

A COMMUNITY-CONTRIBUTED ONLINE MAGAZINE OF WING CHUN

Wing Chun Teahouse

DEBUT ISSUE 2006

TRAINING IN TAIWAN

BY MARK DEBUS

WHO DO I BELIEVE? WHAT'S THE RIGHT WAY TO PRACTICE?

BY WAYNE BELONOHA

A BRIEF INSIGHT INTO THE THE MOOK YAN JONG

BY JAMES SINCLAIR

LO MAN KAM NARRATIVE

BY LO MAN KAM

CHI GONG & THE WOODEN DUMMY

BY KARL GODWIN

THE WING CHUN DIFFERENCE

BY LIN AI WEI

THE TALE OF THE SNAKE & CRANE

BY RIEN BUL





A Letter from the Publisher

We're very proud to bring you the debut issue of Wing Chun Teahouse magazine. The quarterly online magazine is a community-contributed publication dedicated to the martial art of Wing Chun in all its forms. Available in Adobe Acrobat format and on the internet at www.wingchunteahouse.org, the magazine aims to provide a non-political forum for Wing Chun practitioners world-wide to broaden their exposure to the art. Like the now legendary teahouse meetings of our Wing Chun ancestors, it allows readers to increase their knowledge and share their own.

As a Wing Chun practitioner, the Wing Chun Teahouse is as much your magazine as it is ours. We're dedicated to Wing Chun in all its forms, including its many different spellings, lineages, histories and training methods. Most importantly, we want your input in making the magazine better for upcoming issues. We know this is a very small beginning to what we as a Wing Chun community can contribute to a publication that is our own. Whether you have a great deal of experience with Wing Chun or not, our community as a whole can benefit from many different points of view. All subjects are open. The only guideline is that you keep politics out of your writings and respect other lineages within our art. With your help and others in the Wing Chun community, we can create a publication of which we can all be proud.

Sincerely,

Adam Williss

Publisher and Co-Founder

adam@wingchunteahouse.org

Chi Gong & the Wing Chun Wooden Dummy

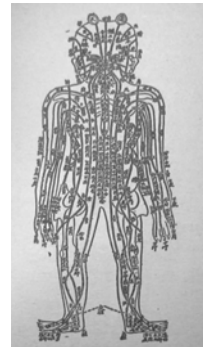
By Karl Godwin

In the modern pursuit of physical and mental well being, the art of Chi Gong has emerged as a simple and effective method of attaining all around health popular with all age groups. As Chi gong styles are generally viewed as subsystems of a great variety of Chinese martial arts, the techniques performed can range from simple sitting exercises to extreme stretching postures considered more related to yoga. Chi gong always represents the relationship between the individual and the environment. Since the practitioner is in constant contact with the environment, sometimes tools can be used to direct and concentrate the energy of the chi for specific purposes. The Wing Chun Mook Yan Jong is such a tool to lead energy for self-defense along a pathway to self-development.

What is Chi?

There is yet to be discovered a scientifically satisfactory, quantifiable definition of Chi. Common modern thought nebulously considers Chi to be a form of bioelectric energy. The problem is bioelectric energy can be measured while the causes of bioelectricity cannot be adequately defined.

In any material body, the state of its existence is determined by its temperature and the pressures placed upon it. The human body is no exception. Every system and mechanism of the body is considered healthy only if each system is operating within certain temperatures and pressures. Intracellular pressures, blood pressure, cerebrospinal fluid pressure and varying body temperatures in illness and health are all examples of varying temperature/pressure relationships. Chi leads the reactions of maintaining all of the temperature/pressure relationships in the body at their optimum measures. This flow of energy rises from the ground through the legs and the body, through the arms, returning to the body and finally back down the legs to the ground. This cyclical flow has been determined to follow specific channels called "meridians". Among complex structures, energy is transferred from one meridian system to another. The Earth is governed by pressure and temperature and therefore possesses meridians. Energy from earth is received by the human body and is released externally, either back to the ground, or into another system via the hands. When the cycle is impeded at some point in the transfer a physical or mental problem occurs. The purpose of Chi Gong exercises is to maintain and stabilize the flow while all parts of the body are under correct pressures and temperatures.



The Martial Arts and Chi Gong

Chi Gong and Chi usage has always been associated with the martial arts, although the benefits for the health of the population should overshadow combat usage. The discovery and development of Chi from fighting is logical. Threats to general health can take many forms. Physical aggression is usually an overt conflict to be resolved. Injury and disease many times are covert conflicts against health. The movements of the martial arts are designed to protect the body against the harmful results of conflict. The subconscious recognizes this as beneficial to the individual's overall well being, and internalizes the effect to counter the conflicts presented by disease and internal injury. Of course, as a fight is best resolved in it's embryonic state, the internal effects of the movements counter disease best in it's pre-symptomatic phases. Patients, however, can use Chi Gong effectively at any stage of disease. The key to the internalization of combat movements to benefit internal health is the maintenance of "mindfulness" of each movement. The movements must be done slowly, with focus and slow breathing for the subconscious mind to translate the intent of the physical health promoting factors.

The Evolution of Human Chi

As humans stand upright, the connection (pressure) with the Earth is different from animals. Instead of grounding the body with four contacts, the human has two. This leaves the arms free to carry necessities. Early man's survival depended upon two things:

1. His ability to carry as much food as possible within the span of his arms and
2. Maximizing his upright posture to see greater distances for perception of opportunity or danger.

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For hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of years, the security of man depended upon these two factors. This action of rising upright and embracing materials to live, repeated for eons, is embedded in man as a survival mechanism. This posture has such an effect internally, it is used by most Chi Gong styles as the first exercise. By virtue of a type of postural-emotional-visceral reflex, it can enhance health. (Photo 1.)

When assuming this posture, the mind senses the security of food, which triggers healthy internal functions along with an uplifted emotional state. This also creates a set of positive physiological changes to enhance overall health.



Photo 1.



Photo 2.

This standing posture is the initiation to all Chi Gong training, especially for martial art application. The Wing Chun style adopts this posture with a toe-in bent knee stance to maximize the connection with the ground. (Photo 2.) Because of the angle of the legs, pinching exertion between the knees actually increases the root with the ground.

A second stance used for advancing, places nearly all of the weight on the rear leg. With the hips square, this posture provides the most single weighted connection with the ground. Although the weight is almost entirely on the rear leg, the front foot is pressed firmly against the ground with the knees pressing together. These two stances make up the physical foundation of Wing Chun as well as the support for Chi Gong development. From this established base, a productive chi posture can be built. This posture requires the spine to be stretched upward from the secure base as if a string were pulling the body up through the top of the head at the crown. This slightly stretches the upper curves of the spine. By tucking the sacrum under and bending the knees, the lumbar curve is stretched and reduced. Finally, the shoulders are relaxed and the elbows are dropped to their lowest position. This aids in lowering the body's center of gravity. The resulting posture creates a unique condition of the Axial skeleton, that is, the spinal column, skull, pelvic girdle and shoulder girdle. The extreme tension of the proper horse stance commits most of the body's muscular tension below the fifth lumbar vertebrae. The fifth lumbar vertebra is an important structure in Eastern wellness methods. Internally, the organs at this area and lower are organs of compression (the digestive organs). The organs above become more expansive, (the heart, the lungs, the brain broadcasting electrical energy.) Above this fifth lumbar vertebra, the upper body can maintain a relaxed yet flexible energy. Wing Chun instructors prefer to call, "rattan energy" like the bending and releasing of a rattan whip. In fast actions, the vibrational oscillations increase as it directed through the arms and finally through the fingers. Because the vibrations of the movement are impossible to keep track of at this rate, in the practice of Chi Gong, the movements must be performed slowly, with speed reserved for the training of energy discharge, (chi application), not cultivation. These are the three keys for optimum chi development; an erect spine: a loose and flexible upper body and a solid, secure lower body foundation. Cheng Man Ching, a great Tai Chi practitioner of the Twentieth Century felt these principles contained everything for the development of chi.

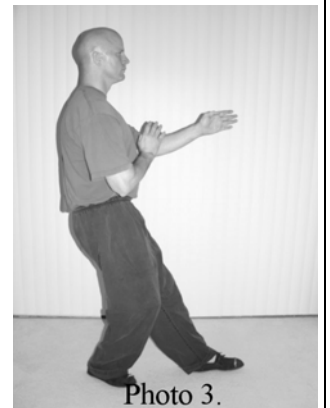


Photo 3.

Wing Chun Chi Gong

The Wing Chun style recognizes three aspects to complete Chi Gong training. The empty handed forms, Siu Nim Tao, Chun Kiu, and Biu Jee, cultivate and circulate the energy from the ground and within the body independently. This is chi gong development from the self to the self. The Mook Yan Jong form teaches how to release the energy from the self into another organic object. Chi Sao, the sticking hands exercise of the art allows the student to receive energy from another in a harmonic fashion and use the incoming energy in a beneficial way. The two weapons of Wing Chun, the long pole and the butterfly swords, are also used to develop energy. As well, they provide an advanced method of extending the energetic field, the weapons provide via an organic tool with the long pole and an inorganic extension through the steel of the knives.

As important as solo practice is, it represents a limited circuit in the flow of chi. Meridian theory tells us the movement of

chi changes direction at the toes and at the fingers. This change of direction should imply a change in the entity of the energy itself. Energy from the ground rises through the body... correcting impaired functions and collecting along the way offending energetic units. This is continued through the arm and discharged from the hand to the environment. From the environment, energy is picked up by the hands and returned back through the body to be discharged through the soles of the feet. From here the process begins again. There are three discharge and three entry points on each hand and foot. Among the receptors of pressure are structures called "pacinian corpuscles" found in the palms and the soles of the feet. They hold special significance to the Chi Gong student because they receive the information of the body's physical connection with the ground and the environment. The feet provide locomotion and stability by accommodating the Earth's energy, which is considered inorganic. The hands use tools and bring food to the mouth, which until a few centuries ago, involved the interactions of organic energies. Children's play involves running and climbing trees. Beyond entertainment, this is developmental Chi Gong and plays a great role in adult well-being, both in internal health and injury prevention agility. Many students of the internal arts make use of trees for different aspects of their training; to strike, to climb, even to walk around. For adult practitioners however, the need for tactile contact with wood is essential for a completely rounded Chi Gong regimen. The Wing Chun wooden man is the perfect device for such training.

There are no reliable historical references pertaining to the development of the wooden dummy. At the simplest level, effort spent on the wooden dummy is an extension of woodworking; the difference being instead of creating an object from the wood, you are creating a better self by working with the wood. The wooden man is a refinement of the tree. The first training apparatus for combat was undoubtedly a tree. With a branch trimmed, an excellent arm was made. Eventually a simple post was used for striking and kicking. Different styles of combat developed the posts in different ways. The traditional Wing Chun wooden dummy happened to use an arm and leg configuration designed to cultivate fighting skill and chi simultaneously.



The Mook Yan Jong possesses two upper arms, a middle arm and a leg connected to a solid trunk inches in diameter. This configuration in no way describes an anatomical representation of the body as an energetic entity. The trunk is where energy exchange takes place. Chi cultivation contact with the trunk.

Progressive Development vs. Adaptive Development

Conventional physical training relies on progressive development. In weightlifting exercises, as strength increases, weight increments are regularly increased. When punching a heavy bag, as power increases the boxer proceeds to heavier bags. While this training is very beneficial for the combat aspect, the chi cultivation is limited mainly to the muscles because the equipment is mobile. The weights move and the bags swing. The wooden dummy is immovable. The density of the wood is too great to be affected by the hand. A properly constructed dummy trunk can be practiced upon for a lifetime and not be structurally affected. Changes occurring during proper practice happen within the student, not the dummy. As the student strikes the dummy with proper posturing, energy from the earth is received from the soles of the feet to travel up the meridians of the body, through the arms and out of the palms of the hands as action-reaction dictates. This process simultaneously occurs in reverse. The pressure happening at the point of impact is applied to every cell in the line constructed between the hands and the feet. This is why proper posturing is important. By using the posturing concepts described above, the line of pressure will extend through the Dan Tien or the body's center; located two inches below the navel and two-thirds the distance from the front of the body to the back. This is the area of the fifth lumbar vertebrae. At the moment of impact, an instant of "chi growth" occurs because the dan tien is not only supported from the stance, but also solidified from the lateral support provided from the incoming energy of the arms. Since this is the most security the center can achieve. The flexible, soft energy internal practitioners seek can grow upwards through the organs of expanding energy to the brain. The constant application of force to the immovable dummy trunk creates structural changes in the body. Since the dummy does not move, there may not be noticeable growth in muscle mass, unless the student is deficient in the musculature. Muscle density may increase however, due to their structural responsibilities. Muscles of the abdominal area become strengthened to the point of being a very effective

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shield for the organs within. The bones increase in density, maximizing their support and protective functions. (Photo 5.)

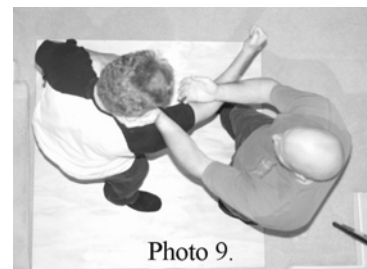
Training on the Mook Jong also introduces a unique dimension to speed development. Training to overcome the impossibility of beating the dummy to the next move is the basis for adaptive speed training. Progressive speed training involves the precise use of a timer to record the exact speed of an action. Using the recorded time as feedback, the student can make a conscious effort to reduce time of his action through a combination of increased muscle speed, decreased antagonistic muscle tension and unnecessary synergistic action. This will result in non-telegraphic movement. The student progressively becomes quicker. Adaptive speed training involves the constant effort to complete the form faster, achieving a fast enough speed can never be attained to beat the jong. Thus the student adapts by making his movements more refined and, over time, will sense he is moving more slowly, when in reality, he is simply moving with more skill in an diminishing time frame.

If the trunk is the point of energy exchange, then the arms guide the energy. The Wing Chun style makes ample use of a concept known as "sil lin die da"; the principle of simultaneous defense and attack. This combat strategy is used repeatedly in the wooden dummy form. Being an internal martial art, the defending and attacking arms contact with the proper chi meridians. The defending arm will accept the aggressive energy with the incoming meridians while the attacking arm sends the energy out of the outgoing channels. When practicing a technique such as tan sao with a simultaneous chang sao, a complete circuit of energy is formed. Energy travels into the trunk from the outgoing meridians of the chang sao while returning into the body via contact with the incoming meridians of the tan sao. This action encourages balanced energy flow in the right and left sides of the body. A Wing Chun exercise called "Chi Sao" allows two practitioners to cultivate this harmonic exchange in a mutually beneficial way. The exercise demonstrates the appropriate flow of energy from outgoing meridians of one partner to the incoming channels of the other, while the other arms simultaneously perform the reverse functions. (Photos 7. and 8.)

Martial Application

While the health benefits of Wooden Dummy Chi Gong are numerous, the specific wooden dummy form evolved out of the need for the cultivation of self-defense skills. The dummy movements when performed on an opponent create a new system of energy exchange. Remember, the dummy is not an anatomical representation of an opponent, but rather an energetic one. The arms and legs intersect the central axis of the dummy. By following these lines, the student's energy is always training to move through the center of the opponent. Originally, a wooden dummy was built to specifications determined by the anatomy of the student after the student has attained some skill in the art. The dummy should reflect the energy of the student. A skilled maker should produce a dummy which when practiced on, should feel similar to practice with the student it was made for.

The adaptive energy described has obvious combat benefits. After years of training on the density of the jong, an ungoverned strike to the human frame can cause great damage. This power is not just randomly applied to the body however. The arms on the dummy guide the movements not only to the central axis but also through specific points. These locations are always acupuncture points and are found on the arms and the trunk. While some dummies may have the acupuncture points mapped out, this practice is really unnecessary because the construction of the arms automatically leads the energy to the specific targets.



The beauty of almost any Wing Chun dummy form is the way it uses natural timing and combinations used to set up, weaken and attack energy points in an opponent's body. (Photos 9. and 10.) A properly constructed dummy guides the arms to specific points automatically as result of relaxed practice. Expert precision is acquired through constant repetition. One million postures should be considered the minimum practice to gain precise accupoint striking skill. Depending upon the branch of Wing Chun studied, one million postures can be achieved by performing the wooden dummy form between two and ten thousand times.

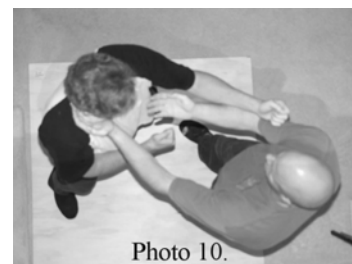


Photo 10.

Wing Chun has historically been considered one of the fastest styles to learn for fighting effectiveness. This view overlooks the true depth of Wing Chun as an internal martial art. In reality, the style offers one of the most complete approaches to chi development in the Chinese systems.

*NOTE: This article is taken from Karl Godwin's book, **Modern Training Methods of Wing Chun: Volume 1 – The Wooden Dummy.***

Karl Godwin has been training in the art of Wing Chun for nearly 30 years and teaching since 1982. He is the founder and master instructor at Seminole Wing Chun in Central Florida. For more information on Karl Godwin or how to get his book, please visit Seminole Wing Chun online at www.floridawingchun.com.



Lok Yiu, second Hong Kong student of Yip Man, passed away on February 6th, 2006 at the age of 83 after battling lung cancer. Born in 1922, Lok Yiu began training in Wing Chun in 1950, shortly after Yip Man began teaching at the Restaurant Workers Association. He started teaching private students in 1959 and opened his first school in 1961. The death of this legendary Wing Chun figure is a great loss to the martial art world and the Wing Chun community. His knowledge and spirit is survived by his twin sons, Sifu Lok Keng Kong and Sifu Lok Keng Sang as well as the thousand of students he taught in his 30-year plus teaching career.

ALL HONOR TO HIS NAME

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WHO DO YOU BELIEVE?

By Wayne Belonoha



When learning Ving Tsun, you will hear many different opinions about what is right and what is wrong. How something should be done, and how it should not. Often two different people will have completely different views, yet somehow, they both make their methods work.

How do you really differentiate and determine who is right and who is wrong? How do you know who to believe?

This question caused me to examine why there were so many different styles and methods of Ving Tsun. Even within my immediate kung fu family, there were differences and differing opinions. Not that it caused any problems, because it always brought forth great discussion and thinking, but what caused this to happen? Why would people become polarized about the "right way" or "most efficient way" and hold on so tightly to their opinions? When some people teach, they will say their way is right and others are wrong; that their way is the only correct way because they have a deeper or secret understanding.

I thought about this concept for a long time and the more I studied the people and their techniques, the more I came to realize why they held on so strongly to their opinions. It was because they believed strongly that they were right and that their Ving Tsun worked for them. Sometimes I would not agree with their assessment of what would work and what would not, and they would disagree with my assessment of their assessment. I would discuss it with them, and after listening - really listening - the answer came to me.

They were not wrong - they were right. Did this mean I was wrong? No, it did not. We were both right, within our own contexts. I came to believe that because of context, there is rarely an absolute wrong or right in Ving Tsun. There are rules that make Ving Tsun what it is (for example, the vertical fist and the rapid fire punching). There are only varying degrees of right and wrong.

These varying degrees of right and wrong symbolize a relationship that exists throughout Ving Tsun and life. The relationship is one where two opposites compliment and repel each other at the same time, where one cannot exist without the other, like the Chinese yin and yang. Engraved on one of the Ving Tsun Chops is the saying "The Yin and Yang Principle Should be Thoroughly Understood". This is the key to many conflicts within the Ving Tsun system and the answer to many questions. This key is, as one might expect, both simple and complicated at the same time.

Like the yin and yang, even what one considers to be absolutely wrong will always have an element of truth - a context (although slim) where truth exists surrounded by wrong. Opposite qualities very rarely exist in isolation; the yin contains yang, and vice-versa. Extreme yang contains the seed of yin and one cannot exist without the other.

Many people make the mistake of believing or thinking in absolutes, separating the yin from the yang, instead of believing that both points of view are complimentary in building a complete understanding. In the Yin/Yang symbol, the primarily white side contains a spot of black and the primarily black side contains a spot of white. If a ving tsun person is too soft without having some firm, or is too strong without having softness, the skill is lessened.

Ving Tsun is a style of degrees of right and wrong. Let's examine the yin and yang in terms of some Ving Tsun elements. The Ving Tsun practitioner must balance competing demands for speed, accuracy, power, control, strength, strategy, flexibility and risk - to name a few. Typically, changing one causes a change in another. I can punch fast, but too fast and I lose some degrees of power and/or control.

Let me give an example using a relationship between risk and speed. Some people believe that you must always step to the outside (to the left or right of the opponent) because it's safer. It is true that stepping to the outside is safer, but it takes more time. So which is better? Safety or speed? There is no answer to this question outside the context of the situation and experiences. There are people who believe strongly in one way over the other. Why? Because the applications and techniques in Ving Tsun are always bound to the context in which they exist and are influenced by the experiences of the student. Since contexts are boundless, there can always be a justification for any particular movement - no matter how improbable.

I have come to believe that there is no ultimate technique and that one technique is not necessarily better than another, just different - and each is better suited for certain situations or contexts. That also does not mean that just because one way has more advantages the other way is wrong. It is just, in the case of the example above, more risky or slower.

Adding to the complexity of the equation is the person themselves. If a person is very risk adverse, they will view the risky move as unacceptable - and will teach it as such. The strong person will view using power as acceptable, where the weak and meak person may not. The slow person will see fast movements as unacceptable or impossible to perform by "a normal person". When a particular technique breeches a person's comfort zone of any attribute (strength, flexibility, speed, intelligence, jealousy, etc), they often consider it unacceptable and will normally say it's wrong. However, some people may be willing and able to use more of that attribute - and then for them that technique may be perfectly acceptable.

However, objectively, if it works for that person then they can call it ving tsun; it has merit and correctness in their view. It works for them, so it's not wrong. It may not meet your criteria or may breach your comfort zone so you may consider it incorrect or impractical - and that's fine too.

The problems start when one person sees the techniques in black and white only and teaches in terms of right and wrong instead of terms like better and worse, or riskier and safer.



About the Author

Wayne Belonoha is founder of the Canadian Ving Tsun Academy and Vice President of the United Wushu Federation of Canada. He is author of *The Wing Chun Compendium*. More info on Wayne Belonoha and *The Wing Chun Compendium* can be found at vingtsun.ca.

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THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WING CHUN AND OTHER ARTS

By Lin Ai Wei

Unlike many other martial arts systems, Wing Chun Kung Fu was created to be fully combative in all aspects. Its theories, principles, and concepts are based on the structure and limitations of the human body. These limitations are highly exploited in Wing Chun Kung Fu by angular strikes, forward and regain stepping and last but not least, center line application. The many concepts of Wing Chun Kung Fu utilize our mental capacity in comprehending the idea of doing just enough to get the job done. The principles of Wing Chun are based on one's character in practice, teaching and combative application. The theories of Wing Chun are based on the possible outcomes in any given scenario. This means one may have an idea of how a combative situation may be, and what techniques they may use to exercise application of their technique. The only way to prove this theory is the use of it in actual combat.

It is safe to say that through the development of Wing Chun kung fu, in light of the full comprehension of one's theories, concepts and principles, mastery of this system would not take too long to achieve. This reason being is the method it was created for. To actually recognize this method, one must take into consideration, size, structure, and ability of the person who had originally refined its techniques.

Since a woman had refined these techniques, known as Wing Chun Kung Fu, she saw that high kicks, low stances, and extreme forward energy would allow her to get hurt more than protect herself. Ng Mui, being this woman, had left out the unnecessary motions of some of the most well-known movements in the Shao Lin martial arts. Seeking a more effective manner to protect oneself, she took on ideas of center line protection, center line attack, simultaneous attack and defense, and last but not least, the idea of utilizing lower kicks to maintain a rooted posture while in combat.

It is well known that the many martial arts in existence are seemingly fancy, using large motions to express attack and defense. These various styles are very pleasing to the eye, especially to the novice. Therefore, to an untrained eye, Wing Chun Kung Fu would look very ugly and ineffective when compared to the flashy, acrobatic methods of these aforementioned martial art systems. In actuality, the acrobatic and flashy movements can not be used in combat effectively, unless practiced for many years. Wing Chun Kung Fu, on the other hand, can be used effectively in a shorter period of time.

Like any martial art, there are unlimited benefits to reap with Wing Chun Kung Fu. Yet, these benefits will only manifest if the proper tools are in place and set for each individual condition. There is a truth in Wing Chun Kung Fu that states simplicity is the key to all combative expression. Following this truth in everyday living, one sees that the way they walk, think and communicate will change. Cultivating mind and movement with simplicity, the limitations of the human body become nonexistent.

The usual benefits of physical well being, healthy living and a clear mind will manifest due to proper guidance, participation, patience and will of both the teacher and student.

About the Author:

Lin Ai Wei is head of the Yun Xing Pai in Shandong province, China. He leads the China branch of Lau Wai Wing Chun under Alan Goldberg. For more information on Lin Ai Wei or to contact him, please email yunxingpai@yahoo.com or visit his website at www.freewebs.com/yunxingpai.



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WING CHUN & MY UNCLE, YIP MAN:

A LO MAN KAM NARRATIVE

Yip Man's real name was Ki Man. He was a native of Foshan in Kwangtung. He was the second child born in the family, living on Fook Yin Road in the Mulberry Gardens of Foshan. His is a well-known family in that area. Next door to his house is a famous Teahouse of Foshan, Tou Yun Gue. Also next door is a famous bakery, Gow Hing Long. The houses of Mulberry Gardens are very big, and Mulberry Gardens itself is very large and well known in Foshan.

I was born in Hong Kong and grew up there. My mother was Yip Man's sister. During World War II and the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong, I went to Foshan to live with my uncle in Mulberry Gardens. At that time, I met and studied with my uncle every day. My mother regularly told me stories of Uncle Yip's great boxing accomplishments. As a youth, this inspired me, especially in view of the difficult time in which we were living.

At the age of seven, my uncle became one of the students of Master Chan Wah Shun. Master Chan was old at the time and rarely taught students himself. Yip Man was his last. Since Yip became Master Chan's closed door disciple, Master Chan developed a great liking for him. Yip Man's elder fellow students, Ng Choun Su, Lar Ru Chi, and Chan Ru Man, all took care of the young Yip Man.

The tuition of Master Chan was very high: each student had to pay a few ounces of silver. The common man at the time could not afford such a cost, so Master Chan's students only numbered in the teens. This is also why Wing Chun is known as the rich person's kung fu. Six years later, Master Chan was near death. Before he died, he ordered his student Ng Choun Su to teach his younger students. Master Yip Man followed the elder fellow-student for three years. At the age of sixteen, Master Yip went to Hong Kong to study English at St. Steven's College. There he was introduced by a classmate to the second son of Mr. Leong Jan, Leung Bik. The two studied together for three years and perfected the art of Wing Chun.

Among his fellow students, Yip Man got along best with Mr. Yun Ke Shan, who is the student of Mr. Ng Choun Su. Both Yip and Yun are the same age and often spent time together. While at Yip Man's house, Mr. Yun met Yip's son, Yip Chun. Mr. Yun was very impressed by Yip Chun, so he taught him the first form of Wing Chun, "Shaolin Tao."

During the early years of the Chinese Republic, Foshan had a yearly festival called "Autumn Scenes." One year Yip Man and his wife went to see the festival. While there, an officer of the military tried to take advantage of Mrs. Yip. At the time, Yip was wearing a long gown with cloth shoes. His stature was not tall, and he looked more like a gentleman than a fighter. The officer figured he was weak and helpless, so he became more daring and offensive. My uncle immediately resorted to the "simultaneous attack and defence" technique of Wing Chun, and the officer was knocked to the floor immediately. The officer then took out his revolver, but uncle grabbed its barrel and used the strength of his thumb to break the trigger, rendering it useless.

When the Japanese occupied Foshan, the military police caught wind of Yip Man's reputation and invited him to become their coach. But he refused from the standpoint of righteousness. That angered the Japanese greatly, to the point that they ordered another kung fu master, surnamed Leung, to challenge Master Yip Man. Yip Man accepted only after being asked many times. Master Leung thought his punch very powerful and used it against Master Yip. Yip Man immediately executed the Wing Chun "Horse Stance and Kwan Sao" to defend himself, and then turned around and kicked Master Leung to the ground. After this occurrence, Yip Man left Foshan due to the increased pressure the Japanese placed on him. However, he still continued helping the Chinese government suppress the Japanese. After the Japanese resistance, Uncle Yip did not teach Wing Chun, but worked at the police department. In order to rid the area of evil and protect the people, Master Yip solved many crimes, including the Foshan Sar Ton Fon Street Robbery, and caught the robber in Sing Ping Theater. Master Yip Man continued his position as leader of the military patrol of south Kwang Chow until the collapse of Mainland China.



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With the mainland lost, my uncle left Foshan for Hong Kong. There he was introduced to Mr. Lee Min, who later helped Yip establish a Wing Chun school at the Mess Union in Da Nan Street, Kowloon. At the beginning, the followers were Lee Min, Leung Chan, Lou Yue, and myself. We had no more than ten students. Mr. Lee is not only a student but also a good friend with my uncle. Later on, Shu Sun Tin and Yip Bue Shing also followed uncle. The students kept increasing to the point that in 1954 Master Yip Man left the Mess Union to establish a kung fu institute at Hia Ten Street, Deep Water Bay, Kowloon. The other students and I followed as usual. At that time, uncle had to leave two or three times a week in order to teach the students of a union at Hollywood Road and Tai Wong Temple at Queen's Road, East Wanchai. The students kept increasing, so uncle moved the institute from Hia Ten Street to Lee Da Street to Lee Jenwou Village to Hing Yip Building. But he did not openly advertise for students. One would have to be introduced or know a follower. Bruce Lee was introduced by Mr. Cheung Jwo Hing to learn Wing Chun when the institute was at Lee Da Street.

The way of Yip Man's instruction depended on every student's degree of knowledge, natural ability, personal habits, and interests. Yip Man's great innovation was to personalize instruction by making each student's progress dependent on his own habits and will to succeed. The strength of Yip Man at over seventy was no less than that of a young man. About nine years ago, robberies occurred frequently in Hong Kong. One night when Yip Man was taking a walk, two thugs with knives tried to rob him. It only took Yip Man a few kicks to knock them out of the way. My uncle encouraged me in 1956 to travel to Taiwan and establish a Wing Chun clan there. Also, I received sponsorship from President Chiang Kai-shek in this regard. I was then representing the young people of Hong Kong. I began to miss my home in Hong Kong and tried to return, but my uncle scolded me for coming back. Yip Man thought it was too great a chance to pass by. In 1960, my uncle commanded me to make my permanent home in Taiwan, and I have remained here ever since then. I returned to Taiwan to serve my country by enrolling in a military school and learning the art of war as a field commander.

Now that I think about it, I realize Yip Man's intention in sending me back to Taiwan was that I should devote myself to this country and keep Wing Chun prospering here. His wish is today being fulfilled, for there are French, American, English, South African, Australian, East African, and West German students learning here.

During the Asian and World Kung Fu contests, the members of the Wing Chun sport team have received high honours, thus helping the Wing Chun style to prosper around the world. Because of my obligations in Taiwan, I was unable to attend my uncle's funeral. What the people outside our area have never learned is that the authentic disciples of Yip Man, such as myself, were the only ones entitled to wear the black band of mourning around their waists. Indirect students were entitled only to wear black bands around their arms. Since the death of Yip Man, confusion has continued to expand related to all matters associated with Wing Chun. I have chosen to respect the traditional Chinese ethic and my uncle's memory by avoiding argument and conflict with all those people who claim to be the new head of Wing Chun Clan. My uncle taught that Wing Chun is not for sale. Students may apply for lessons, and each student can make his own decision about which exponent teaches the boxing most suited for him.

Contact Information

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"THE TALE OF THE SNAKE AND CRANE"



By Rien Bul

There have been endless debates about the legends in the Chinese martial arts. What is true and what isn't? Which people have actually existed and which have not. As interesting as these discussions might sometimes be, most of the time the point of a story is missed.

Like the fables of La Fontaine or most mythological stories these stories were often meant to teach us something. For example; the story of the Nun Ng Mui teaching the young girl Fong Weng Shun a martial art to defeat a big man who stalks her is in fact an analogy that tells us that with our style, a person of slighter build can defeat a much bigger, stronger person. They chose women as the subject for the story to accentuate the meaning of the story.

Wudang Weng Shun Kuen is often called 'Southern TaiJi Quan. And it is! Like the better known TaiJi Quan styles like Chen and Yang, its roots are in Wudang boxing. So it shouldn't be a surprise that the genesis-story of TaiJi Quan speaks of Chan Shang Feng observing a Snake and a Crane fight and creating a martial art, inspired by that experience, while in the later Weng Shun Kuen version it was the nun Ng Mui who watched the same animals fight, creating the style from it.

Of course this never literally happened. But that is not what really matters. The story is just an analogy that teaches us the most basic but profound principles of our style. What should we learn from the story then?

Whenever a crane is being attacked, it stays calmly in place. If the adversary tries to get around it, it just turns around its own axis, continually facing its opponent. This principle has been much misunderstood. Because Weng Shun Kuen stylists are taught to keep facing their opponent, many think it means to keep facing the adversary, nose to nose, through all the stages of the fight, even when it would be more practical to go to his blind side. No matter how much an opponent moves, or how threatening or big its gestures are; the crane never gets excited. It stays calm and centered, just observing what is coming.

Hung Kuen, another Nam Kuen (Southern Fist) that probably evolved from Weng Shun Kuen, has a Crane form. The explanation of the principle behind Hung Kuen's Crane form is the same as the one described above.

There are several styles that have some kind of historical link or another to Weng Shun Kuen. Oftentimes a story about a person observing a Crane is involved. In some stories the Crane fights an ape, a fox or another animal. But in most stories it is a Snake.

According to Hung Gar Kuen's legends a practitioner of the Shaolin Tiger style married a girl who was accomplished at Fukien White Crane style. They mixed their styles and this was how the Tiger/Crane style of Hung Gar Kuen supposedly came to be. The girl was said to be called Fong Weng Shun.

In the legends of the Fukien White Crane style it is told that a girl called Fung Chi Niang created the style after she tested a White Crane's fighting skills by prying it with a stick.

In a book on Chuka Shaolin by Mark Viley the Grandmaster of the style states the following: " Another possible origin of Chuka Shaolin is Fukien White Crane boxing. Some believe that the various teachings of the Chu Gar Gow spread and became and became the various styles of Fukien Shaolin Boxing- of which White Crane Boxing is a part. Since the cave where the nun Leow Fa Shih Koo resided and later taught her 'Shaolin' art to the sisters was known as the Pai-Ho Toong, or White Crane cave, it is possible that Chu Gar is based on Southern White Crane Kung Fu."

To me this makes sense. It has been said that Weng Shun Kuen evolved from Chu Gar Gow. The footwork of Chu Gar Gow, that of Chuka Shaolin and that of Wudang Weng Shun Kuen are virtually alike. But what is most obvious is that all these stories have similar elements; Nuns, young girls and most of all..Cranes! Sometimes even the names sound very alike. It should not only be clear that the source for these stories is the same, but also that the principles of the several Crane- styles and forms in them are the same. We should conclude that the above mentioned styles have a mutual source OR that they have at least met at some point and exchanged information. This could possibly have happened in the 'Weng Shun Tong' and/or on the Red Junk opera boats.

However, practitioners of these styles would benefit from re-examining their legends and see what they have to tell them. It might help them to understand their styles better.

About the Author

Rien Bul is a practitioner of Wudang Weng Shun Kuen in the Netherlands. Wudang Weng Shun Kuen translates as 'Perpetual Spring Fist.' More information on Rien Bul and Wudang Weng Shun Kuen can be found at <http://home.quicknet.nl/qn/prive/wengshunkuen>.



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Training in Taiwan (Republic of China)

By Marc Debus

The school directors of the Lo Man Kam Wing Chun Federation regularly use the opportunity to train in their Sifu Lo Man Kam's school in Taiwan. All are in agreement that it is a valuable experience to be able to train in the headquarters of the Lo Man Kam Wing Chun Federation. Sifu Lo Man Kam gives between four and five hours of instruction each day, which is divided into a 'morning class' and an 'evening class'.



Sifu Lo Man Kam holds the opinion that only by constant contact and continuous training can success be achieved in the Wing Chun System. In order to ensure that his art is passed on correctly - as he himself was taught by his uncle Yip Man - to his followers in the various parts of the world, he travels abroad frequently to visit the students of his System and their schools.

In Taiwan there is always the opportunity to practise with pupils who have trained for many years with Sifu Lo Man Kam. Sometimes it is even possible to train with the son of Sifu Lo Man Kam, Gorden Lu. Father and son often give instruction together.

Gorden Lu lived in America for several years and there ran the headquarters of Sifu Duncan Leung's Wing Chun Organization, as he was not able to run the business himself. Sifu Lo Man Kam and Sifu Duncan Leung have been friends for many years. And likewise a close association exists between many former Yip Man pupils.

Training in Taiwan differs much from the Wing Chun training which one sees in Europe, America or elsewhere in the western world. The pupils come to the training session and begin to train independently, according to the tasks assigned them by the Sifu. The pupils continue this training until such time as Sifu Lo Man Kam is of the opinion that he can give them a further training exercise because they have mastered the previous one. Sifu Lo Man Kam is present during the training and constantly corrects as necessary.

It is clear that this training with Sifu Lo Man Kam's long-term students is very effective. The older Kung Fu 'brothers' are always ready to help and offer good advice.

Furthermore, the Wing Chun training appears in a completely different light in the appropriate Asian surroundings. Between the two training classes, which take place at eight o'clock both in the morning and in the evening, there remains plenty of time during the afternoons to get to know the city and the surrounding area. And frequently the local classmates offer not only advice, but also take the time to show their foreign training partners around their country. The German delegation would here like to thank Yang Tin San in particular, who gave us many hours of his spare time.

It is particularly enjoyable that Sifu Lo Man Kam provides guest rooms for his foreign pupils and so one often has the opportunity to stay with the Sifu in his home, which is directly under his school. Throughout the entire house are calligraphies by various artists and by the Sifu himself, as well as documents, pictures, and cups won by Sifu Lo Man Kam or his pupils. Sifu is always ready to tell his pupils about the provenance of each article, and where he received it. The collection is so large that many hours can be whiled away in this manner.



About the Author:

Marc Debus is the head of the German Lo Man Kam Wing Chun Association with its headquarters in New Anspach, Germany. He authored the book 'Siu Nim Tau – The Little Idea' and 'The Lo Man Kam System – History, Reports and Techniques.'



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A BRIEF INSIGHT INTO THE MOOK YAN JONG

By James Sinclair

The wooden dummy is essential in the development of a rounded Wing Chun practitioner. The 'Art' of Wing Chun Kuen is amply demonstrated with the variety of techniques and principles executed. It has been said that forms are a waste of time by many people, and that time spent working on forms could be better spent working on a live partner. However, although the dummy has elements of a traditional form it is primarily training equipment and as such is comparable to using the heavy bag, speed ball or focus mitts.

The dummy, as used in Wing Chun, develops further skill in sticky hands and ultimately self-defense. It's designed to aid in teaching the importance of achieving the strongest angle of approach to apply pressure and the correct use of strength and power when up close.

The dummy height is adjusted according to the practitioner and should be set up with the higher arm at shoulder level. The upper arms are adjustable with the ability to change their height and angle away from the centre. The wooden arms do not bend and are only capable of being moved a small amount when pulled or slapped. If a dummy is set too high a practitioner will be unable to practice many of the techniques. Equally, a low dummy is not as beneficial although the difficulties of training are less.

The two upper arms do not strictly demonstrate the inside and outside gate as a beginner may expect. If you use your imagination you will see that the 'inside' areas, as you look at it, are often the outside areas of what would be the opposite arm. A primary aim in Wing Chun fighting is to face an adversary's centre line without them facing yours. The dummy is designed with arms angled away from the centre line, the practitioner, therefore, has to move well in order to achieve good angle and be able to work on the dummy.

Taan Sau (palm up block) shows how a practitioner should achieve a good angle of approach and press into the dummy leg. In application, on an opponents' cross, the rival is breaking the stance and offsetting the opportunity to unwind with a left hook. If he did unwind, his hips would open and a groin kick would become available. The lower arm represents an arm or leg at the lower mid level. This is also the lowest area in which a Wing Chun student would use their own hand techniques. Beyond this point turning and the use of the legs are the defensive tools.

An individual's height is largely made up by the length of their femur or thighbone. However the height of the knee joint from one individual to another varies very little and therefore, the dummy knee height must be set according to that almost universal height. This will develop good accuracy when striking to damage the leg or pressing to weaken an opponent's stance.

The dummy leg represents an opponent's stance. However, many students fail to set up their dummy correctly and leave the dummy leg way off the floor. This allows a lazy or unknowing student the ability to pass their foot under the leg and leads to sloppy footwork.

It is often shown in books on Wing Chun that a practitioner is simultaneously striking with hand and foot whilst blocking. This leads people to believe that this kind of co-ordination is typical of Wing Chun students, when in fact it is not. When a simultaneous leg and hand technique are shown on the dummy it is a leg technique with hand block, the strike is incidental as the variables are too great to expect everything to work out in reality. Most styles block then punch or block then kick, and will often intercept a strike by 'beating a person to a punch' etc. Wing Chun practitioners can block and strike or block and kick simultaneously but not all three. The hand technique shown on a dummy when blocking and kicking is for distance judgment, as it very easy to be out of range when kicking low. It is important to be able to drive through with a low kick to break a strong stance.

One exception to this rule is the sweep kick. In this technique there a few important points to remember. When training this technique on the dummy, the most important starting point is the placement of the supporting foot. It should be in line with the dummy leg. If you step too far forward you could easily be hip thrown. If you do not step far enough you will have no leverage and be easily counter swept. In the UKWCKFA we teach these techniques religiously and have developed quick counter kicks if your foot placement is wrong. Our third level syllabus is based largely on footwork and kicking ability and trains the student for realistic dynamic situations where an opponent can and will always be prepared to move.

Another common misconception shown Wing Chun books and articles is that we use two arms to cover our whole torso when blocking with techniques like Kwun Sau and Gaan Sau. No student who trains in martial art for any length of time is unable to tell whether a strike is going to be high or low once launched. Most students get struck because they are too slow or beaten by excellent timing; a double arm block would not help in that situation.

The kwun sau or rolling block is a very important move in Wing Chun and is used most commonly to escape from the very threatening double inside gate position. In this position the opponents' ability to crush, close up, and strike freely is very high. This point is realized early in Wing Chun and is the biggest reason so much time is spent mastering smooth 'changes' in sticking hands.

The Gaan Sau has also been misinterpreted. Gaan sau is a technique that allows a Wing Chun practitioner the opportunity to locate and control an opponent's arms. It is also a great technique to absorb a strong mid to high round kick. Although it appears to be a very large technique on the dummy, it is NOT used to cover from lower mid level to high. No student at this level is that badly coordinated that they can't tell the general area of an attack. In the sequence shown the gaan sau is used to take an opponent's lead hand down and strike to the neck. The opponent either blocks the strike or not, it does not matter. If he does block then the Wing Chun practitioner has both arms and will then go on from there. In this case he finishes with Gwai Jarn.

There are some clever techniques and very simply principles applied on the wooden dummy. To a Wing Chun student the idea is to stick well and maintain contact as necessary. Not all applications require one to stick, some require that a break is made and reinforce the principle of striking when the hand is freed.

One tactical piece of footwork is commonly called the cross stamp kick. However, a Wing Chun student would never actually cross his legs at close range as the danger of being pulled or pushed is far too high. The idea is to learn to move very quickly to the outside of an opponent but remain very close. In self-defense it is an essential move when confronted by multiple assailants and under extreme pressure when cornered.

The wooden dummy represents a classical method of training. However, it is not the strict sequence of a form that realizes mastery of the techniques, but the ability to move freely with all the elements learned from the form. Along with the traditional 108 movements (plus 8 at the end of each section if you want to be pedantic) there is another form. This form is more practical in application and is a drill form. It is basically a form based on repetition of the most important elements of the form. But ultimately the idea is to move formlessly applying all the skill and knowledge applied through the syllabus taught.

James Sinclair is chief instructor and founder of the United Kingdom Wing Chun Kung Fu Association. He has been featured in several martial arts books and magazines including 'Ultimate Martial Arts,' 'Martial Arts Illustrated,' 'Fighters Magazine' and more. His instructional DVDs include such titles as 'Wing Chun Kung Fu: Pure and Simple' and 'Wing Chun Kung Fu: Wall Bag Training.' He has also produced the UK Wing Chun Kung Fu Association's Interactive CD ROM. For more information, visit the UK Wing Chun Kung Fu Assoc at www.ukwingchun.com.



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