

## Standards of Excellence



Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004 - 2022 Copyright



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### Introduction to the guiding principle of Excellence in the martial tradition of Praying Mantis Kung Fu

In my last article titled, “What Was Before – A Return to Meaning in Marital Tradition” I explored the concept of martial tradition in Praying Mantis Kung Fu introducing three core elements and seven guiding principles that are foundational to the practice. In today’s article I continue the discussion on the seven principles introducing the meaning of Excellence and its relevance. If you have not previously read part one then I suggest you go back and do so as it will provide you with important background understanding to this article.

#### What are guiding principles?

The seven guiding principles represent an ancient but practical wisdom that includes Authenticity, Excellence, Sustainability, Personal Growth, Moral Development, Social Engagement and Leadership. These are goal-based principles that provide big picture orientation on how to live an exemplary life. As with virtue-ethics they are sacred to the martial practice and are deeply rooted in Neo Confucian philosophy.

The idea of goals and goal setting is a powerful process for thinking about your ideal future and turning vision into reality. The process of setting goals helps you choose where you want to go in life. By knowing what you want to achieve, you know where to concentrate your efforts. The seven guiding principles provide a practical template to overlay and integrate with your own individual goals and targets. They are foundational in the practice of Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu and should be embodied with conviction, creativity and spirit.

#### Relationship of Principles

Using the metaphor of the Bodhi tree, if Authenticity is the root of the tree, then Excellence and Sustainability are the trunk that grow from such providing structural foundation. From the trunk branches of personal growth, moral development, social engagement and leadership grow bearing fruit in the form of purpose and meaning.

七星螳螂派



Master Luo Guang Yu  
罗光玉 1888-1944



**What Was Before: Return to Meaning in Martial Tradition**

## Seven Guiding Principles



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Excellence represents the internal theme of self-discovery and the pursuit of becoming the best version of yourself. This is what I refer to as a human becoming. This is further sub-divided into self-cultivation and moral development. Likewise, Sustainability represents the interaction of the self with the external world in a harmonious value enhancing manner. This is represented by social engagement and leadership. Both excellence and sustainability are born from authenticity and form an interdependent relationship in which they causally effect/affect each other.

## PRINCIPLE OF EXCELENCE

Excellence is the second guiding principle in Praying Mantis Kung Fu. It represents the internal theme of self-discovery and creativity in the pursuit of becoming the best version of yourself. It has three components that include attitude, effort, and outcome.

Excellence begins with attitude. Attitude is an optimum mental state of readiness for taking information in, synthesizing, rationally analyzing, and making unbiased best fit decisions. An attitude of excellence is a mindset focused on the relentless pursuit of continuous self-improvement. It is a motivation born internally that manifests in self-learning and further enhanced through exposure to best practices. This is why it is so important to surround yourself with good quality people - including friends and mentors (teachers). Understanding excellence within any given endeavor requires understanding of its coherence (function, structure/properties, process) including benchmarking standards and improving with each opportunity to perform. The opposite of excellence in attitude is complacency in which one is accepting of the status quo and does not strive for higher standards.

*Excellence is the relentless pursuit of continual improvement*

Excellence in effort means putting in your best physical and mental effort each time. Everyone can understand physical effort so here I want to emphasize effort of mindfulness in execution. This is a key lesson my teacher Kai Uwe Pel always reinforced in the training hall. Mindfulness is a type of cognitive engagement and rigor that manifests clarity of purpose and an attention to detail with awareness for what you are doing in the moment. The opposite of mindfulness is mindlessness.



**Master Kai Uwe Pel**

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*“The secret to better performance is control. This is something that my teacher Kai Uwe Pel commonly preached in the training hall and is a lesson on self-control through mindfulness. On the surface it is simple and easy to remember, but do not be fooled as it encapsulates a profound lesson with far reaching implications. Control is premised on ‘mindfulness’. Greater mindfulness leads to greater self-control – including control of thought and control of action. Greater control of thought leads to better decision making. Greater control of action leads to better execution. And ultimately this leads to better performance outcomes.” The Secret to Better Performance is Control (June 8, 2021)*

Excellence is about benchmarking performance outcomes. Performance outcomes are a function of not just what you are doing but more importantly what result you are trying to achieve and to what standard. In defining performance outcomes in the context of kung fu kung fu it is important to remember that it is a combative practice with the primary purpose of building self-defense skills that will save your life in a real live street engagement.

This is a critically important distinction in the context of defining outputs versus outcomes. Many kung fu schools excel in skill acquisition output as a measure of learning success but fall short on outcomes. There is a focus on executing skills and applications in controlled/semi-controlled conditions for the purpose of observation and instruction, but this is where it stops. While this is an important and undeniable aspect of the learning process, it only represents the early phases of training and does not develop live combat capabilities.

## PERFORMANCE PRACTICE SKILL DEVELOPMENT MATRIX

SKILL SET	CRITICAL TEACHING QUESTION	LEARNING DRIVER	COACH'S FOCUS	ATHLETES UNDERSTANDING	PRACTICE EXPERIENCES
7. Live / competitive conditions	Can skill be applied in live condition to meet demands of situation?	Athlete driven	Understanding	Why to do it When to do it When not to	Live training, Problem solving and decision making in fluid environment.
6. Performance under consistent pressure					Progressive introduction of block training, variable training, and random training (live).
5. Performance under pressure	Can the athlete perform the skill in training practices which simulate increasingly live conditions or competition conditions?	Coach and athlete working together in a learning partnership (traditional teacher-student relationship)	Experiencing	How to do it	Performance and practice variations. T.U.F. Training Technique under fatigue
4. Performance under fatigue					Progressive introduction of speed, fatigue, pressure, and measurable training goals / targets to skill practice.
3. Performance at speed					
2. Performance very well	Can the athlete perform the skill?	Coach driven	Instructing	What to do	Block training. Observation, demonstration, instruction
1. Performance					

Source: Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu @ 2004-2021

There are many follow-on intermediary and advanced level skill sets like Reading and Planning that must be developed and layered into execution. These can only be developed and transferred in the context of more thoughtful and progressive training methodologies that includes modes of variable and live training. Furthermore, these must be developed at speed, under fatigue and under constant pressure. This includes not just what to do in a fluid developing situation, but more importantly how to do it, why to do it, when to do it and when not to do it.



Kai Uwe Pel's Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu: A Traditional Chinese Martial



## 五内行

















### Five Internal Virtues

意志	Will
忍耐	Endurance
毅力	Perseverance
恒心	Patience
勇敢	Courage

Only within this context can one begin to properly assess and benchmark functional performance outcomes in the context of combative practice.

Lastly, I want to mention a few words on the Five Virtues of Mind from the San He Wu De framework. These are intimately connected with the guiding principle of Excellence. Internal virtues of Will (willpower), Courage, Endurance, Perseverance and Patience provide us with a more specific set of attitudes and behaviors to be embodied that are highly conducive to striving for excellence. They are considered internal virtues of mind because of how they help to build a strong disciplined mind, which in turn helps to regulate the emotional mind. This concept of self-regulation through mindfulness is a foundational theme in the pursuit of excellence.

## Praying Mantis Kung Fu – An Integrated System Overview

<b>Core Elements</b>	'Art of Violence' Combative Practices	'Art of Longevity' Health Practices	'Art of Becoming' Philosophical Practices
<b>Goal-Based Principles</b>	Authenticity	Excellence Personal Growth Moral Development	Sustainability Social Engagement Leadership
<b>San He Wu De Framework</b>	Right Mind	Right Virtues	Right Effort
<b>Function</b> • Combat preparedness	<b>Level I</b>  • Beginner 初 • Xia 下 • Li 力 • Qixing 七星	<b>Level II</b>  • Intermediate 中 • Zhong 中 • Jing 精 • Meihua 梅花	<b>Level III</b>  • Advanced 高 • Shang 上 • Qi 气 • Guangban 光板
<b>Structure</b> • Footwork • Kicking • Striking • Grappling • Throwing	<b>Characteristics</b> • Physical  • Cognitive  • Structure  • Doing  • Block  • Fundamentals 	<b>Characteristics</b> • Mental  • Associate  • Conscious  • Reading  • Variable  • Systems 	<b>Characteristics</b> • Spiritual  • Autonomous  • Uncircuitous  • Planning  • Random/Live  • Intuitive 
<b>Process</b> • 3 fast, slow, steady, calm • 4 attack methods • 5 internal external • 6 harmonies • 7 long 8 short • 8 hit 8 no hit • 9 methods • 10 continuous strikes • 12 key words • Training Methodology	<b>Duration</b> • 2 – 3 years	<b>Duration</b> • 2 – 3 years	<b>Duration</b> • 2 – 3 years

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## Conclusion

The key takeaway from this article today is that you need to embody excellence in attitude, effort and outcome in both your kung fu training and daily life. It is the relentless pursuit of continual improvement. The opposite of this is complacency and the acceptance of something less than your best. An attitude of excellence is internally motivated while capabilities are developed through real world learning and applied practice. This is the unison of learning and praxis. In my next article I will introduce the third guiding principle of Sustainability, sometimes also referred to as Harmony (He).

Be kind, be excellent, train hard!

Nathan Wright  
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## 2022 Publications



[Goal Setting in 2023](#)



[Standards in Excellence in Martial Tradition](#)



[What Was Before: Return to Meaning in Martial Tradition](#)



[Where And When Are You At Risk? Theory of Mind in Self Defense \(Part III\)](#)



[Commentary on Principles of Mind in San He Wu De](#)



[Theory of Mind in Self Defense: Part II - Who is the Violent Offender?](#)



[Theory of Mind in Self Defense: Part I - Who Are You and What is Your Defensive Persona?](#)

## Past Publications



[Foundational Concepts and Legal Principles in Self-Defense](#)



[The Secret to Better Performance is Control – Lessons in Mindfulness in Praying Mantis Kung Fu](#)



[Part I: The Realities of Violence – Case Study Analysis on Current State of Victimization in the US](#)



[In recognition of Master Pel celebrating forty years in Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu](#)



[Announcement: Retirement from Arena of Public](#)



[Part III: Cultivating the Five Internal Values and the Right Effort in Praying Mantis Kung Fu](#)



[Part II: Cultivating the Five External Values and Right Moral Standing in Praying Mantis Kung Fu](#)



[Part I: Three Harmonies & Martial Values and Cultivating the Right Mind in Praying Mantis Kung Fu](#)



[How Low Can you Go? Foundational Footwork and Benefits of a Low Framed Methodology](#)



[Conceptual Levels of Training in Luo Guang Yu Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu](#)

# Mantis Publications & Research



## Who We Are

We are a diverse group of people dedicated to the transmission and promotion of traditional Seven Star Praying Mantis Kung Fu (Qi Xing Tang Lang Quan). We represent the proud family lineage of Master Luo Guang Yu, who made the style famous in the Shanghai Jingwu Association in 1919. In 2019 we celebrated the 100-year centennial anniversary of Seven Star Mantis in Shanghai.

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