this book outside of a fun martial arts story. A very good read. Highly recommended!

Polly spins a great story of his journey to China in 1992, but it's more than a travelogue, it's a coming of age memoir told with humor, humility and cultural insight. I think this book would appeal to a great number of readers: certainly those interested in kung fu will be captivated with the story of a white American studying for 2 years with the legendary Shaolin monks; those interested in the recent evolution of China from a sleeping giant to a world super power can get a glimpse of what China was like as it was rousing from its slumber; and fans of memoirs and stories well told (I put myself in this camp) will find Polly's self-effacing style engaging and warm. His challenges navigating the language, the cultural customs and the kung fu mat will resonate with travelers, immigrants and athletes alike. What an accomplishment Polly achieves bringing such a diverse readers into his fold.

I bought the book several years ago. Loved it funny, serious, and enlightening. But I gave away my hard copy to a friend. I downloaded this E-book version and read it again while I had jury duty for 1.5 weeks.

I gave this book a 5 star rating because it wasn't so difficult to read but not so simply written at the same time. I couldn't stop reading this book until it was completely finished. As in taking it to work, reading on the bus, etc. It has a good sense of how different cultures are and it is not boring. Matthew Polly makes very funny at the same time. I would suggest this book to people looking to get inspired on a goal they want to do accomplish and think it's impossible, people who are into fighting, or into the whole oriental kung fu culture. Very good book, very inspiring, great for old and young. And I'm from the hood so get this book if you're even just thinking about it.

"American Shaolin" was a great read. Written in a casual and humorous story-telling fashion, it was easy to read and very enriching (it even has some free Chinese cursing lessons). This book tells the story of a young college student who decides to take time off college (in the midst of his studies at Princeton) to go to China and find monks that he didn't even know for sure were there, and convince them to train him in kung-fu and teach him Buddhism. His experiences in China around 15 years ago as a foreigner are definitely entertaining and to some extent gives you a good insight of the culture present at the time in some regions of China. The story is written by the author himself and I found it to be very pleasant to read.

I mentioned this book to a friend. She had read it and was interested to hear my responses to the photos, particularly the iron crotch photos. Unfortunately the Kindle version does not include the photos. Why put a book on Kindle and then cheat the readers out of accompanying photos? It was a pretty good read but after learning I didn't get the whole book it was a disappointment.

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