

AN ONLINE MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO WING CHUN

Wing Chun Teahouse

SUMMER 2006



CHU SHONG TIN

Q&A WITH THE KING OF SIU NIM TAO

WING CHUN FOR TODAY

CONFRONTING TODAY'S QUESTIONS

BRAWL AT THE BRIDGE

EXCERPTED FROM RENE RITCHIE'S NEW NOVEL
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UNLOCKING GREATER INSIGHTS

THE WING CHUN FORMS

A BRIEF OVERVIEW BY DAVID PETERSON

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Darrell Jordan's Interview with **CHU SHONG TIN**

An Interview with Yip Man's third Hong Kong student excerpted from Darrell Jordan's new book *The Sound of Ving Tsun: The Grandmasters and Masters*

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ABOUT THE TEAHOUSE

Our goal is to provide a place for Wing Chun practitioners of all lineages to broaden their exposure to the art. We're dedicated Wing Chun in all its forms, including its many different spellings, lineages, histories and training methods. However, we rely entirely on submissions from our readers.

Your articles are what allow us to continue bringing Wing Chun specific content to the public eye.

NOTE: All articles are the opinions of their respective authors. Articles do not represent the opinions of the Wing Chun Teahouse magazine, its publishers or its partners.

Publisher's Letter



I'd like to start our second issue by saying thank you for the overwhelmingly warm welcome.

As a community-contributed publication dedicated to Wing Chun in all its forms, names and lineages, we're proud to be able to bring you Wing Chun specific content quarterly. This is only possible through your article contributions.

In our Summer Issue, Darrell Jordan lends us an interview with the legendary Chu Shong Tin from his new book, *The Sound of Ving Tsun: The Grandmasters and Masters*; J.L Moon confronts the difficult questions of Wing Chun's meaning and purpose in today's world; René Ritchie features an excerpt from his new novel, *Legends of Wingchun: Embers of the Shaolin*; Karl Godwin reveals greater insights into his modern Wooden Dummy training; and David Peterson presents a simplified meaning of the forms through the Wong Shun Leung method.

The Wing Chun Teahouse is created by Wing Chun martial artists for Wing Chun martial artists. We want your input in making the magazine better for upcoming issues. Most importantly, we want your articles. We want to hear about your training methods, your lineage's approach to fighting and your personal experiences. The only guideline is that you keep politics out of your writings and respect other lineages within our art. With your articles, we can promote the art of Wing Chun's many lineages, training methods, branches, names, leaders, legends and masters.

Sincerely,

Adam Williss

Adam Williss
Publisher
adam@wingchunteahouse.org

Please Email Article Submissions to editor@wingchunteahouse.org



From author Darrell Jordan's *The Sound of Ving Tsun: The Grandmasters and Masters...* a compilation of interviews with four grandmasters and five masters of the Ving Tsun system.

DJ: Could you tell us how you got started in Ving Tsun?

CST: At first, when Yip Man started teaching at the Restaurant Workers Union, a few months later, I got a job as a bookkeeper there. I had weak health when I was young, so I was learning Tai Chi at night and slowly, slowly I began to compare the theories of Yip Mans Ving Tsun to Tai Chi, to see which is better being acceptable for me.

I then make out the logic that Ving Tsun has better application than the Tai Chi I was learning so I signed up for classes with Yip Man and became a Disciple of Yip Man.

DJ: So you watched the classes?

CST: Yes, I watched the classes; I worked in the same premises as class. So I listened to the theories, and slowly I began to compare Ving Tsun with Tai Chi.

DJ: How many people were in the class at the time when you enrolled?

CST: When Yip Man started the class, it was very difficult for him to introduce Ving Tsun. There was a group of about 20 or 30 people at the Restaurant Workers Union that started right away.

Yip Man was already teaching there for a few months before I got a job there. And then very slowly, people were separating from the classes, and by the time I joined, there were three of us left. Dai SiHing Leung Sheung, Lok Yiu, and I was the third one.

DJ: Do you recall in what year this was?

CST: 1951, I was 18 years old, first of January, 1951.

DJ: What were the differences in Ving Tsun that made you decide to learn it?

CST: To my understanding of Tai Chi at the time when I was learning it, the theory of Tai Chi is how to slide away oncoming force, and how to find the opponents weakness. You have to keep picking and picking for some time before you can find the opponents weakness, and then send an attack which means they are not in tract, or in one theory. The difference in Ving Tsun is that you have a whole set complete, one button contains everything. One key, a complete set of distinct, eh, solutions for the situation that you are at, the moment of contest. You don't have to wait for someone to come and attack you, and then do something. Or wait until they are out of guard to do something else. Ving Tsun is all in the condition you can apply it, the techniques. Whereas in Tai Chi, you have different techniques for different situations.

DJ: You are known as the King of Siu Nim Tao, how often do you practice this form?

CST: I do not have to practice the fist form anymore. I used to practice when I was younger in the morning before the class starts. Now, I don't have to practice the forms by the set, because throughout the process of giving instruction and demonstrating the forms, I am practicing.

DJ: Could you tell us in your opinion, what the essence of Siu Nim Tao is?

CST: Siu Nim Tao of course is the first fist form of Ving Tsun style, and it has all of the fundamental movements as you can see. And it can use the least strength if you do it right, you can apply a blocking technique without exerting strength at all. Which means if your opponent is exerting strength onto you, if you apply the technique right, or your body construction is correct, you can defend yourself by diminishing the oncoming force without exerting force of your own. This is number one. Number two, Siu Nim Tao can exert an internal force. Siu Nim Tao can train a concentration of the mind that can control your pulse and your blood flow in your body. Also, Siu Nim Tao is on one single spot, you never move



GM Chu Shong Tin with Master Buick Yip at the 1st Ving Tsun World Conference.

one inch on your feet. The only attacking hands are one punch and the palm, all of the other movements are for defense.

But if the opponent were to come into your range, all you have to do is make a little change of the technique, and your defensive technique becomes an attacking technique. Siu Nim Tao is inclusive of almost all of the attacking techniques that you need. Because the punch and the palm really is all you need if you can get them right, if you can get them through the opponents hands and into your opponent.

You don't need hooks, or low punches to hit your opponent. Once you get into the domain of your opponents defense, it is easily like cutting bean curd. It is a piece of cake if you use the techniques of Siu Nim Tao correctly.

[Grandmaster Chu showed me some photos, one being a demonstration he performed at the World Ving Tsun Conference in Hong Kong. GM Chu was standing on one leg while on a scale so as to measure the added weight while two large guys were attempting to push him over]



DJ: Is there a way to know if you are developing your Siu Nim Tao correctly, a feeling perhaps, or some way to recognize improvement?

CST: You cannot use whatever you improve on an opponent, because you will be seeing different opponents. Maybe one is stronger than you, maybe one is weaker than you. So you cannot evaluate your status of your level in Siu Nim Tao, but you can feel improvements by yourself if you do it right. Everyone has a different attitude, and a different way of mind or thinking. If you really work on Siu Nim Tao, you will be able to feel significant difference. In most cases, people only spend a short time on Siu Nim Tao. Maybe 90% of the people I see are not into Siu Nim Tao.



GM Chu Shong Tin explaining the finer points of bong with Brian McDondald

DJ: Does Siu Nim Tao have more influence in your Chi Sao than the other forms Chum Kiu and Biu Jee?

CST: In the process of doing Chi Sao, because Siu Nim Tao is fixed and stable, but in Chi Sao you keep constantly moving. And once you are moving, it is not Siu Nim Tao. If you teach a guy only Siu Nim Tao, and go tell him to Chi Sao with a Sihing, he won't know how to move, because nobody ever taught him how to move. Eventually in Chi Sao, it is not just the techniques in Siu Nim Tao, but all the techniques, but these are even rooted from techniques in Siu Nim Tao.

DJ: When learning and practicing Chi Sao, which should one focus more on, offense or defense?

CST: I am more into finding out the theory of Ving Tsun and to apply the Ving Tsun in the Chi Sao. Most times when I Chi Sao with my older students at the school, I do not take offense, I take defense; I let the others attack me. And while I defend, I can apply the techniques according to the theory for defense. I never

make hitting on my counterpart during the work out. But when I go out for contest, I have to take offense, and no one is ever able to block one of my movements.

If I want to punch, I get it in, if I want to palm, I will get the palm in. I had seven or eight contests before I opened my school and became a teacher. I never hurt my opponents fiercely, just give them red palm marks on their chest.

DJ: In the United States, Chinese tournaments have become very popular. In these tournaments they have Chi Sao competition. Would you comment on this?

CST: It's just like if you have a gun, and you go target practice, you don't have to think that one day I may have to shoot somebody. You just take this as training for your head, your hands, your eyes. You practice jogging, you don't have to go for competition. You just go for your own self reinforcement. Ving Tsun is just a method of training.

DJ: In Chi Sao, do you have a favorite technique?

CST: No, nothing special, whatever I feel is appropriate.



DJ: Did you have a favorite person to Chi Sao with in class?

CST: I like variety; I do Chi Sao with everybody. By now, there is almost no one that I haven't Chi Sao with.

DJ: At the Ving Tsun Athletic Association last week, you were giving demonstrations on certain movements from Biu Jee. Obviously you are using your imagination to develop these demonstrations, can you talk about this?

CST: I do not have to formulate any particular demonstration. I can randomly give you a demonstration for any movement in the forms. If someone needs a demonstration, I can give you one right away.

Also, when I deal with other people from other styles, I can tell them that if they do their technique in this way, it will be more efficient. In Ving Tsun, every part of the body, the construction, configuration, has been so scientifically calculated to give the best function on each particular movement. A lot of people still don't understand this. They think all of these wild or large movements are very good. But actually, there is a basic requirement for the body's function in physical movement that you can exert good, efficient speed and strength.

DJ: Some of the techniques from Biu Jee (Shooting Fingers form) are considered for emergencies. Can you comment on this?

CST: It is not actually interpreted as for emergency case. Because once you use techniques from Siu Nim Tao and Chum Kiu, and in fact they are full, or you can apply all you learn in Siu Nim Tao and Chum Kiu fully, there is obviously no opportunity for your opponent to take you.

Biu Jee is just like a very powerful weapon. It really depends on if you want to apply it or not. It's like an arrow on full strength, whether you want to let go of your finger or not to give that striking force, which might not be necessary. So it is not really for emergency purpose, it's just on the likelihood on whether you use or not.

DJ: When I first arrived to the Ving Tsun Athletic Association last week, you were giving a lecture where you used Brian to assist you. Do you do this all of the time at the VTAA?

CST: I started a tea party on the first Sunday of every month at the VTAA so that I could introduce my research and understanding. So I conduct classes every month for the group on what my achievements are and pass it out. We all have a responsibility to the continued growth of Ving Tsun. [At the VTAA, several of the Grand Masters and second generation Sifu's hold class for their students. They have their own particular days and times to hold class. During the Tea Party G/M Chu started, all students from all schools and classes at the VTAA are welcome to participate]

DJ: Sir, I see that your class is beginning, before I go, I would like to ask one other question. Where do you see Ving Tsun now and in the future?

CST: Now first we talk about the future for Ving Tsun in the world of Martial Arts. Ving Tsun will keep on developing, will pass down from inheritance to inheritance, from generation through generation. There are two major main streams of Ving Tsun. Some people like to learn and explore Ving Tsun to the depth.

Then there are those that like to promote it. Some people will close themselves behind the door, and do research work. Then there are the people out there selling it, pushing it. The people pushing it don't have to have much ability to push it, and the people pushing it don't have much knowledge of how it was made, they just know the name and try to sell it. But mostly, there are more salesman than researchers. That's OK, it is a good balance.

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The Sound of Ving Tsun **The Grandmasters and Masters**



Darrell Jordan

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Today, Wing Chun is confronted with many questions. Questions such as “how can we train against the modern, deadly martial artist,” or “what about the problems Mixed Martial Arts guys give Wing Chun guys?” Many people in the martial arts world would perhaps say that our great Art is not equipped to answer these questions. I believe the answers to these questions do lie within our art. However, before they can be found, a more clear definition of exactly what our art is defining the culture of modern martial arts and modern Wing Chun Training.

First of all, let me get my personal opinions out of the way: I do not believe that all martial arts are equal, nor do I believe all methods of training martial arts are equal. I do not believe the politically correct garbage that all methods have merit and bring equal value to the table. They just don't. Sure, maybe each method is well suited for some individual's *specific wants or needs*. But they are not all suitable for objective, black and white answers to the questions of combat and self-defense.

Having said this, the first question must be asked. “What *is* Wing Chun, really?” Here is my definition: Wing Chun is a "concept based" martial art. This means **concepts and principles govern how to move, fight and train**. Nothing in Wing Chun is done without applying these "concepts" and they are the reasoning behind all technique, methods, and strategies.

Wing Chun is physics. The laws of physics govern everything in the natural universe. Therefore, the best martial artist, and likewise the best Wing Chun practitioner, will follow principles of sound body-mechanics, timing, and force, consistent with the laws of the physical world. This means training in a realistic manner. In the real world, many Wing Chun training methods we see today (oftentimes coming from some teachers' inadequate understanding of a real fight) will simply not work.

"The western mind seems to interpret the chinese training as "holy," even though the chinese mind doesn't, often see things that way."

Perhaps this is because of the culture that surrounds Wing Chun. Because this is the martial art of Bruce Lee, as well as a treasured system out of China, many Wing Chun families have traditionalized the system beyond what was ever intended, almost worshipping it. The Western mind seems to interpret the Chinese traditional methods of training as “holy,” even though the Chinese mind does not often see things that way (I have been to China as well as studied her culture and language). However, I believe the methods of training the art were intended to evolve as our understanding of the *down to earth* principles that govern the art (and the world) grow and mature. Even though Yip Man changed the art on multiple occasions, note that I didn't say the Art *itself* should change, only the training methods.

Some of Yip Man's contemporaries claim he was a heavy drug abuser in his later years and we know that he personally taught much less to his later students. With so few students attaining the understanding of these principles and the ability to apply them effectively, there would likely be few with enough understanding to evolve their

training methods to suit the real world. Thus, the innovation and insight that is a natural part of Wing Chun would then become replaced by tradition and Wing Chun Culture.

Martial Arts Culture Today

The culture of today's Wing Chun world has, without doubt, been the downfall of the art and its effectiveness. Wing Chun has evolved into the laughing stock of the martial arts community. One guy told me I did "The *Tae Kwon Do* of China." This is because, like *Tae Kwon Do*, those propagating our Art have oftentimes not maintained its relevance to the real world. All traditions ultimately lead down this path. Even Jesus said this: "because of your traditions, the Words of God have no effect in your lives." If Wing Chun is to survive as a legitimate portrayal of the true principles of physics as applied to self-defense, then an evolution must take place. The Art itself has no need to change. But our understanding of the art must evolve. And so must our ways of training our skills.

The martial arts world has changed. The culture of martial arts has been redefined by modern science. One need not look far to see this. Who in the traditional martial arts community is ready to take on Matt Hughes? Or Tito Ortiz? Or Randy Couture, or any of those guys? Sorry, but if I had to bet, my money's going on the MMA guy. While I do not personally attempt training for the ring, they have allowed their system to modernize and have adopted training methods that work *for what they do*. Incidentally, this has occurred in a very short period of time since the founding of NHB fighting events, which originally featured mostly traditional martial artists.

And what about other forms of warfare? Things like guns and modern weapons make self-defense and preservation a different world than 1800 China. We could go on forever naming all the new threats to our safety and well being.

I believe Wing Chun was initially created to address these problems... and *continue addressing them as technology and information increased*. To me, Wing Chun is the original MMA. No matter which history you ascribe to, a look at Wing Chun technique shows it obviously developed from multiple influences. From its inception, Wing Chun was meant to be a system of answers to the questions being asked. "How do we train someone quickly to fight effectively?" "How do we deal with western boxers trading in southern China that are beating known Kung Fu masters?" All through its history Wing Chun has answered the questions given it by the martial art culture of the day.

"To me, Wing Chun is the original MMA."

However, today we do not see innovation and insight in much of Wing Chun training. In some ways, other martial arts are ahead of the Wing Chun world, which was once regarded as the world's most effective fighting style. For example: popular grappling arts such as Jujitsu and wrestling have evolved their training to accommodate "reversals". By practicing their techniques in literal *reverse motion*, the grappling stylist is oftentimes able to reverse a technique. Few Wing Chun practitioners are able to effectively do this. Yet, how many of us have considered training the technique in a different or experimental way to accommodate this?

Am I suggesting that we do what Bruce Lee did and blend Wing Chun with other styles? Or use it as a part of our MMA regimen? No. However, we must answer the questions based on our understanding of the principles. Yes, many styles of Wing Chun are going to need to change drastically once they begin to observe these natural principles. However, these principles *must* be applied to have a realistic understanding of how Wing Chun *should* function and how one can truly protect one's self.

Principles of Self-Defense.

And just what are these principles that need to be observed? What methods are there to train these principles? These questions cannot be adequately answered in a magazine article. But two good points can be made.

1. DO I TRAIN FOR A FIGHT OR SELF-DEFENSE?

In order to train ourselves properly, we must first define our goals. Our first goal to define should be why we are training in the first place.

Is it because I love the Art? Do I train simply because I enjoy the techniques and the idea of doing Kung Fu? Is it for physical fitness? A hobby to channel energy into? Is it to be in competition? Is it to be able to "fight" really well? Or is it to defend myself?

A competitive martial artist would probably consider looking beyond Wing Chun training and into athletic conditioning. Like all animals, people are not naturally equipped with weapons to hurt one of their own species. In order to dominate in a ring an

unnatural advantage must be sought out. Therefore physical size and conditioning are required. In addition to this many modifications would have to be made to suit the over 30 rules of MMA competition. Do I train to be able to “fight?” A fistfight is an egotistical brawl between two guys and may not always address issues that would come up in a true self-preservation environment. Oftentimes a fight can be avoided using simple intelligence unlike a self-defense scenario, which can sometimes be unavoidable.

Do I train for self-defense? At this end of the spectrum, all the rules of competition and the gentlemanly “rules” of a fistfight are discarded. The most deadly and dishonorable techniques are employed (eye gouges, throat strikes, small joint manipulation, fish-hooking, hair pulling etc...). This is what Wing Chun was at its inception, an Art for self-preservation.

Once the question of my overall training objective is answered, I can apply that objective to everything I train.

2. HOW DO I KNOW IF WHAT I AM TRAINING WILL ACTUALLY WORK?

The next question should be asked immediately after the first: will this actually work in the environment I am training for, and how do I know if it does? Sifu Karl Godwin refers to this as “actual event integrity.” We must train with a sense of realism, which means we must *actually apply* the techniques as often as possible. And if not, we must create the best environment to simulate actual application as possible. Sifu Bill Graves defined a hit for me as this: “anything that moves a body that is not in motion, or stops a body that is in motion.” Karl Godwin’s definition of a hit expands upon this: “Maximum compression of specific body tissues against the body’s mass before it is set into motion or before it stops existing motion.” We must apply our strikes in such a way as to exhibit this, which means using heavy force and contact sometimes. While there is immense value in soft and slow moves and observing “right of way” in a slower scenario, a realistic perception cannot be gained from training exclusively this way. If students do not strike in such a way as to move a partner and be moved themselves, they shortchange themselves as well as their partner.

We must also ask ourselves if we are likely to encounter certain energies from opponents in the real world. If we are using training techniques that serve no purpose we need to train them differently. And if

there are techniques we may encounter that we do not train against, we must do so in a realistic way.

Above all else, we should not fool ourselves. We need to actually fight against certain techniques to see if what we are doing actually works. We cannot take our teachers’ word for it. Many of our teachers are themselves deceived into thinking their training is realistic. It must be tried out and differences must be addressed. If we are willing to lose our ego and learn from a teacher, why not do the same thing and learn by trying our technique against someone else? Why not spend more time sparring in way that is as close to fighting as possible?

The above questions can be asked by anyone training and can be considered in any aspect of our training. By doing this, by questioning ourselves and our own training, we begin to shape the culture of our Wing Chun. Will my culture be effective and innovative? Will it be traditional and artistic? Your training is in your own hands.

*I would like to give special thanks to Sifu Bill Graves, who has graciously taught me Wing Chun in a concept based manner for nearly 12 years. And also to Sifu Karl Godwin whose teachings and influences over Florida Wing Chun, my Sifu, and I have shaped our understanding of Wing Chun. This article represents nothing more than **my personal understanding** of Karl and Bill’s approach to, and teachings on, Wing Chun and self-preservation.*



J.L. Moon (right) is the longest consistently training student of Sifu Bill Graves of *The System Wing Chun Kung Fu* in Jacksonville, Florida. He is also a personal student of his Si-gung, Karl Godwin of Sanford Florida, and is one of only a few students to have finished the core curriculum under Karl’s school, *Seminole Wing Chun*. He regularly trains under both Karl and Bill and is a Si-hing in good standing in both schools. More information on Florida Wing Chun and their methods can be found at www.floridawingchun.com

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BRAWL AT THE BRIDGE

(Excerpted from *Legends of Wingchun: Embers of the Shaolin*)

By René Ritchie

Wingchun's head shot up.
Death descended.
The saber moved fast, so fast it seemed to stretch out forever...
Then a growl erupted across the banks.
Bandy-legs paused.
No-neck turned.
And a stranger leapt from the bamboo, framed by the rising sun...

Boklao shouldn't have yelled—it ruined any chance for surprise—but he needed their attention off the family, needed them to commit, and with a bellow, No-neck did just that.

He charged at Boklao head-on and saber high, and Boklao charged back, front leg bowed and rear drawn. He cracked the steel-tipped end of his pole into No-neck's saber hand—the closest target. No-neck grunted, his other fist shot out and caught Boklao in the jaw, but Boklao went with it, spun around and slammed his pole into No-neck's head.

No-neck reeled back towards the river.

Boklao spat blood and locked eyes on the family. "Get out of here! Now!"

Bandy-legs lunged. He wasn't as big as No-neck but with a saber he didn't need to be.

Boklao angled to the side and smacked the pole down at Bandy-legs' foot. Bandy-legs dodged but Boklao followed him, smacked again and again like a blind man making his way through an alley. He needed to keep Bandy-legs moving, keep him off-balance...

His toes an inch ahead of the steel-tip, Bandy-legs scrambled, and Boklao switched directions and thrust up.

Bandy-legs should be out of position, should be open... But he wasn't—he was expecting it! He reared away at the last second, grabbed Boklao's pole, and yanked him straight into the path of his saber.

Boklao cursed, let go of his pole, and snapped down at the waist. Bandy-legs' saber shrieked by overhead. Bandy-legs swung again. Boklao leapt and the saber sliced under him. He rolled and came up into a crouch, hands clawed open.

Bandy-legs smirked and tossed the pole aside. "I'm going to impale you by inches!"

"*Indahun!*" No-neck clutched his head and worked his grip. "Just kill the mongrel dog and be done with it!"

They charged, their boots chomped across the banks. Boklao waited... waited for their sabers to all but taste him. And then he ducked out from in-between and swung his leg like a tiger's tail. His heel smashed into Bandy-legs' ribs, sent him colliding into No-neck, and sent them both tumbling to the ground.

"Now we'll see..." Boklao rose over them. "We'll see who the dogs are..."

A shadow reared up behind him.

"Yes, we will..."

They were fighting! Wingchun had never seen anything like it before, not beyond her nightmares and so—

A monster reared up. Its fangs dripped...

A third bandit appeared behind the stranger, not mismatched but black as shadow, a huge blade glinting in his hands...

"I have to warn—!" The bandit struck. The stranger fell.

And Wingchun was yanked back behind the bamboo

Black seared white.

Down... Boklao was down. Dirt caked his face and blood oozed from the back of his head. He'd made a mistake, underestimated them and let someone get behind him, but his bandana had taken the edge off the impact and, while he was down, he wasn't out. And that was *their* mistake.

A bark—something incomprehensible—echoed above him. Boklao's eyes slivered open. Another bark preceded a kick. Boklao clenched his teeth. He couldn't scream, couldn't let them know. Not yet...

Apish arms yanked him up from behind and cold, sharp steel bit into his throat. Boklao clenched harder.

"Stop."

The steel paused and a scarred face leered down.

"If I wanted him dead I would have hit him with the edge of my blade, not the flat." Scarface hefted a thick, two-handed chopper—the kind used to bring down horsemen. "But he's been trained to fight and that means I can cut more from him than just his head. I can cut the name of his trainer..."

No-neck snorted. "Every sick-man Southern boxer we stumble over!"

Scarface's eyes raked across at him. "You have an opinion?"

"N-no!"

"Let me slice the *lehele* open," Bandy-legs said, "and hang him from a tree. When he sees his guts dripping out, he'll tell you anything you want to know."

Scarface's eyes raked back. "Yes, I'm sure he will..."

No-neck grumbled, for the briefest moment, his grip slackened...

And Boklao's eyes flew open.

He jammed his hand up between the saber and his throat, and stamped his heel down into the small bones of No-neck's foot. No-neck bleated and bent forward, and Boklao rammed his head back. The bleat became a

howl.

"Pacify him!" Scarface yelled.

Bandy-legs closed fast but he wasn't the gravest threat... Boklao scanned the banks and then threw himself into a cartwheel. He spun past Bandy-legs, reached down and reclaimed his pole from off the ground, and then came back to his feet and brought the steel tip down—right onto Scarface's head.

"Now we're even, you piercing a—!"

Pain sizzled cold across Boklao's back. He jerked sideways and cursed.

Bandy-legs slashed again. Boklao blocked with pole and his breath rose hot and high. They lunged at each other. Bandy-legs slipped the pole and his saber sliced across Boklao's shoulder. Boklao swung back around but Bandy-legs was clear and No-neck was oriented again, bleating, snorting...

They circled him. Wood, water, and rock spun by. Boklao feinted towards No-neck and then twisted around and swept the pole low into the back of Bandy-legs' ankles. Bandy-legs thudded down to the rocks, and Boklao continued the motion, brought the pole up high as it would go, and then hammered it down. Bandy-legs twitched and went still. Then Boklao cross-stepped and stabbed back and up, a seated tiger flicking its tail. The pole caught No-neck mid-charge and mid-throat. He snapped in half and splashed across the edge of the river.

"This time..." Boklao's chest rose and fell. "This time you stay down!"

His legs shook, his arms prickled, but he had to focus. Scarface... Where was—? His nostril's flared, he whipped around—

And Scarface's chopper fell.

Boklao wrenched his pole up and around. It cracked into the blade and then they stood against the river and mountains, their weapons crossed and their eyes locked.

Bamboo and steel streaked through the sky and echoed up and down the banks.

Boklao kept back, out of range of the horse-chopper, and twirled the pole, jabbed and feinted—did anything he could to force the distance.

"You should have let them hang you from that tree," Scarface said. "That would have been only a single cut. Now I'm going to grant you the full two-thousand, and when you're done whimpering out the name and whereabouts of your master, I'm going to take what few scraps remain and cast them one-by-one

down the river to hell.”

“Right where you’ll be waiting,” Boklao said, “for me to kill all over again!”

Boklao thrust. Scarface slashed. The pole missed. The chopper didn’t. Boklao’s leg burned. Scarface laughed.

“One.”

Boklao snarled and spun but Scarface caught him as he came around, kicked him and stabbed. Boklao’s arm seared.

“Two.”

The world narrowed red, Boklao’s nose filled with the smell of salt and his mouth the taste of iron. He swung the pole low. Scarface cut high. Boklao’s ear stung.

“Three.”

And then Scarface brought the chopper back up and around and it hung over Boklao’s head.

Boklao growled and jammed the pole tight against the chopper’s cross-piece, barred it before it could begin its descent.

Scarface pressed. Boklao dropped down to one knee. The pole groaned and Boklao’s arms wavered. Scarface bent his full weight behind the chopper. The pole splintered, Boklao blasted back through the mud, and Scarface loomed over him, chopper glinting.

“I want you to know something,” Scarface said. “I want you to know that after you’re dead I’m going to track down that family—the one you tried so righteously to save—and I’m going to send them to hell after you. I’m going to grant you that final failure.”

“They’re—” Boklao’s breath tore through him and the pain lanced from joint to joint. “They’re gone. They got away from you...”

Scarface laughed again. “They couldn’t have gotten far.”

“They didn’t.”

Wingchun was still hidden, wasn’t she? She had to be. She couldn’t be moving, could she? If she was moving, she’d know it. She’d be crying out. She’d be screaming...

Apart, she saw herself step from the bamboo. Detached, she heard the echo of words escaping her lips. Numb, she felt the rock smash down.

A scarred face cringed and yelped out. Then the

distance closed, the rock tumbled to the ground, haze consumed the corners of her vision, bitterness the back of her throat, and a dull rush swallowed all other sound.

She collapsed back, ready to shatter into a ten-thousand pieces...

Continued in...

LEGENDS OF WINGCHUN EMBERS OF THE SHAOLIN

About *Legends of Wingchun*: Destiny and consequence collide in the first novel from acclaimed martial arts author René Ritchie. *Legends of Wingchun: Embers of the Shaolin* (ISBN 0-9738804-0-6) tells the story of Boklao a rogue fighter, and Wingchun, a small town girl, who together must face the Imperial Army, the Heaven & Earth Rebellion, the Bandits of the Eight Immortals, and a ruthless killer from the very edge of the world, all in a desperate quest to discover the truth behind their own pasts—a truth that threatens the lives of everyone around them—and to unravel the mystery of the Fist of the Elders—the secret martial art that caused the utter destruction of the Shaolin Temple itself...

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THE REVERSE MOOK JONG FORM

BY KARL GODWIN

Wing Chun Kung Fu is unique in the martial arts world for possessing a concise, precision-based approach to self-defense yet retains the ability to be physically applied universally. True Wing Chun can be used at long and short range; high or low; standing or on the ground. When engaged in a survival situation, no one stops fighting because the environment changes. Failure in a situation is usually caused by one or two things. First, the student has opted to take shortcuts in the traditional training methods. Second the student has failed to explore every possible training method of the art. The first reflects a lack of focus on essential tradition while the latter shows a lack of open-mindedness to investigate all of the options the existing training modes offer. Many times, the student is guilty of both problems. Because the breadth of Wing Chun technique is restricted to three empty hand forms, two weapons and the mook jong, it's depth can be easier to probe than other classical styles. (Note: Some styles also offer a footwork dummy, a knife dummy and a pole dummy.)

Of the methods available to the traditional Wing Chun student, the wooden dummy offers the most varied training options. The empty hand forms cultivate internalization of technical feeling; all energy is applied from the self to the self. Chi sao teaches the student to accommodate pressure from another; energy is applied from other to self. The wooden dummy applies energy from the self to another. Strikes can be applied along circuits of incoming

and outgoing force. To this end, the dummy form of any lineage can be practiced in a variety of ways. After basic competence is achieved in the form, the set can be practiced fast or slow. The variations in timing can offer the student fairly fast improvements in chi sao sparring ability. Changing the height of the jong allows study of the vertical field of self-defense and practice within the variety of ranges from engagement to short bridge. The form should be practiced left-handed only and right handed only to develop hand independence. Complete mastery of the wooden dummy cannot be achieved however, until the student has accomplished ability in the most overlooked aspect of mook jong training; the reverse form.

“My sifu originally told me students at his kwoon performed the form in reverse order as a sort of final exam.”

Reverse order executes the subsets of the form from the end to the beginning. In our lineage, there are ten subsets of the jong numbered 10, 20, 30, etc. through 100. Reverse order is simply doing the form from 100, 90, 80 etc. This exercise is great for testing the memory of the student. To increase the challenge, the sifu can recite the subset numbers randomly.

Reverse motion with the mook jong form means the actual movements are done as if played backwards on film. If you adhere to a 108 movement mook jong form, the reverse form would be 108, 107, 106 etc. until 1. The reversal of movement should be in action, path, speed and pressure modulations.

The bottom line of the effect of the practice of the reverse form is greater insight into the techniques of the forward form. Knowledge, precision, control, power and sensitivity are all superior by this training method.

The simple memory of the techniques of the mook jong form is improved by the full front and back exploration of the set. Before automatic application skills can be developed, proficiency in the simple motor skills of the jong must be attained. Learning the set backwards expands the forward skills by cultivating the neuromuscular relationships of muscle groups conventionally used for retrograde motions. This theory would suggest each type of muscular action: agonistic (The muscles responsible for the action), antagonistic (The muscles which oppose the action), and synergistic (The muscles which stabilize the action), could be augmented by acquiring skill in its opposing function when practiced along the same lines of motion. When practicing the form in reverse,



In this sequence, the ending motions of the # 10 subset of the Mook Jong form are demonstrated in reverse. In the forward form, the ending would start with the kim yeung ma scissors goang sao and finish with double toy sao (aka tak sao).

enervate the muscles on the trunk of the body. The stabilizing actions of the pectoral muscles greatly assist in bringing these arcs to the centerline. Stabilization during the reverse form relies more on the latissimus muscles of the back. This is because in the reverse form, the hands move in expanding arcs away from the center point.

The development of the expansion skills of the reverse form is important to the Wing Chun student. Most of the techniques of the forward form develop skills used on the inside of the opponent's arms or counters angular to the outside of his arms. One of the difficulties of the forward form is being able to reproduce the huen sao circling hand

the agonists become antagonists and antagonists become agonists.

Wing Chun is an interesting study of synergistic action. While the latissimus muscles are the main stabilizers of Wing Chun motion, the pectoral and the deltoid muscles keep the hands on track to the target. When performing the forward wooden dummy form, variations in the synergistic musculature must be made when performing certain moves because of the limited mobility of the wooden arms. This limitation produces some slightly unrealistic actions that probably would not occur in an actual self-defense situation. Some artists have constructed dummies with moveable arms to remedy this situation. The problem with this solution is no moveable arm can be made to mimic the infinite variations of the arms of an attacker. A simpler solution is to "patch" the deficiencies in the form by training the synergistic muscles in the complete range of their usage within the confines of the mook jong form. This is a primary function of the reverse form. When training the mook jong backwards, the muscles should also contract in a reverse order. Of the variety of force applications used in Wing Chun, two types focus on a short convulsive muscular contraction at the end of a longer, relaxed contraction, jut lik and ging lik. Jut lik is an explosive shocking energy used to jerk the opponent forward, causing a destabilizing whiplash movement. Its opposite, ging lik, is an explosive tightening of the hand muscles at the end of a strike. ging lik is responsible for Wing Chun's "one inch punch". In the wooden dummy form, every subset ends with jut sao, or "shocking hand". This technique compresses the arms of the jong with a slight snatching effect. Done in reverse, the energy would be a release of the arms with the same vigor. This same concept applies to withdrawing the hands from the trunk as if striking in reverse. This could be considered an internal kung fu application of plyometric training. Generating the maximum force in the shortest time, the trainee is attempting to develop the explosiveness of a movement in reverse. Done backwards an explosive ging lik contact to the trunk of the dummy becomes a jerking jut lik control from the trunk. Vice versa, a jut lik control of the arms of the jong becomes a ging lik burst away from the arms. Mimicking an explosive movement towards the trunk would be "negative ging lik training," imitating the shocking motions of the hands away from the dummy is "negative jut lik training."

The reverse form balances the musculature and movement. The hand movements of the forward form move in concentric arcs toward the center point. These motions

“The forward form can be considered to produce driving force of a centripetal nature while the reverse form releases force as a result of centrifugal energy.”

from outside to inside by going over the arms to the inside gates. In this situation, the opponent often presents stiffness in his arms, obstructing a direct path to his centerline. The reverse form trains the arms to accept and release the opponent's inside pressure and counter with an attack to a lower target. Generally, the forward form cultivates manipulation of the opponent's pressure through control while the reverse form develops the ability to manipulate the opponent's energy through release.

The forward form can be considered to produce driving force of a centripetal nature while the reverse form releases force as a result of centrifugal energy. This can be considered a physiological definition of kung fu's hard and soft. The centripetal movements of the forward form require a coordinated contraction of the chest and arms. All movements of the forward form are refined evolutions of the fetal position. The fetal position is the most all around protective defensive position of the body. The original pose in the womb, the body instinctually attempts to assume it during times of stress and trauma. For full protective effect, the fetal position is a strong contraction of all of the muscles of the trunk. It seems the efforts of all martial arts are to harness the defensive energy of the fetal effort while adding offensive techniques. The more advanced the art and artist becomes, the less the postures of the art will resemble the fetal position. No matter what the change of posture, however, if the practitioner is pushed to his limits he will try to add the force of the fetal positioning to his technique becoming “dow lik”, or struggling. This is the source of the concept of incorrect hardness. It is the goal of the Wing Chun student to overcome the compulsion to resist through proper training, which would include correct breathing a very secure stance, and systematic relaxation of specific muscle groups.

The centrifugal actions of the reverse form are totally counter to the impulses of hardness. While the motions of the centripetal form are naturally precise yet tend to develop rigidity, the moves of the centrifugal form are soft but defy precision. The circles of the reverse jong moving outward from the centerline tend to force the hands away from the arms. The reverse hand movements attempt to develop precision by seeking and flowing along the mook jong's arms.

In the series of photos on the previous page, notice how the arms flow to open into the scissors goang sao.

ability of “dividing the hands” of the opponent.

Sticking to the arms of the mook jong in these outward flowing circles helps the student learn to subtly adhere to the opponent's arm to veer his attack off his desired course.

Described in this article are just a few of the obvious benefits of the reverse mook jong form. Once the student has gained initial competence with the form, he should try other variations of reverse mook jong training. This method can be practiced with speed to develop continuity of movements of slow to strengthen posture. Doing the form left-handed enhances the neuro-muscular connections needed to use both sides of the body equally. Of course the breath must be relaxed and no more than six breaths per minute should be spent no matter what the exertion.

The reverse form is another way of gleaning new skills from traditional Wing Chun. The art is compact enough to allow the student multiple variations of practice without leaving the traditional Wing Chun technical paradigm. The student is obligated to try the alternative training before claiming competence in the art. Any assessment of Wing Chun, whether positive or negative, would be totally unfounded unless the critic or artist critiqued is skilled in the reverse mook jong form.



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As an instructor and communicator of the martial arts, specifically the 'Wong Shun Leung Method' of Wing Chun Gung-fu, it is very important to be able to explain the art and present its concepts in as succinct a way as possible. This is of course to ensure that each and every student can gain a deep and practical understanding of what the system offers them, and how best to use this "tool" for self-improvement and personal protection. Clearly, one can get into very detailed discussions on all aspects of the system, but sometimes this can cause more confusion and lead to greater misunderstanding than clarification. Especially for the less experienced students, too much detail can inhibit, rather than enhance their development.

This being the case, in recent years I have tried to find ways of simplifying the presentation of information, and providing simple summaries of various aspects of the system so that students find it easier to assimilate the information. This brief article takes that approach with reference to the three basic forms of Wing Chun and the "wooden dummy" form.

While my remarks are based directly on the 'Wong Shun Leung Method', hopefully the ideas presented here are also relevant to practitioners of other lineages and will provoke a different way of looking at the forms which will add to the readers knowledge of the system and enhance the development of their skills.

SIU NIM TAU ("young idea")

I would define the three sections of the 'Siu Nim Tau' form with just three words:

1st section - structure

2nd section - recovery

3rd section - coordination

The 1st section is primarily about 'Lat Sau Jik Chung' ("springy forward force" – that constant desire for the hands to attack when free of obstruction, the hallmark of effective Wing Chun combat), but there is much more than just that one concept being examined. It is the very **STRUCTURES** that are involved in that, and in footwork, kicking, simultaneous attack & defense, power generation and a host of others, hence my definition - *structure*.

The 2nd section concerns the various ways in which we might understand the concepts, techniques and strategies required to overcome situations where we have lost control of the *Centerline* and are unable to

face our adversary. In short, it provides ways of being able to face our opponent when placed in a compromised position such as arm-locks, bear hugs or grappling situations. Hence, my definition - *recovery*.

Finally, the 3rd section shows us various combinations of movements, applied with one hand, to emphasize the importance of realizing that we are capable of using one hand for more than one motion at a time. In other words, just because I have just used my left hand to attack or defend does not presuppose that it cannot be used again immediately, rather than relying upon the other hand first in a typical "one-two" action. In addition, it helps us to add flow to our actions, to develop natural motions that move easily from point to point. It is important to note that at no time is this section suggesting that the combinations utilized MUST be done in exactly those sequences. They are merely linked together for ease of practice and improvement, NOT as set motions. Therefore, the main aim of the 3rd section is the development of one of the key attributes for combat success - *coordination*.



CHAM KIU ("bridge seeking")

Probably the easiest way to view the '*Cham Kiu*' form is via the three distinct applications/interpretations of the '*Bong Sau*' ("upper-arm deflection") action, each section emphasizing a different idea:

1st section - '*Yi Bong*' ("shifting Bong") which teaches the concept of "borrowing the opponent's energy" to disperse/redirect an attack. It implies that contact already exists and this contact is then manipulated by '*Bong/Lan Sau*' and stance shifting/pivoting to reposition for further attack.

2nd section - '*Paau Bong*' ("throwing Bong") teaches the concept of "making contact" when the hands are not already in a favorable position. In other words, it is a literal introduction to the concept of '*Cham Kiu*' ("bridge seeking/finding"). It also teaches the concepts and skills associated with offensive footwork (and by reversing the action, defensive footwork, specifically as it needs to be applied with '*Bong Sau*' which, by its nature, requires a specialized action quite distinct from other techniques), kicking ('*Dang Geuk*' – "ascending kick") and the idea of always "chasing one's kicks" so that the opponent is constantly kept under threat, and recovery in the form of regaining the centre ('*Chau Kuen*' – "whipping punch") and refacing the centre ('*Yi Ying Sau*' – "recover shape/form hand").

3rd section - '*Dai Bong*' ("low-action Bong") which provides

a "two-in-one" interpretation of the '*Bong Sau*' for protecting the lower gates, one for when attacked on a lower line while the hands are down, the other for controlling the balance/stance when dragged out of position. This section also introduces the concept of controlling the legs by controlling the arms, a variation on the basic kicking action ('*Waang Geuk*' – "horizontal kick"), and yet another application of recovery whereby the '*Dan Sau*' ("springing hand") action of the '*Siu Nim Tau*' form is applied to the punch to complete the form.

To (briefly) elaborate on the 3rd section of the '*Cham Kiu*' form (controlling the legs by controlling the arms), this is in reference to the final few movements where the '*Soh Sau*' ("pressing palms") action (originally found in the 2nd section of '*Siu Nim Tau*') is combined with pivoting. This action is very '*Chi Sau*' specific, but of course can be applied outside of the '*Chi Sau*' environment. It involves applying pressure on the arms to disrupt the ability to raise the leg (this occurs because it changes the alignment of the hips such that it is extremely difficult to kick effectively). Visualize yourself rolling with a partner who

attempts to launch a kick. To do so, he/she has to transfer the balance to one leg. On feeling this shift in the stance, the hand which is in the '*Fook Sau*' ("prostrating/subduing hand") position (high or low) presses downwards in conjunction with a pivot, suppressing and redirecting the attempted kick. The '*Bong/Taan*' hand becomes a "half-*Taan*" action, monitoring the opposite hand and maintaining a perfect place from which to launch the first counter strike. Step out of '*Chi Sau*' and the same controlling of the arm/elbow can be used against the opponent's forward hand to suppress the ability to kick, or else can be used to actually deflect the kick by cutting across the knee/calf/shin/foot (dependant on range) to knock the opponent off balance either to the inside or outside. The same concept is explored within the '*Muk Yan Jong*' ("wooden dummy") form, incorporating one of only two sequences in the entire 'MYJ' form that MUST follow each other.

MUK YAN JONG ("wooden dummy")

The simplest way to really appreciate the intention of the '*Muk Yan Jong*' form is to consider the following statement: while we do not go out of our way to make mistakes, as human beings we are bound to at least occasionally get things wrong. The most basic and effective of CORRECTLY APPLIED Wing Chun science occurs in the '*Siu Nim Tau*' and '*Cham Kiu*' forms. These two forms guide us through the techniques and principles that are most common and effective and they are shown to us in the best way possible. In the "dummy" form, however, we are shown techniques/concepts being done INCORRECTLY. This is because if we are to instinctively correct an error, we need to be aware of the error in the first place. Thus, much of what is contained in the "dummy" form amounts to the most ideal RECOVERY method from typical error situations. It



was *Sifu Wong Shun Leung*'s view that the most useful and most likely to be used techniques / concepts are contained within the first 60 or so movements (up to and including the '*Po Pai Jeung*' – "in-line palms" section), and these are very largely '*Siu Nim Tau*' and '*Cham Kiu*' based in nature. Beyond that, the techniques/concepts tend to be more '*Biu Ji*' form in nature and in some ways cater for less likely errors and contain more in the way of kicking strategies as well.

BIU JI ("pointing fingers")

The '*Biu Ji*' form is a "pointing finger" and what it is pointing at is a series of examples of the

kinds of problems which can occur in combat when things do not go as planned, and it offers some solutions to these situations. Humans being what humans are, we are all prone to make mistakes no matter how well we plan, or train for, a situation. '*Biu Ji*' form takes us outside the Wing Chun system, outside the system as presented in the '*Siu Nim Tau*' and

'Cham Kiu' forms, that is, and asks the question "What if.....?"

Where the first two forms are each easily broken down into three distinct parts, each part with its own particular concepts and techniques, the '*Biu Ji*' form is quite different. Instead, in '*Biu Ji*' the breakdown takes the form of clusters of techniques which build into a repertoire of "emergency responses" designed to overcome an opponent who has overpowered, out-positioned, injured, surprised or, through some error on the part of the Wing Chun fighter, managed to gain the upper hand.

Sifu Wong Shun Leung referred to the contents of the form as being a collection of "emergency techniques", and that unlike the first two forms,

which were clearly structured, each with three defined sections, 'Biu Ji' was far less structured and had the potential to be added to at any time, should someone come up with yet another situation that gave rise to the need for a more specialized solution outside of the normal spectrum of Wing Chun concepts. As such,

'Biu Ji' is something of an "open-ended" training form, in keeping with its basic reason for existing in the first place.

I suggest that the 'Biu Ji' form alone is about as deadly as a bowl of wet spaghetti! However, it should be pointed out that in the past the reluctance of the Wing Chun clan to expose the form to outsiders is understandable when one considers that the 'Biu Ji' form does in fact point out potential weaknesses in the system which could be exploited by an enemy with knowledge of the form. Thus, it could be suggested that the form is "deadly" in the sense that it points to disadvantageous rather than advantageous aspects of Wing Chun combat.

My teacher always maintained that, contrary to a widely held belief, 'Biu Ji' was NOT the deadliest form because if that was the case, why would we spend so much time developing the other forms and 'Chi Sau' skills? Surely, he would suggest, if 'Biu Ji' contained such invincible techniques, we would only be training that one form. What 'Biu Ji' does is take us out of the box, to view combat from a perspective other than the basic concepts and techniques of the ideal method given to us in 'Siu Nim Tau' and 'Cham Kiu', making us consider what could go wrong and how, if possible, to "cut our losses" and at least survive the encounter. In 'Biu Ji,' winning is NOT an option and definitely NOT a guarantee. What we are seeking are instinctive reactions that may allow for escape, or to neutralize the attack such that we can "ride out the storm". As such, Wong Sifu always said that he hoped that we would never have to make use of the concepts/techniques of this form, because if we were in the position where this was necessary, we were already in a very bad situation from which we may not escape.



About the Author:

David Peterson has been training in the Chinese martial arts since 1973. He became a student of Sifu **Wong Shun Leung** after travelling to Hong Kong in 1983.

He is also a freelance writer whose articles have appeared in many local (Australian) and overseas journals. More recently, his articles have featured on several international Web sites, including 'wingchunken.com', 'Planet Wing Chun', 'Wing Chun World', 'vtmuseum.org' and 'WongShunLeung.com'.

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