

GRANDMASTER WONG KIEW KIT'S HOME PAGE
QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

QUESTIONS ON WING CHOON KUNGFU



QUESTION 1

How in your experience does the Wing Choon concept of controlling the center-line benefit the other styles in our school that do not have this specific focus, and how can it be adapted to for example the 16 combat sequences?

— David Langford

The center-line concept is frequently mentioned in Wing Choon Kungfu but is sometimes misunderstood. This concept is considered of great importance in many popular Wing Choon schools today, but in the style of Wing Choon Kungfu I practice, i.e. Choe Family Wing Choon, it is only one of the concepts contributing to combat efficiency. In other words, in Choe Family Wing Choon, the center-line concept is not given the same importance and emphasis as in most other Wing Choon schools.

The center-line refers to an imaginary line running from the top of the head down the mid-position of the nose, mouth, chest and stomach, through the navel and dan tian to the sex organs and anus. It usually refers to the front of the body, but may also refer to an imaginary line at the back of the body running at mid-position from the top of the head down to the anus.

Basically according to the center-line concept, when a Wing Choon practitioner strikes an opponent, he aims at targets along this center-line. In his defence he deflects an opponent's attack from this center-line. These attack and defence movements are manifested in his solo set practice. Controlling the center-line means commanding this central space in both attack and defence.

For example, when practicing Siu Lim Tou many practitioners of other Wing Choon schools move their cup fist from their center-line outward. We also do this when practicing Siu Lin Tou in our school. This "offer wine" technique is practiced in our One-Finger Shooting Zen" sequence too.

Hoong Ka practitioners perform the "offer wine" technique differently. They do not start from their center-line at their solar plexus; they start from their waist and move their cup-fist straight out at shoulder-position, not at the center. We do this too when practicing Triple Stretch.

In performing "tan sau", or "mirror-hand", some Wing Choon practitioners of other schools move their palm outward from their center-line. We perform this technique differently. We move our palm outward, not directly but diagonally so that the palm will end at the shoulder position.

Many years ago when I was teaching in Australia, a Wing Choon practitioner from another school consulted me how to defend against a series of chain punches. I show him how to use a "tan sau" or mirror-hand to close both punches of an opponent. He said that his sifu forbid him to move his "tan sau" diagonally; it should be moved only forward so as to follow the principle of the center-line.

I told him that using "tan sau" the way he did was ineffective. The opponent, with

a slight slanting of his body, could still piece through and strike him. Or the opponent could use his other hand to strike him, as he had not cover the opponent adequately.

In justifying their striking their opponent at the center-line, Wing Choon practitioners of other Wing Choon schools often use the analogy of a sand-bag. If you strike a sand-bag head-on at its center, you execute a full impact on the sand-bag. If you strike a sand-bag at its side, your punch may glide away with much less impact.

This argument is not valid in Choe Family Wing Choon. In Choe Family Wing Choon, we use internal force, not just physical impact, to injure an opponent. Even if an exponent does not have internal force, striking an opponent's ribs with a leopard punch, or his vital point with a phoenix-eye fist can cause much damage. Leopard punch and phoenix-eye fist are frequently used in Choe Family Wing Choon, but not in other popular styles of Wing Choon.

Moreover, Wing Choon Kungfu is meant for small-sized opponents against bigger-sized opponents. Attacking the center-line of bigger-sized opponents head-on is disadvantageous, but attacking their sides is more advantageous.

Similarly, sticking on to the center-line to deflect a powerful head-on attack from an opponent is disadvantageous. It is more advantageous to move to a side and simultaneously counter-strike the attacker with a phoenix-eye fist or a leopard punch.

The center-line concept is involved in both cases but they are used differently. In other schools of Wing Choon, the exponent remains at the center-line, and deflects an attack from the center-line. For example, if an opponent executes a right thrust punch at your solar plexus, you do not move away but deflect his attack with your right "tan sau".

In Choe Family Wing Choon, when an opponent attacks his center-line, the exponent moves to a side and simultaneously counter-strikes. For example, if an opponent executes a right thrust punch at your solar plexus, you move diagonally to your left side, using your left palm to cover yourself, and simultaneously counter-strike his right ribs with your right leopard punch.

The center-line concept is present not only in the other styles in our school but also in the other styles in all other schools. However, it is not given special importance or emphasis as in some popular Wing Choon styles.

This center-line concept does not have this special focus not because practitioners of other styles in our school as well as in all other schools do not know its advantage when the advantage is present, but because more often than not other concepts like attacking from the side are circular movement are more advantageous, especially for the small sized against a bigger opponent.

Hence, the question of the concept of controlling the center line of some Wing Choon schools benefiting other styles in our school is irrelevant. Not only in the other styles, but even in our Choe Family Wing Choon, we do not always use this concept. In fact, in the case of the small sized against a bigger opponent, for

which traditional Wing Choon Kungfu is famous, using this center-line concept is often disadvantageous.

On occasions when this concept is advantageous, like when an exponent has a lot of internal force, this center-line concept is employed. It is not a case of borrowing the center-line concept from Wing Choon Kungfu because this concept is already found in the kungfu style in question. In the Xingyiquan course at the 2013 UK Summer Camp, for example, course participants used pi-quan to control the center-line in their attack and defence, irrespective of an opponent's moves!

There is no need to adapt the center-concept in the 16 combat sequences or in any systematic attack or defence. Indeed it would be silly to do so when it is disadvantageous, although some martial artists in their mistaken view that the center-line concept is a fantastic method might do so.

In some of the 16 combat sequences, the center-line concept is used. For example, this concept is evident in Sequences 1 and 2. But when other concepts are favourable in certain combat situations, these other concepts are used, like the side-attack in Sequence 3 and 4.

This center-line concept would be detrimental when meeting a fast opponent, like a Boxer. If a Boxer executes a left jab, for example, and a Wing Choon practitioner uses the center-line concept to ward off the left jab with his right "tan sau", he would expose himself to the right cross of the Boxer.

It would be more advantageous for him to use his left catch-hand, as in Cham Kiew, to "close" the Boxer's left jab, and moves into the Boxer's left side, not his center-line, and strikes the Boxer's ribs with his left leopard punch. Interestingly, because of their lack of exposure, those who glamorize the center-line concept may cry out that this is not Wing Choon Kungfu, although this is a typical counter from Choe Family Wing Choon.

If you want to use any of the 16 combat sequences to press into an opponent, the center-line concept would also be detrimental. Instead of striking his center-line, you should use the concept of "one against two" to adequately tame your opponent, and use the other hand to deliver a coup de grace.

QUESTION 2

The Wooden Dummy seems synonymous with Wing Choon. Where did the Wooden Dummy originate and what benefits do Wing Choon practitioners get from training with one?

Is the Wooden Dummy (or its equivalent) found in any other style of Kung Fu?

— Sifu Kevin

The wooden dummy only seems to be synonymous with Wing Choon Kungfu, but is not. In Choe Family Wing Choon practiced in our school, for example, we do not need a wooden dummy.

I believe that the arms of our Wing Choon practitioners, including our female practitioners, could be more powerful than those of practitioners of other Wing Choon schools or other styles. This is because we train internal force. Generally internal force is more powerful than external strength derived from hitting a wooden dummy.

I myself was a living example. When I learned Southern Shaolin from Uncle Righteousness in Penang, I hit a wooden dummy really hard every night. Then I applied medicated vinegar to relieve injury and to strengthen my arms. My arms were hard and powerful compared to ordinary people, and even compared to other external martial artists.

But when I learned Wuzuquan from Sifu Chee Kim Thong in Dungun, my arms were literally nothing compared to the arms of my classmates. My classmates did not hit any wooden dummy. They developed internal force using San Zhan. After knocking arms with them, my arms were badly swollen and had to be in medicated bandage for a week.

Later when I learned Shaolin Kungfu from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam in Kuala Trengganu, I developed internal force using One-Finger Shooting Zen. When I was posted to Alor Star I met a Shaolin master who trained Iron Arm externally. He attempted to impress me with his Iron Arm by banging his arm against a pillar which literally shook.

But I was not impressed. He might be annoyed. He asked me to knock arms with him. He swung his arm hard on mine, perhaps wanting to break my arm. He didn't know I had trained Golden Bell. The harder he knocked at my arm, the harder it bounced his arm back. He could last only two hits!

When I learned Choe Family Wing Choon from Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, there was a wooden dummy in his house where we trained. There was also a wooden dummy set. But in a few years training there, I saw only a few students practicing with the wooden dummy.

I doubted Yim Wing Choon, the founder of Wing Choon Kungfu, and its early masters like Leong Chan, practiced with a wooden dummy. They developed internal force through Siu Lin Tou.

I don't know how or from where the wooden dummy originated in Wing Choon Kungfu. Personally I do not find many benefits practicing with the wooden dummy. Practitioners may harden their arms, but not necessarily increase their striking force.

Hardening arms and increasing force are quite different, and many people may not realize it. Practicing Siu Lin Tou as an internal art produces much more internal force and powerful arms than hitting a wooden dummy. In my opinion, the best benefit of practicing with a wooden dummy is to improve accuracy in striking.

The wooden dummy is also found in Choy-Li-Fatt and Hoong Ka Kungfu, especially when these styles are practiced as external arts.

QUESTION 3

Sifu, can you please explain the strengths and weaknesses of Wing Choon Kung Fu?

— Santiago

I shall explain the strength and weakness of Wing Choon Kungfu popularly practiced in the world today. There are only a few unarmed sets in this style of Wing Choon Kungfu, namely Siu Lim Tou, Cham Kiew and Phew Chee, and this style uses mainly the Four-Six Stance.

There are two weapon sets using the Butterfly Knives and the long staff. As sparring using weapons is not popular today, we shall focus our discussion on its strength and weakness on the unarmed dimension, mentioning the weapon dimension only on passing.

Because there are only a few sets, practitioners of this style of Wing Choon Kungfu can spend much time on sparring, unlike in some styles where students spend most of the time performing their many sets. This makes these Wing Choon practitioners combat efficient, whereas most other kungfu practitioners only demonstrate beautiful forms, or use kick-boxing if they have to spar. This is their strength.

On the other hand, if these Wing Choon practitioners meet other kungfu practitioners who have a wide range of techniques, presuming that their skill levels are about the same, the Wing Choon practitioners will face a big disadvantage. This is their weakness.

For example, if a Tantui practitioner uses continuous kicks, a Drunken Eight Immortal practitioner uses felling techniques, or a Choy-Li-Fatt practitioner uses hard pressing attacks on a Wing Choon practitioner, the Wing Choon practitioner would have difficulty facing these attacks. This was probably the main reason the celebrated Bruce Lee abandoned Wing Choon Kungfu and developed his Jeet Koon Do. It is therefore ironical that many Wing Choon practitioners today glorify Bruce Lee, a martial artist who abandoned their art!

However, if the Wing Choon practitioner is of a high level, like a genuine Wing Choon master, he could easily use typical Wing Choon techniques to counter Tantui kicks, Drunken Eight Immortal felling techniques, Choy-Li-Fatt pressing attacks, and any other attacks from opponents of a lower skill level. Here, the deciding factor is skill. The Wing Choon master could defeat his opponents, regardless of what techniques they use, because he is of a higher skill level.

If both have the same level of skills, the limited range of techniques of popular Wing Choon Kungfu would be a weakness. Because of the small range of techniques in his repertoire, a Wing Choon practitioner would find it difficult to defend against the continuous kicks of a Taekwondo exponent, the throws of a Judoka or the locks of a Jujitsu practitioner of the same skill level.

Fortunately for the Wing Choon practitioner today, this weakness is not very significant because regardless of what his opponents practice, whether it is

Taekwondo, Judo, Jujitsu, Tantai, Choy-Li-Fatt or whatever martial art, when they spar they will still bounce about like Boxers. So, all the Wing Choon practitioner has to do is to rush in with a series of chain punches, which give a semblance of Wing Choon Kungfu. If he has big muscles due to weight-lifting, which traditional Wing Choon practitioners would not practice, it would add to his advantage.

However, if you have similar level of combat skills as the muscular charging Wing Choon exponent, including similar sparring experience, and employ a Taijiquan technique to cover his chain-punches adequately, a Baguazhang technique to get to his back, or a Monkey style technique to slip below him to steal his peaches, the Wing Choon practitioner would not know what to do because he did not have the necessary counter techniques in his limited repertoire.

It is interesting to note that the strength of popular Wing Choon Kungfu is also its weakness. Its limited range of techniques gives its practitioner more time to spend on sparring. However, if an opponent is of a similar skill level, the limited range of techniques becomes a weakness.

Another example where its strength can also become its weakness is that Wing Choon Kungfu is meant for the small-size against a bigger, physically stronger opponent. Wing Choon techniques are such that being big size, including having big muscles, is a disadvantage. Wing Choon force training is such that having big muscles is a disadvantage. And having succeeded in developing internal force in Wing Choon Kungfu, a small-sized Wing Choon practitioner can be more powerful than a bigger-sized opponent.

A Wing Choon student will have this strength of the art if he applies Wing Choon techniques the way they should be applied, and trained Wing Choon internal force the way it should be trained. If he does otherwise, like using Wing Choon techniques like in Boxing, or developing muscular strength by lifting weights instead of training internal force using Siu Lim Tou, the strength becomes a weakness.

Wing Choon Kungfu is excellent for one-to-one combat, ranging from beginners' to masters' levels. This is its strength. However, the nature of popular Wing Choon is such that it is not suitable for mass fighting. If a group of assailants attack a master of popular Wing Choon at the same time, he would have difficulty fighting the group. This is its weakness.

These examples of the strength and weakness apply to styles of Wing Choon Kungfu popularly practiced in the world today. While the strength remains, the weakness does not apply to some little known styles of Wing Choon Kungfu, including Choe Family Wing Choon practiced in our school.

In the little known styles of Wing Choon Kungfu, including Choe Family Wing Choon, there are many other unarmed sets and weapon sets in addition to those practiced in the popular styles.

In Choe Family Wing Choon, for example, the three unarmed sets of Siu Lim Tou, Cham Kiew and Phew Chee of the popular styles, are incorporated into one set,

Siu Lin Tou. There are about a dozen other unarmed sets, like Flower Set, Tiger-Crane, Battle Palm, Choy-Li-Fatt, Drunken Eight Immortals, and Essence of Fighting.

Besides the Butterfly Knives and the Long Staff practiced in the popular styles of Wing Choon, in Choe Family Wing Choon there are about a dozen other weapon sets, like the sabre, the spear, the big trident, the kungfu bench and the Guan Dao. In Choe Family Wing Choon, the butterfly knives set is called Human-Character Double Southern Knives, whereas in popular Wing Choon styles it is called Eight-Chop Knives. The long staff set is similar in both Choe Family Wing Choon and other popular Wing Choon styles, and is called Six-and-Half-Point Staff.

These extra sets, by a big number, are sufficient to off-set the weakness experienced in the popular Wing Choon styles. If a Taekwondo exponent executes kick at a practitioner of Choe Family Wing Choon, for example, he can apply techniques from other sets to overcome the kicks. If a group of assailants attack him, he can apply techniques from Choy-Li-Fatt or Drunken Eight Immortals to overcome them.

The limited weapon sets in the popular styles of Wing Choon is also a strength and weakness. Like in unarmed sets, as there are only two weapon sets, it gives practitioners more time to enhance their skills in these weapons. The Six-and-Half-Point Staff has become a very formidable weapon.

On the other hand, it is also a weakness because practitioners have no chance to explore other weapons. Not only understanding other weapons will enhance performance in the butterfly knives or long staff, if a practitioner chooses that as his choice weapon, but also it will enhance other aspects of his unarmed kungfu, and by extension in his daily life.

After the Special Wing Choon Course in Penang in 2010, we were generous enough to post some videos on YouTube revealing some secrets of Wing Choon. Some critics under the cloak of anonymity ridiculed our videos in the public comments saying that our counters were useless. Some complained that ours was not Wing Choon Kungfu.

An instructor in our Free Sparring Competition Committee traced the real persons behind the anonymity and invited them for some free sparring with our students to see whether our counters were useless. Despite the big talk of the critics, no one took up our invitation. Our instructor also found out that the one who made the most noise, especially regarding our counters against kicks, was a student of his junior during his Karate days before he joined Shaolin Wahnam.

We walk our talk. We do not challenge others, and we respect their right and privilege to practice whatever they like in whatever way they like. But if anyone ridicules and challenges us, and as scholar-warriors after making sure we can beat him in a fight, we shall accept the challenge. I have mentioned this a few times, and would take this opportunity to repeat. Any student or instructor representing our school in a challenge, must not be afraid or be hesitant in hurting his opponent drastically, even fatally. It is a challenge, not a friendly

match. We must of course make sure that there will be no legal implications afterwards.

Those who say that our Wing Choon is not Wing Choon are only showing their lack of exposure. It may not be the Wing Choon they practice, but it is certainly Choe Family Wing Choon.

QUESTION 4

How can Wing Choon Kung Fu benefit/enhance my Taijiquan practice?

— Santiago

To be systematic, we can answer your question under four headings, namely form, skill, application and philosophy.

Wing Choon forms and Taijiquan forms are diagonally opposite. Wing Choon forms are short and linear, whereas Taijiquan forms are long and circular.

Let us take a typical Wing Choon technique and a typical Taijiquan technique for comparison.

A typical Wing Choon attack is "Phew Chee", or a finger-thrust, to an opponent's throat. The attack goes straight from the chest of a Wing Choon exponent to the opponent's throat in the shortest, fastest manner. The distance traveled by the attack is about a foot.

A typical Taijiquan attack is "Green Dragon Shoots Pearl", or a circular palm strike at an opponent's face or chest. When a Taijiquan exponent uses his right palm in a left Bow-Arrow Stance, the attack, as the exponent rotates his waist, goes from somewhere near his right thigh in a big arc first slightly backward, next upward and then forward to strike the opponent's face or chest. The distance covered is about five feet.

The Wing Choon technique is short and straight, moving only a foot. The Taijiquan technique is long and circular, moving about five feet. If the speed of both combatants is the same, the Taijiquan attack would take 5 times longer to reach. One may wonder how could a Taijiquan practitioner hope to defeat a Wing Choon practitioner. The fact is that a Taijiquan practitioner could defeat a Wing Choon practitioner even when both of them move at the same speed!

Understanding the hows and whys will benefit both Wing Choon and Taijiquan practitioners as well as practitioners of other martial arts. As a Taijiquan practitioner, learning the Wing Choon technique will enable you to better appreciate the benefits of the Taijiquan technique. As an analogy, if you practiced Taiji dance before, you will better appreciate when you practice genuine Taijiquan.

There are many situations when using the Taijiquan attack is more advantageous than using the Wing Choon attack. If an opponent is very fast, like a Boxer, for example, slowing him down without his knowing using the Taijiquan attack is more advantageous than the Wing Choon attack.

When an opponent attacks you, using the Taijiquan "Green Dragon Shoots Pearl", which deflect the opponent's attack cum striking him, is more advantageous than "Phew Chee". Although in theoretical time the Taijiquan attack is 5 times slower than the Wing Choon attack, in real time it is still fast enough for an effective strike. If the Wing Choon attack takes a quarter of a second, the Taijiquan attack takes one and a quarter seconds.

Moreover, this Taijiquan counter runs into the opponent's attack. In other words, the Taijiquan exponent does not start his counter after his opponent has completed his initial attack; he does so while the initial attack is in progress. If a Wing Choon practitioner takes a quarter of a second to execute his finger-thrust a foot away, by moving your body backward a foot more as you rotate your waist to start your defence-cum-attack, your opponent would take half a second to reach you.

By then you would have brushed away his attack, and your counter-attack is on the way, and will reach him in three quarters of a second. If you could make him fall forward when you brush away his initial attack, in which case you would have to simultaneously move slightly to your right side so that you opponent would not fall onto you, you would hit him while he is falling.

By slowing down your attack in using the Taijiquan technique, you will be in a better position to make changes if an opponent uses feint moves or tricks you in any way. This will be more difficult if you use a short, straight Wing Choon finger-thrust.

When you chase an opponent, like a Boxer, using one hand to control him and the other hand to strike him as in "Green Dragon Shoots Pearl", is more advantages than using a short, straight finger-thrust, which may expose you to his counter strikes. As you are chasing him, safety first is of utmost importance, and striking him fast is of secondary importance. The Wing Choon finger-thrust does not have this advantage.

On the other hand, learning the Wing Choon finger-thrust will benefit and enhance your Taijiquan in many years. Instead of striking your opponent's throat with "White Snake Shoots Venom" in the orthodox Taijiquan way, when the situation warrants it, you can execute the same pattern in a Wing Choon way.

Puritans may cry that this is Wing Choon and not Taijiquan. They become a slave to their art, instead of mastering it. Tell them, if they are willing to listen, that kungfu is alive.

Practical experience of the short, straight movement of Wing Choon Kungfu will enhance your effort in reducing big forms of Taijiquan into small forms, which is essential for combat efficiency. Instead of moving your "Green Dragon Shoots Pearl" in 5 feet, you can reduce the circular movement into two feet. Gradually, when your whole body has been filled with flowing chi, you can execute the same technique in just 3 inches away, even shorter and faster than the Wing Choon movement.

You can still achieve this ability without learning the Wing Choon finger-thrust. But if you do, you will achieve the result faster and better. If learning just one Wing Choon technique can give us so much benefit, we can imagine how much a Wing Choon course can benefit and enhance Taijiquan.

Form is only one aspect that Wing Choon Kungfu can benefit and enhance Taijiquan. Another aspect is skill, or "gong" in Chinese.

Wing Choon Kungfu is well known for two special skills, "chi sau" and "chun keng", or "sticking hands" and "inch force".

"Sticking Hands" trains sensing skill. When your arms are in contact with an opponent's, not only you can sense his movements without looking at them, like how and where he attacks, but also his intentions, like whether he is hesitant or nervous. At a higher level, you may sense his movements and intension even without contact.

Participants at the Special Wing Choon Course in Penang in 2010 did very well in this area. They could sense their opponents very well even when blind-folded. You can view some videos at <http://www.shaolin.org/video-clips-5/wingchoon/wingchoon03/wingchoon25.html>

A few participant told me that their sensing skill had developed so efficiently that during sparring with their eyes open they found it more effective using their sensing skill without looking at the attack, than seeing the attack with their eyes. However, due to time factor, blind-fold sticking hands is not likely to be taught at the coming Wing Choon course in Barcelona. But practitioners of other kungfu styles, particularly Taijiquan practitioners, will benefit much from the sessions of sticking hands which will be taught.

Taijiqua, practitioners also train sensing skill using Pushing Hands. But the approach is different. In our school, in Taijiquan Pushing Hands, the pattern, "Immortal Waves Sleeves", is used. In Wing Choon Kungfu, two patterns, "Circulating Hands" and "Covering Hands", are used. These two patterns are also found in Taijiquan. They are open Cloud Hands and close Cloud Hands.

In other Wing Choon and Taijiquan schools, Sticking Hands and Pushing Hands are performed in a routine with many patterns. In my observation, this methodology greatly minimizes their training opportunities. Instead of developing sensing skill, they focus on following their routine. It is like performing a combination set, commonly known as a two-man set, which serves the purpose of demonstration rather than combat training.

Hence, in our Sticking Hands and Pushing Hands, I purposely reduce the techniques to the minimum so that students can focus on developing skills, and not on learning techniques or worse on remembering their routine.

Like Taijiquan Pushing Hands, a main aim of Wing Choon Sticking Hands is to develop sensing skill. But the movements are different. In Sticking Hands, students employ Wing Choon techniques, whereas in Pushing Hands, students employ Taijiquan techniques. Taijiquan practitioners will benefit much by learning Wing Choon skills, and vice versa.

If an opponent executes a middle attack, for example, a Wing Choon practitioner would use "pak sau" or "slap-hand" when he is using "covering hands" in his "sticking hands", or "tan sau" or "mirror-hand" when he is using "circulating hands". Against a same attack, a Taijiquan practitioner would use "ward off".

The movements are quite different. In "slap-hand" and "mirror-hand", the

movement is linear. In "ward off", the movement is circular. Linear movement is faster, but the counter-strike is not necessarily so.

In Wing Choon Sticking Hands, your right hand is in contact with your opponent's left hand. If he uses his left hand to execute a middle strike, and you use your right "slap-hand" to deflect it away to your left (when you are performing "covering hands"), or your right "mirror-hand" to deflect it to your right (when you are performing "circulating hands"), your "slap-hand" movement or "mirror-hand" movement is about 6 inches. In either case, you need to use your left hand to cover his left hand before you use your right hand to counter strike with a finger-thrust, with your attack traveling about 1 foot.

In Taijiquan Pushing Hands, your right hand is in contact with your opponent's right hand. If he uses his right hand to execute a middle strike, and you use your right hand to ward off, deflecting his attack forward and diagonally to your right, your ward off movement is about 1 foot. Immediately you counter strike with a White Snake Shoots Venom, with your attack traveling about 6 inches. This is second class Taijiquan. In first class Taijiquan which we practice in our school, the White Snake attack is incorporated in the ward off, with the defence-cum-counter traveling about 1 foot. Hence, although the Taijiquan movement is circular and is technically slower than a straight Wing Choon movement, your Taijiquan attack arrives faster than a Wing Choon attack.

Inch-force is developed in Siu Lin Tou. Using inch-force, a Wing Choon practitioner can injure an opponent within inches, instead of using muscular strength derived from lifting weights.

The methodology of training inch-force is different from that in Taijiquan force training. In inch-force training, energy is consolidated and exploded out within inches in a linear manner. In Taijiquan force training, energy is made to flow in circular movement, and having picked up momentum is exploded out in a continuous flow. Taijiquan practitioners will benefit much from learning inch-force training.

At an advanced level, when a Taijiquan practitioner has filled his whole body with chi, by just practicing Taijiquan he can explode force within inches. But if he also learns inch-force, he will attain the result faster and better by a big margin. This is the advantage of breadth and depth.

Another dimension where a Taijiquan practitioner can benefit much from learning Wing Choon Kungfu is application. Application can be martial or non-martial. Non-martial application of Taijiquan enhanced by Wing Choon Kungfu is a special feature of our school, usually not present in most other schools.

The combat application of Wing Choon Kungfu is in direct contrast with that of Taijiquan. For most students of other schools, learning Wing Choon Kungfu and Taijiquan together may be detrimental, as the benefits of one cancel out the other. But in our school, which is unprecedented in kungfu history, learning these two arts or any contrasting arts together is mutually beneficial as their benefits enhance one another.

Wing Choon Kungfu is known for its economy of movement. A Wing Choon practitioner would not use two moves if one is sufficient, or a longer distance if a shorter one is available. On the other hand, Taijiquan is reverse. A Taijiquan practitioner may, by choice, use two moves when one is sufficient, or a longer distance when a shorter one is available. In our school, due to the benefit of breadth and depth, learning Wing Choon Kungfu will benefit and enhance Taijiquan, and vice versa.

In combat application, if a Muay Thai fighter executes a right sweeping kick at you, you can move forward slightly to your right and simultaneously execute a finger-thrust at his throat while he is still kicking. This is the economy of movement of Wing Choon Kungfu. You strike down an opponent as soon as he makes a move!

If you use Taijiquan, your response will be different. You will move back a small step into White Crane flaps Wings in a T-step to let his sweeping kick past. Immediately, while your opponent is recovering himself, you move forward and fell him using "Carry Tiger Back to Mountain".

You avoid his kick first, so as to be safe. In case his first kick is a feint move, you are in time to make adjustment. Even when his kick is real, if you move in too early, if he is skillful he can make instant changes to strike you. You let his attack past, then while he recovers himself, you move in to strike him, using the principle, "start later but arrive earlier".

If you have learnt Wing Choon Kungfu, you can use the Wing Choon move to enhance your own Taijiquan counter. You may, for example, if you are skillful move forward slightly to your right and fell him with Carry Tiger Back to Mountain the moment he starts his right sweeping kick. You must, of course, be ready for his feint moves or instant change.

This combat principle can be fruitfully used in daily life. If you wish to date a girl, for example, using Taijiquan, you may ask as follows.

"Are you free this Saturday night?"

When she says yes, you continue with, "I'll like to take you out for dinner."

If she says no, you can ask, "What about Sunday night?"

You give yourself room for maneuver.

If you have learnt Wing Choon Kungfu, you will make only one move instead of two or three.

You say, "I'll like to take you out for dinner on Saturday night."

Even when she is not free on Saturday night but likes to go out with you, she will make her own adjustment. If you ask her the Taijiquan way, you would miss this opportunity.

What happens if she is really not free on Saturday night and cannot make any adjustment?

In typical Wing Choon move, you can then say, "then I'll like to take you out on

Sunday night or any night you are free."

Someone who practices only Taijiquan, and has his Taijiquan training internalized in him, would not make such moves.

He would say things like below.

"As you are not free on Saturday night, are you free on Sunday night?"

"What do you do on Sunday night?"

"Do you like to see a movie or go for dinner?"

After going round in circular movements, the Taijiquan practitioner would eventually ask, "Would you like to go out with me on Sunday night?"

The Wing Choon practitioner, who has Wing Choon training internalized in him, would go straight to the point: "I'll like to take you out on Sunday night."

Learning Wing Choon kungfu will enhance your application of strategies in everyday life for mutual benefit.

The fourth dimension is philosophy. Both Wing Choon Kungfu and Taijiquan are effective for the smaller sized person against bigger and physically stronger opponents. But their approaches are different. Wing Choon Kungfu will benefit and enhance Taijiquan, and vice versa.

To avoid the full force of a stronger opponent, both Wing Choon Kungfu and Taijiquan advocate avoiding or deflecting the opponent's force instead of meeting it head on. How they do so is different.

In Wing Choon Kungfu, when a stronger opponent attacks you with a powerful right punch, for example, you move your body slightly to your left side and deflect the attack with your right mirror-hand and simultaneously strike his throat with a finger-thrust. All the movements are generally linear and executed in the fastest manner.

In principle you move the target away from the line of attack, cover the attack and simultaneous counter-strike the opponent. If you keep your body still and ward off the attack with a mirror-hand by moving your arm, in a mistaken concept of the middle-line theory, the movement would be unwise.

Dealing with a similar attack using Taijiquan is different. Without moving your feet, you shift your body backward, rotate your waist and ward off the attack with Immortal Waves Sleeves, moving your ward-off arm diagonally forward. All the movements are circular.

In principle, maintaining your central position, you yield, then deflect the attack using the opponent's momentum and turn the table back to him. If you do not shift back your body, but maintain your body position and ward off the attack with your arm is unwise.

Both the Wing Choon philosophy and the Taijiquan philosophy can be applied in daily life. Suppose you have a small business, and a bigger business selling similar products is attacking you by cutting their prices. If you meet the attack

head-on by cutting your prices too, you will be unable to meet the attack.

You maintain your prices but move your position by selling to a different group of customers, like those from a higher income group, in the most direct and fastest manner. This is using the Wing Choon approach.

Alternatively, you may use the Taijiquan approach. First you yield, accepting that your bigger business rival can afford to lower his prices. Next, you deflect the attack following the attacking momentum, saying that what they, your customers, want is not just the product but also service. Then you turn the table round, saying that your rival being a huge organization may be unable to give them personal service but you can, which will more than off-set the little extra price they pay.

Wing Choon Kungfu can benefit and enhance Taijiquan practice in four main dimensions, namely form, skill, application and philosophy. Similarly Wing Choon Kungfu can benefit and enhance other kungfu styles too, and vice versa.

QUESTION 5

Are Sticky Hands the same as Pushing Hands or they have a different approach?

— Santiago

Sticking Hands and Pushing Hands are the same and also different.

Sticking Hands is the Wing Choon counterpart of the Taijiquan Pushing Hands. The Hoong Ka and Wuzuquan counterparts are Asking Bridge and Kneading Hands.

All these four methods of the different kungfu styles are to train sensitivities of the arms so that a practitioner can respond to an opponent's attack spontaneously and correctly. At an advanced level, the practitioner does not even need to look at the attack.

Many course participants at the Special Wing Choon Course in Penang in 2010 told me that they could respond more effectively by sensing with their arms than looking at the attack with their eyes. This is scientific. Their arms, which have a consciousness of their own, responded immediately, instead of the eyes sending impulses to the mind which then redirect instructions to the arms to respond.

At an even higher level, the response is instantaneous without the arms in contact. Some of you may have seen me responding to an unexpected attack in this way while I paused in a demonstration to explain to a class but the other demonstrator, not realizing that I had stopped, continued to attack me.

I recall an incident more than 30 years ago in Alor Star when I was teaching a Wing Choon staff set to a student. He stopped at a pattern crouching on the ground with his staff. I moved towards him to correct a fine point. Suddenly he rose and quickly thrust his staff right into me. This was the next pattern immediately after the crouching pattern on the ground.

I bet that most people would be hit, walking straight into a thrusting staff. Instinctively I used my right tiger-claw to grip the staff as it was inches away from my face. The student was shocked and apologized profusely. I believe it was impossible to be in time to grip the staff on a physical level as it happened so fast. By the time the eyes saw the coming attack, it would be too late for a correct response.

There are two explanations for the ability to respond spontaneously and correctly. One, the chi field around my arms has extended beyond my physical arms. Even when my arms are not in contact with an opponent's arms, I can still respond spontaneously and correctly without looking at the attack because my chi field is still in contact with the opponent's chi field. This explains why I could react spontaneously while talking in the first example above.

The second explanation is that of mind field. I have expanded my mind beyond my physical body. When someone suddenly attacks me, even without my seeing the attack, my mind has picked up the impulses and enables me to respond

spontaneously and correctly. This explained my instantaneous response to the staff thrust. It also explains why masters in the past could avoid arrows and flying darts shot at them. At the physical level, it would be too slow. By the time the eyes saw the arrows and darts coming, there would not be enough time to avoid them. The masters could avoid them because they operated at the mind level. This was one of the many manifestations that the highest kungfu operated at the mind.

Both Sticking Hands and Pushing Hands train sensitivities and instantaneous response, but their approach is different. The difference can be seen in their training methods.

In Choe Family Wing Choon, Sticking Hands is performed with two practitioners standing facing each other in Goat Stance. There are two basic movements, circulating hands or "huein sau", and covering hands or "kham sau".

In circulating hands, each practitioner moves his arms in outward circles while in contact with the opponent's arms. The movement is similar to open Cloud Hands in Taijiquan. In covering hands, each practitioner moves his arms in inward circles while in contact with the opponent's arms. The movement is similar to close Cloud Hands in Taijiquan.

The aim is for each opponent at any time to strike his opponent, who will respond accordingly. To make the training systematic, a particular routine is first followed. In our school the routine covers all the four modes of striking - top, middle, bottom and sides - from both the in-gate and the out-gate modes are trained.

When students are familiar with both the attack and the counter movements, control is gradually released so that the students progress gradually from fully controlled following a set routine to totally free without any routine. The practitioners may also adopt any suitable stances and move in any suitable steps.

The same procedure is followed using kicks, felling techniques and chin-na. Eventually any one practitioner can use any of the four modes of attack, and the other practitioner will respond spontaneously and accordingly, including responding with continuous counters. It should be noted that even at this stage, it is still not yet free sparring. The practitioners still start with their arms in contact and at the Goat Stance. In free sparring the arms of the two combatants are not in contact.

In Wahnam Taijiquan Pushing Hands two practitioners use the Bow-Arrow Stance and their right arms are in contact using the pattern "Immortal Waves Sleeves". First they practice stationary Pushing Hands, i.e. without moving their feet, though they may move their body as an attack is at middle range. If an attack is at close range, they do not move their body, they ward off the attack with their arm.

The aim is for one practitioner to attack and the other practitioner to ward off the attack. While the attack movements in Taijiquan and Wing Choon are

similar, the defence movements are different. In Wing Choon Kungfu, the deflecting movement is brushing the attack to a side with rotation of the waist. In Taijiquan, the deflecting movement is first to sink back following the attacking momentum, then deflect it and turn the movement back to the attacker. Roughly the Wing Choon circular movement is vertical, whereas the Taijiquan oval movement is horizontal.

From my observation, those who practice popular styles of Wing Choon do not deflect an attack the way we do in Choe Family Wing Choon. They seldom rotate their waist but maintain their frontal position and ward off the attack from their center-line. In Choe Family Wing Choon, our defence issues from our waist, sometimes without even moving our hands. In popular styles of Wing Choon, their defence issues from their shoulders, often with much arm movement. Because we employ leverage of our waist, we need less force to deflect an opponent's attack.

Our Wahnam Taijiquan Pushing Hands is also different from the Pushing Hands of other schools. When we practice stationary Pushing Hands, we do not move our body when an attack is short range. If an attack is middle range, we use shen-fa, or body-movement, to sink back to avoid the full force of the attack, but without moving our feet. In stationary Pushing Hands of other styles, practitioners of other Taijiquan schools move their body almost all the time. They don't seem to differentiate between short range attack and middle range attack.

In mobile Pushing Hands when an attack is long range, we move our feet. We change our attack from a finger-thrust to pushing with both arms, i.e. from "White Snake Shoots Venom" to "Open Window to Look at Moon". Indeed, we move our feet because the attack is long range. If the attack is short range we just move our arms, and if the attack is middle range, we shift our body, irrespective of whether the attack is a finger-thrust, a palm push or any other techniques.

In other words, we use the best footwork according to the range of attack. If an attack is short range, it is not necessary to move the body or the feet. If the attack is middle range, it is inadequate to avoid the full force of the attack by just using the arm, so shifting the body back is an excellent move. Moving the feet back would miss the opportunity of counter-strike, for which Taijiquan is well known. If an attack is long range, like when an opponent is moving into you, just using your arms or sinking back your body is inadequate, so you have to move one step back. Because he is moving forward, even when you move back, you will still be close enough to counter-strike him, while being far away to be safe.

When Wahnam Taijiquan students are familiar with these footwork movements, they can progress to a more advanced level of remaining in the centre. When an opponent moves forward with a long range attack, they may, for example, employ the tactic of interception. They sink back their body without moving their feet to intercept an opponent's attack when it is at middle range before it

has progressed to long range, deflect it and counter-strike. This is a very effective counter.

These lessons on footwork and range of attack are not systematically taught in our Wing Choon syllabus. Thus students who wish to specialize in Wing Choon Kungfu, can benefit much from breadth and depth if they attend some Taijiquan courses. These principles and practice, of course, are applicable in daily life.

A student, who has internalized his Wing Choon training, may aggressively fight back or move away when someone attacks him at his work place.

The following are some possible scenarios.

Attacker: "Why do you talk to that customer. It is not your job."

Wing Choon student: "You mind your own business" or finding the attack overwhelming, he moves away.

Wing Choon student with Taijiquan advantage: "It's not my job but I work in the same company. I try my best to help the customer. But you did nothing."

QUESTION 6

I was recently watching a Kungfu film that focused on Wing Choon, and one of the characters made an interesting comment regarding Sticky Hands practice. The teacher said to the student, "Do not follow your opponents movements. Follow his shadow." The teacher was telling the student to follow the opponent's intention, rather than his movements. Would you agree with this instruction for Sticky Hands. Or is this a fictional approach that was included in the movie?

I'm also curious to know if "shadow" is typically/traditionally used to mean intention - as in No Shadow Kick. Would this be a kick that is executed without any obvious intention to kick, or telegraphing the movement, thus making it difficult to block?

— Matt

I would not agree with the instruction mentioned in the movie. There is some truth in the instruction at an advanced level but its meaning is not like what you mentioned.

The main aim of Sticking Hands is to train sensitivity of the arms so as to be able to deflect an opponent's attack with the arms without having to look at the attack. The core of the training is with the attacker's movements.

In kungfu context, "shadow" does not typically or traditionally mean intention. It means the withdrawing movement of an opponent, usually but not necessarily after an attack.

If an opponent attacks the practitioner's head, regardless of whether the opponent's intention is to attack the head and before he withdraws his attack, the practitioner must deflect the attack during Sticking Hands practice. He may dodge the attack instead of deflecting it, but still he covers the attack with his hand in case the opponent extends or changes his attack.

The attack may be a feint move. When the practitioner in his Sticking Hands training attempts to deflect the attack to his head, the opponent changes it to an attack to his body using a reverse ginger-fist, also called a leopard-fist (which is commonly used in Choe Family Wing Choon, but not in the popular Wing Choon styles practiced today). In his initial training the practitioner may be tricked. In this case, the opponent must not forget to guard his face with his other hand.

But eventually, as his deflecting hand is in contact with the opponent's attack, the practitioner can sense the changing movement of the opponent and follows it, thus also deflecting the real attack after the feint one.

The arms of the two practitioners in Sticking Hands training are usually in contact. But there may be occasions when they are not. For example, an attacker may use the tactic of "one against two" to close the opponent's two hands with his one hand, then execute a thrust kick. The responder may counter with a hand sweep.

Then, the attack makes a feint move to attack the opponent's head. The

opponent raises his hand to deflect the attack. But before the arms come into contact, the attacker changes his momentum to attack the opponent's body with a reversed ginger-fist. Initially, the opponent may be hit. But gradually, if the training is systematic, the opponent can respond spontaneously even when their arms are not in contact.

In our school, when we practice Sticking Hands we create a chi field that extends beyond our physical arms. Even when our arms are not in contact and we are blind-folded, we can pick up the movement, and later the intention, of an opponent in our chi field. This was the reason why some of our advanced students and instructors in the Special Wing Choon Course in Penang in 2010 reported to me that during free sparring when their eyes were open, they could respond more effectively by sensing than by seeing their opponent's attack.

At this stage, the opponent's movement and his intention are the same. He makes a feint move to attack your head, then changes it to an attack to your body because that is what he has intended to do. As our training is systematic and progressive, later you can also sense his emotions and other intentions. You may, for example, sense that he is nervous or confident. You may also sense that he is preparing to run away, or is about to press in with continuous attacks.

As the level of martial arts today is low, with many martial artists freely exchange blows with a shocking disregard to their own safety, many people may not believe in these higher aspects of kungfu. But some of our instructors and senior students told me that sometimes in free sparring they knew beforehand what attacks their opponents would make. They picked up their opponents' intentions in their chi field or mind field.

George told me an interesting story some time ago. He was free sparring with Kai on an occasion not connected with Wing Choon Kungfu. They were in poise position. Suddenly George withdrew with his hand protecting his eyes. Kai then told George that he intended to execute "Poisonous Snake Shoots Venom". Kai's shen, which included his intention, was so strong, and George's sensitivity so sharp that George could easily pick up Kai's intention before Kai actually made the movement.

Had George practiced Wing Choon Kungfu, he would have the benefit of breadth and depth to exploit the situation. He would wait for Kai to make his move, then swiftly squatted down like a gorilla, as George is quite large in size, to pluck some peaches. Gorillas love peaches too. Kai, of course, could protect his peaches. He might, for example, lift up his leg to protect the peaches and then executed his world-famous kicks.

The above scenario shows the systematic progression of Sticking Hands training. If a teacher were to say, "Don't follow the movement, follow the intention", students would be confused. They may understand the meaning of the instruction but lack the skills to carry it out. Such an instruction is bad, but is better than an instruction commonly found in martial arts, "Put on your boxing gloves and fight". The instructor submits his students, and the students submit

themselves to being hit and punched when they are supposed to learn an art that prevents this happening!

In kungfu context, "shadow" often refers to an opponent's retreating movement. When an opponent attacks, you deflect his attack, with your hand still in contact with his arm. When he withdraws his arm, you follow the "shadow" to strike him. This is a manifestation of a saying commonly found in popular styles of Wing Choon, i.e. "loi lau huai soong, leik sau chiet choong", which means, "When an opponent comes, retain him; when he retreats, send him away. If the arms lose contact, strike straight ahead."

In Choe Family Wing Choon practiced in our school, this is only one of many combat principles. It is not the all-important principle that some practitioners of popular styles of Wing Choon think it is. Other important combat principles in Choe Family Wing Choon, which are also found in other kungfu styles, especially those from Shaolin, are "yow kiew kiew sheong ko, mo kiew shun shui lau", which means "If there is a bridge, go along the bridge; if there is no bridge, follow the flow of water", and "yow yein ta yein, mo yein choui ying", which means "if there is form, strike the form; if there is no form, chase the shadow".

When an opponent attacks, you counter-strike at the same time, with your attacking arm going over his attacking arm, thus deflecting his attack. This is going along the bridge. If he withdraws his arm, you still continue with your counter-attack. This is following the flow of water.

When an opponent attacks, you rotate your waist slight to avoid his attack and simultaneously strike his attacking arm. This is striking the form when there is form. If he withdraws his arm, you immediately change from striking his arm to striking his body. This is chasing the shadow when there is no form.

In "no-shadow kick", "shadow" does not refer to intention. Its meaning is literal. It means that the kick is so fast that it does not leave a shadow.

Actually, the effectiveness of the no-shadow kick depends more on tactic than on speed. I can speak with some authority because no-shadow kick is one of my specialties, the other being tiger-claw, both of which I learned from my Tiger-Crane Set. Those who will attend the Legacy of Wong Fei Hoong course at UK Summer Camp 2014 will have an introduction of both no-shadow kick and tiger-claw.

Although it is one of my specialties, as far as I can remember I used the no-shadow kick only once in my sparring and actual fighting in my younger days. Many years ago in Alor Star in Malaysia I used the no-shadow kick in the pattern, "Yellow Oriole Drinks Water", on a master of Silambam, a classical Indian martial art. He was surprised by my dragon-hand form a few inches from his eyes. It was a few seconds later that he realized by no-shadow kick was just an inch from his groin.

In the Chinese language, "shadow" may sometimes mean "trace". With a twist of semantics, though I don't think this was its original meaning, "no-shadow kick" may refer to a skillful use of tactic that an opponent has no trace or awareness

of the kick, even when it may not be executed fast.

I have demonstrated the no-shadow kick a few times in classes. There are quite a few no-shadow kicks hidden in our combat sequences. As they appear in the combat sequences, they are ordinary kicks. They become no-shadow kicks with the application of some appropriate tactics.

There is certainly a well-defined intention when executing a no-shadow kick, though the intention may not be obvious to an opponent. There is a signal when executing a kick, sometimes clearly shown. In fact there is a colloquial kungfu saying that "as soon as he moves his shoulder, I know a kick is coming".

In a no-shadow kick the signal is minimized, or if it is obvious like in the case of a tiger-tail kick, the signal is made to be so misleading that an opponent does not suspect a kick is coming.

Talking about the tiger-tail kick, I now remember I used it as a no-shadow kick on another occasion on my sidai, or junior classmate, Ah Huat, who was a master at the Chin Wah Hoong Ka Kungfu Gymnasium. During a free sparring, I tempted him to attack him, then suddenly applied a tiger-tail kick that caught him in total surprise though he knew this technique very well. It was my skillful use of tactic. Both this event and the event with the Silambam master are recorded in my coming autobiography, *The Way of the Master*.

"Never block a kick" is good kungfu advice, as there are many disadvantages doing so. If he telegraph his kick, like moving his shoulder, for example, let him kick and dodge it, simultaneously strike his kicking leg. He will find it difficult to defend against your counter.

QUESTION 7

Why do you think Yip Man style of Wing Chun has become so popular as an effective martial art?

What are the differences this popular style compared to the Wing Choon you teach?

Finally, I've noticed that many Wing Chun masters in the West are developing their own personal "Wing Chun", often taking things from other sports/martial arts like Grappling and Boxing, and many of them are overly aggressive and arrogant, some even violent, what is your opinion on this?

— Sifu Daniel

I can think of two reasons why Yip Man style of Wing Chun has become so popular as an effective martial art.

The first reason is that its practitioners spend a lot of time on sparring, whereas practitioners of most other styles spend their time on demonstrating form. The relatively few kungfu sets in this style contribute to this situation. Leaving aside weapon sets as weapons are seldom used in combat nowadays, there are only three kungfu sets in this style, whereas in other styles there are more than a dozen sets. This gives practitioners of this style more time on sparring practice.

Compared to some martial arts, or sports, like Boxing and Muay Thai, there are no sets, so their practitioners focus solely on sparring. Boxers and Muay Thai fighters are generally more effective than kungfu practitioners in using their arts for combat. Their lack of or relatively few sets is a significant contributing factor.

The second reason is the low level of combat today. This is a sensitive issue, and may make may some people unhappy or angry. But I prefer to state my opinion honestly, or course without being disrespectful to any martial artists. As I have mentioned many times, what and how they practice is their business, and I have no interest to convince them.

But in my opinion, the standard of martial art today is low. A crucial aim of any martial art is self-defence, but most martial artists today, including advanced ones, cannot defend themselves. They may be good at hitting others, but the fact remains that they are poor at self-defence, to the extent that they accept being hit in free sparring as normal.

In the light of the present situation when martial artists in general regard being hit as normal, if you practice a kungfu style that encourages you to rush in to hit your opponent, without any regard for your own safety, the popular style of Wing Chun practiced today is effective as a martial art. This is the criterion of most people.

But it is not my criterion in judging whether a martial art is effective. In my opinion, the first principle of combat is safety. If you can come out of combat unhurt, even if you lose the combat, I would consider the it an effective art of self-defence. On top of this, if you can use the patterns you practice to defeat

your opponent, I would consider it a very effective martial art.

There are many differences between this popular style of Wing Chun and the style of Wing Choon I teach, which is Choe Family Wing Choon.

The first noticeable difference, though it may not be significant and some people may not have noticed it, is that we use the term "Wing Choon", and not "Wing Chun", though the Chinese characters are the same. I prefer to use "Wing Choon" because it is less likely to be mispronounced by English speaking people, with "choon" rhyming with "soon". It is easier to mispronounce "Chun" to rhyme with "pun".

A more significant difference is that the form of Choe Family Wing Choon is much closer to that of Shaolin Kungfu than the popular Wing Chun form. We frequently use, for example, the Horse-Riding Stance, Bow-Arrow Stance, the phoenix-eye fist and the leopard fist, which are seldom found in the popular style. It is therefore no surprise that those who are limited only to the popular style of Wing Chun, think that our Wing Choon movements are not Wing Choon movements. Forms that are frequently found in the popular Wing Chun style, like the Goat-Stance, the Four-Six Stance, the cup fist and the finger-thrust are also found in the Wing Choon I teach.

Many people may not be able to tell the difference between traditional Shaolin Kungfu and Choe Family Wing Choon because the forms look the same. But the initiated can tell the difference. Choe Family Wing Choon is softer, and frequently uses the forms of the snake and the crane, whereas traditional Shaolin Kungfu is harder and frequently uses the forms of the dragon and the tiger.

These same many people can usually tell the difference between traditional Shaolin Kungfu and the popular Wing Chun style by observing their forms. Northern Shaolin is characterized by long Bow-Arrow Stance, kicking and jumping, willow-leaf palm and hook-hand, Southern Shaolin by shorter Bow-Arrow Stance, False-Leg Stance, dragon-form and tiger-claw, whereas popular Wing Chun style by Four-Six Stance, cup fist and finger-thrust.

Because of a wider range of techniques, there is also a wider range of combat applications in the Choe Family Wing Choon I teach than in the popular Wing Chun style. While all the combat applications found in the popular style are also found in our Wing Choon style, there are many useful techniques in Choe Family Wing Choon not found in the popular Wing Chun style. For example, moving diagonally forward to a Bow-Arrow Stance and simultaneously executing a ginger-fist, also called a leopard-fist, to an opponent's ribs, is not found in popular style Wing Chun.

A useful technique often found in Choe Family Wing Choon, known as "por pai sau" or "flank-breaking hand", which is similar to "Jade Girl threads Shuttle" in Taijiquan, and "Old Elephant Drops Tusk" (where the fists instead of the palms are used) in Shaolin Kungfu, is not found in the popular Wing Chun style. This technique is very useful when fighting in a pub where assailants often rush in swinging a broken bottle. You move in frontally into a Bow-Arrow Stance, using

one hand to break his bottle-holding arm, and your other hand to execute a combat-ending strike on his solar plexus.

It is also very effective against a fast Boxer or someone rushing in with a series of chain-punches. Here, you move in from a side into a Bow-Arrow Stance, using one hand to cover your opponent's two hands, and the other hand to execute a decisive strike on his temple. If he hasn't felled, you can finish him off with a finger-thrust into his throat or eye. Is this Wing Choon Kungfu. Of course, it is.

Such counters reveal another philosophical difference between Choe Family Wing Choon and popular Wing Chun style. Wing Choon Kungfu is known for its economy of movements. Wing Choon strikes are also vicious. As a combat art for a small sized person against bigger sized opponents, you have to finish them off with just one decisive strike. You can't afford to play around with a series of 20 chain punches.

If you are far superior to your opponent and wish to play around with him, you can use chin-na or felling techniques, which are found in Choe Family Wing Choon but seldom found in the popular Wing Chun style. Here, the center-line concept, which is an important principle in popular style Wing Chun, is used differently. In popular style Wing Chun, an exponent keeps his center-line. But a Choe Family Wing Choon exponent goes away from the center-line to grip his opponent from a side with a chin-na technique, or off-balance his opponent from his center-line with a felling attack. Is this Wing Choon. Of course, it is, though those who think of Wing Chun as only goat stance and chain punches may call it Jujitsu or Judo.

The approach to force training is also different. The wooden dummy is an essential training tool in popular style Wing Chun. Some practitioners of popular style Wing Chun would consider their training incomplete if they had not hit a wooden dummy. Judging from the big muscles many practitioners of popular Wing Chun style have, it is reasonable to conclude that weight-lifting is an important part of their force training.

In Choe Family Wing Choon, we can be quite powerful without having to hit a wooden dummy or lift weight. We can develop a lot of internal force using Siu Lin Tou.

I believe our force training is in line with Wing Choon history and philosophy - founded by a lady for small sized exponents against bigger sized opponents. Both its founder, Yim Wing Choon, and a great master nicked named Wing Choon King, Leong Chan, were known to be graceful and elegant. It was unlikely they had big muscles.

When I was learning Choe Family Wing Choon from my sifu, Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, the celebrated Bruce Lee made the popular Wing Chun style well known, though, ironically, he abandoned Wing Choon Kungfu for Jeet Kun Do. I found a lot of differences between the Wing Choon I practiced and the popular Wing Chun style. So I asked my sifu about it.

His reply was most humbling, and greatly shaped my own philosophy and later

teaching. He said, "What others practice is their business. We practice, and are grateful for, what our masters have passed down to us."

Of course, I did not blindly practice what masters had passed down to us. I assessed my practice to the best of my understanding and experience. Having learnt from Uncle Righteousness, Sifu Chee Kim Thong and Sifu Ho Fatt Nam, who were patriarchs of their own arts, I was already proficient in kungfu philosophy and practice. Still I found my Wing Choon training greatly enriched my kungfu understanding and performance.

I later discovered that the Wing Choon Kungfu I practiced was closer to what was practiced by early Wing Choon masters. I also discovered that Wing Choon Kungfu was a complete art by itself. Not only there was no need to borrow techniques from other arts, these techniques were already very advanced in Wing Choon Kungfu. This does not mean that we cannot enrich Wing Choon Kungfu from our understanding and practice of other arts. This is the benefit of breadth and depth, which is a hallmark of our school.

Earlier I learned an important lesson from my sifu, Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. He said that anyone who developed his own personal style, often taking things from other arts, was either not advanced in his art, or the art he practiced was not advanced. This comment was made at a time when many kungfu "masters" borrowed from Karate, even calling their arts so and so "do", like Shaolin-do or Taiji-do.

Let us briefly examine the examples you gave that these "masters" took from other arts to improve their Wing Chun, that is Grappling and Boxing. Chin-na, which is more sophisticated than just grappling, is already found in Wing Choon Kungfu, though not many Wing Chun practitioners may realize it. The "tan kam sau" and "seong kam sau", or "single grip hand" and "double grip hand", found in the fundamental set, Cham Kiew, are examples of chin-na techniques.

Important differences between chin-na techniques and grappling can be traced to the fact that Wing Choon Kungfu is a fighting art whereas Grappling is a martial sport. An exponent applying a chin-na technique has to ensure his own safety. He would not, for example, expose himself to attacks by his opponent while he grips his opponent. A martial sport practitioner, on the other hand, is protected by safety rules.

A chin-na technique is combat-ending by itself. In other words, having applied the chin-na technique successfully, the exponent can let go of the opponent but the opponent could not continue fighting. In practice and friendly sparring, however, the exponent may not apply decisive force to hurt his sparring partner. But this may not be so in grappling. If the exponent lets go of his hold, his opponent can fight again. Those "masters" who borrow grappling techniques from martial sports probably do not know these facts.

Many people forget that Boxing is a sport, governed by safety rules. If one uses Boxing in a real fight without safety rules, it can be disastrous. When an opponent throws you some Boxing punches, you can cover his both hands with your "tan sau" or mirror-hand, not from your center-line which would be

disadvantageous but from a side, and simultaneously kick his groin. Or you can move slightly to a side away from the center-line, and glide your "phew chee" or finger-thrust to his eye, with your thrust arm deflecting his Boxing punch.

As mentioned earlier, Wing Choon strikes are vicious. It ends combat in the fastest manner. Personally I would not use such vicious techniques if I have a choice. But if I have no choice, like an overly aggressive and arrogant master ridicules my Wing Choon and challenges me to a fight, I would not hesitate to pierce my finger-thrust into his eye or smash his groin with a Wing Choon kick to show that Wing Choon Kungfu is not only effective but deadly in real fighting, which it actually is. I am quite sure that Yim Wing Choon herself, or Leong Chan or the famous Wing Choon master, Yip Man, would do the same in a same situation.

Even if we leave aside these weaknesses in using Boxing techniques in a real fight, for which Wing Choon Kungfu is designed, borrowing these Boxing techniques from Boxing is unwise because there are better techniques in Wing Choon Kungfu itself for similar functions.

Boxing punches depend on muscular strength, which in turns depends on big muscles. This is contrary to fundamental Wing Choon philosophy. The striking power of Wing Choon comes from internal force, developed from practicing Siu Lin Tou. I had personal confirmation of this about 30 years ago.

A gang rode their motor-cycles right to the middle of an open training ground of my sidai, or junior classmate, Lau Weng Woh, who was teaching lion dance in preparation for the coming Chinese New Year in Penang. Earlier I told a gang member off when he was rude to his master.

That gang member pointed to me, and the leader of the gang came straight to me and said, "Why do you mind others' business?"

"I like to mind others' business," I replied, and simultaneously gave him a gentle Wing Choon cup fist on his face.

This sent him back about 20 steps falling onto the ground. I was quite surprised at the time, but on hindsight I believe my internal force shocked his brain.

The whole gang of about 10 people attacked me. Had I used popular Wing Chun style, Grappling or Boxing, I would be in trouble. But the Choe Family Wing Choon I practice included Drunken Eight Immortals and Choy-Li-Fatt, which are excellent for mass fighting.

I did not think of Drunken Eight Immortals or Choy-Li-Fatt then, but fought spontaneously. The mass fighting, with me alone fighting about 10 gangsters, as the others were enjoying the show from the side, ended not with a vicious Wing Choon technique (because I had a choice as the gang did not insist that I must use Wing Choon) but with "Lohan Tames Tiger" from Shaolin Kungfu, throwing the leader face-on to the ground. But my control was superb. I stopped just an inch away, letting him smell the cement floor.

Because Boxing depends on muscular strength, a Boxer throws his body

forward as he punches, which makes it more difficult for him to defend against counter-strikes. Wing Choon strikes, which can be more powerful even executed by a small-sized exponent, does not have this weakness.

Boxing is limited to ordinary punches, but there is a wider range of hand-forms in Wing Choon Kungfu, like the finger-thrust, the palm strike, the cup fist, the ginger-fist and the phoenix-eye fist. Striking the eye with a finger-thrust or the solar plexus with a phoenix-eye fist is more effective than with an ordinary punch.

Although Wing Choon Kungfu is a vicious art, its training when carried out correctly can make practitioners relaxed, humble and peace-loving. This is due to the way of its training. Anyone practicing Wing Choon or Wing Chun and finding himself becoming more aggressive, arrogant or violent, should, for his own sake, check whether he has practiced the art wrongly.

Not tensing the muscles, not grimacing and not working oneself into a frenzy, which are contrary to what some misguided Wing Chun practitioners wrongly think the art is, is essential in internal force training, which is crucial in an art meant for the small-size against the big and muscular. It is well known from records that Yim Wing Choon, Leong Chan and Yip Man, the great names in Wing Choon Kungfu, were lovable people.

QUESTION 8

How similar do you estimate the Choe Family Wing Choon practiced in our school to be to the original style taught by Yim Wing Choon?

— Sifu Andy

I believe that the Choe Family Wing Choon practiced in our school is very similar to the original style taught by Yim Wing Choon, with the exception of the part contributed by Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu. On the other hand, considering only the Wing Choon part and leaving out the Choy-Li-Fatt part, Choe Family Wing Choon is still very different from the style of Wing Choon most popularly practiced today.

A brief historical background will explain the Choy-Li-Fatt part of Choe Family Wing Choon.

Choe Family Wing Choon was originally an exclusive art taught only to the Choe Family in the Nga Wu Village of Phoon Yu District of Guangdong in South China. "Nga Wu" means "Beautiful Lake". "Phoon Yu" is just the name of the district without any special meaning.

Initially the villages of Nga Wu practiced Choy-Li-Fatt Kungfu, taught by a famous master, Yik Kam. One day a red-boat, i.e. a huge boat conveying actors and apparatus of Cantonese opera, landed at Nga Wu Village. One of the actors, Leong Yi Tai, was a master of a little-known kungfu style called Wing Choon Kungfu.

Yik Kam, who was keen to meet other kungfu masters, paid a visit to Leong Yi Tai and requested a friendly sparring. Yik Kam was so convincingly beaten by Leong Yi Tai that he begged the Wing Choon master to accept him as a disciple.

Subsequently Yik Kam taught Wing Choon Kungfu in Nga Wu Village, but he kept the famous Drunken Eight Immortals set. He also composed his Choy-Li-Fatt techniques into a set, and just called it "Choy-Li-Fatt".

There were many kungfu sets in Choe Family Wing Choon passed down by Yik Kam. The fundamental set, which all students must learn, was Siu Lin Tou, which incorporated the three sets of popular style Wing Choon, namely Siu Lim Tou, Cham Kiew and Phew Chee. The other Wing Choon sets included Flower Set, Tiger-Crane, Battle-Palm, Battle-Fist and Essence of Fighting.

Although Battle-Palm and Battle-Fist were Wing Choon sets, there were a lot of Choy-Li-Fatt features in them. My sifu, Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, told me that their spirit was Wing Choon, but their application was Choy-Li-Fatt. Essence of Fighting had a combination of Wing Choon and Choy-Li-Fatt. It was probably composed by Yik Kam, drawing from the best techniques he had used in his fighting.

Flower-Set and Tiger-Crane were typically Southern Shaolin Kungfu, with emphasis on the softer forms of the snake and the crane. Siu Lin Tou was like popular style Wing Choon, except that the ginger-fist (also called the leopard

fist), the phoenix-eye fist as well as the bow-arrow stance were frequently used.

I once asked my sifu why our fundamental set was called Siu Lin Tou, which means "Little-Practice-Beginning", whereas the fundamental set of popular style Wing Choon was called "Siu Lim Tou", which means "Little-Thought-Beginning". My sifu said that every time Yim Wing Choon practiced her kungfu, that was the set she would begin first before proceeding to other practices. Hence, the set came to be called "Siu Lin Tou", or "Little-Practice-Beginning".

My sifu did not know why in popular style Wing Choon the set was called "Siu Lim Tou". But he was of the opinion that as "Siu Lin Tou" required more effort to pronounce it, gradually it changed to "Siu Lim tou", which would be smoother to pronounce, as in some English words like "thank you" and "come on".

Besides the Long Staff and the Butterfly Knives which were found in popular style Wing Choon, there were also many weapon sets in Choe Family Wing Choon which were not found in popular style Wing Choon. These weapon sets included the sabre, the short staff, the big trident, the soft whip, the spear, the kungfu bench and the Guan Dao.

I believe that the Wing Choon part of Choe Family Wing Choon, like Siu Lin Tou, flower Set and Tiger-Crane was similar to what Yim Wing Choon practiced and later taught to her husband, Leong Phok Khau. Leong Phok Khau taught Wing Choon Kungfu to two disciples, Wong Wah Poh and Leong Yi Tai.

Leong Yi Tai taught the art to Yik Kam, whose successor was Choe Shun, who passed the art to Choe Tuck Seng, then to Choe Chun, and then to Choe On. Choe On taught my sifu, Choe Hoong Choy.

My opinion that Choe Family Wing Choon was similar to the art taught by Wing Yim Choon was based on some research. It is well known in kungfu circles that the specialty of Ng Mui, Yim Wing Choon's teacher, was the Flower Set. Ng Mui taught the set to her two disciples, Yim Wing Choon and Fong Sai Yoke. It was from the Flower Set that Yim Wing Choon evolved her Wing Choon Kungfu.

When I was the Honorary Secretary of the Kedah Kungfu and Lion Dance Association in the 1980s, I spent quite some time with a Ng Mui Kungfu master. He showed me some of his favorite kungfu moves and I noticed how similar they were with those of Choe Family Wing Choon.

Another of Ng Mui favorite kungfu set was Tiger-Crane. She also taught this set to her two disciples, Yim Wing Choon and Fong Sai Yoke. I learned this Tiger-Crane Set from Sifu Choe Hoong Choy. This Tiger-Crane Set was different from the Tiger-Crane Set I learned from Uncle Righteousness, and also different from the one of Wong Fei Hoong's lineage.

One of the patterns, Single Leg Flying Crane, was an ultimate technique of the Ng Mui Kungfu master. He told me that no one had managed to escape this ultimate of his. During a friendly sparring, he applied his ultimate technique on me. Luckily I knew about it from the Wing Choon Tiger-Crane Set, and thus was able to counter it.

These examples suggested that Yim Wing Choon practiced the Flower Set and the Tiger-Crane Set. But still it was possible that when she developed her Wing Choon Kungfu, she discarded these sets even though they were very useful. However, other evidence suggested that this was not so.

There were records that when Leong Chan, a disciple of Wong Wah Poh, fought he used kungfu techniques similar to those of Southern Shaolin, including bow-arrow stance, false-leg stance and palm strikes, for which he was famous, similar to those in Flower Set. His victorious fights won him the honorable nickname, the Wing Choon Kungfu King.

There was an interesting description of his encounter with another kungfu masters famous for Iron Palm, but whose name I cannot remember. A tree branch was in their way while they were walking along a country path. The master broke the branch with his Iron Palm to clear the way, demonstrating his kungfu force.

Soon they came to the edge of a pond, where birds on a tree were making a lot of noise. Leong Chan use his palm strike to break a branch, causing the birds to fly away.

"Now we can have a nice chat undisturbed by the birds," Leong Chan said.

"Your kungfu force is remarkable" the master replied.

"I have heard the fame of your Iron Palm. I had a chance to see it just now," remarked the Wing Choon Kungfu King.

Once when Leong Chan was having his morning tea, he was ambushed by a group of about 15 people using weapons. He fought his way out using a bench.

Leong Chan's favorite weapon was not a kungfu bench, but a soft whip. Once he attended a gathering, expecting that there would be a fight. So he hid his soft whip under his clothing. Sure enough a fight broke out and he was attacked by group of about 20 people with weapons. He fought his way out using his soft whip.

There was another interesting story connected with the patriarch of Choe Family Wing Choon. Although Leong Chan had been successful in all his fights, eventually he met another master whom he was not confident of beating. It was a leitai match, i.e. a match on a platform with no rules and open to public viewing. For many days Leong Chan brooded over how he could meet this master.

Then news came that a red-boat with his sisook, Leong Yi Tai, on it would land at Fatt San, or the Mountain of Buddhas, the city in South China where Leong Chan lived. Leong Chan visited his sisook on the boat and told him his predicament.

"I know the fighting style of the master," Leong Yi Tai said. "I'll teach you a special technique to beat him."

"I'm grateful for sisook's teaching," replied Leong Chan.

"But the red-boat is too public for me to show you the secret."

Then Leong Yi Tai leaned over and whispered something into Leong Chan's ear.

"I'll show you the special technique in a fighting scene tonight."

So that night Leong Chan went to the opera and looked out for the secret in a fighting scene. He got it. It was a double flying kick, known as "yin-yeong thui" in Cantonese, literally meaning "drake-duck kick". It was an example of hiding secret in the open. This double flying kick was similar to the one the Ng Mui Kungfu master used on me.

Leong Chan practiced the technique for the remaining days until the leitai match. True enough he beat the master with this double-flying kick.

This event revealed the following facts which the uninitiated would be unable to detect, and which showed that our Choe Family Wing Choon was similar to the original style taught by Yim Wing Choon.

The double flying kick was found in the Flower Set and the Tiger-Crane Set but not in Siu Lin Tou, or the three fundamental sets of Siu Lim Tou, Cham Kiew and Phew Chee. Not only that Leong Chan had practiced the Flower and the Tiger-Crane Set, or at least one of the two sets, but also that Leong Yi Tai knew about this fact.

If Leong Chan had not practiced the double flying kick before, even if Leong Yi Tai told him the secret, Leong Chan would not be in time to practice it well enough to defeat the master in the leitai match. If Leong Yi Tai had not known that Leong Chan had practiced the double flying kick, he would not have told him the secret as Leong Chan would not be able to use it effectively in practice though he might know the secret in theory.

As an analogy, if you had not known that your European friend going to England for a holiday had learnt driving before, you would not tell him that in England he had to drive on the left side of the road. Even if he knew this in theory, he would not have sufficient time to learn driving on the left side to put it into effective practice.

With some fun in detective work, we can rightly conclude that the Flower Set and the Tiger-Crane Set were taught by Yim Wing Choon to her husband, Leong Phok Khau, who in turn taught them to Wong Wah Poh and Leong Yi Tai. Wong Wah Poh taught it to Leong Chan, and Leong Yi Tai passed them on to our Choe Family Wing Choon lineage. Hence, the Choe Family Wing Choon practiced in our school is similar to the original style taught by Yim Wing Choon.

QUESTION 9

If there were a modern day Yim Wing Chun (i.e. a beautiful and feminine young woman) out there wishing to take up kungfu, what would be the complete set of benefits to her from practicing Shaolin Wahnam Wing Choon?

— Sifu Andy

A modern day Yim Wing Choon, i.e. a beautiful and feminine young woman will get a lot of benefit practicing the style of Wing Choon practiced in our school. I use the term Choe Family Wing Choon, but later, if conditions are suitable, we may change the term to Shaolin Wahnam Wing Choon as suggested by you because there are some noticeable differences between the Wing Choon I first learned from my sifu, Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, and the Wing Choon I now teach.

Her benefits are quite extensive, covering many areas.

Firstly, she will have good health, vitality and longevity. This is a fundamental set of benefits one will get by practicing any arts in our school. This is also an area where we place more importance than combat efficiency. The main reason why we can give these wonderful benefits is because we practice our Wing Choon as chi kung, and attaining good health, vitality and longevity is the expected result of practicing chi kung.

Many other Wing Choon schools may not have these benefits. Their practitioners practice their art at the physical level, and not as chi kung. Thus, they do not derive the expected benefits of chi kung, which are attaining good health, vitality and longevity. Worse, they often neglect their health from sustaining injuries in free sparring, and their injuries are routinely unattended to.

Another wonderful benefit, which is of particular to women of any age, is that practicing our style of Wing Choon will make them even more beautiful and feminine. This is in direct contrast to the kind of image some practitioners of other styles of Wing Choon often reflect, that of being muscle-bound and aggressive.

Why does practicing Choe Family Wing Choon make a beautiful and feminine young woman more beautiful and youthful. It is because Choe Family Wing Choon closely resembles the art invented by a beautiful and feminine young woman who wanted to enhance her beauty and youthfulness. When Yim Wing Choon cared enough about wearing a skirt, which made her feminine, to modify her Flower Set to Siu Lin Tou, we can imagine how much she care about her beauty and youthfulness. So in Choe Family Wing Choon there is no lifting weights and hitting a wooden dummy - something that Yim Wing Choon herself would not want to do.

How did the real Yim Wing Choon or how does the modern day Yim Wing Choon have strength and strong arms for combat efficiency if she does not lift weights and hit a wooden dummy. She used, or the modern counterpart uses superior method of developing internal force through Siu Lin Tou. Not only internal force

training gives her more strength and more powerful arms, without being bulky and muscular, but also it gives her rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes, enhancing her beauty and youthfulness.

Another set of wonderful benefits from training Choe Family Wing Choon is having mental clarity and spiritual joys, but not religious. Having a mind clear of irrelevant thoughts is a crucial requirement for practicing Choe Family Wing Choon as an internal art, and this leads to mental clarity. Internal art cultivates not just the physical body but also the spirit, leading to spiritual joys like being relaxed, peaceful and happy.

Yim Wing Choon never meant her art to produce practitioners who were aggressive and violent. All great Wing Choon masters, ranging from Wong Wah Poh and Leong Yi Tai to Leong Chan and the modern master, Yip Man, were relaxed and peace-loving. My Wing Choon sifu, Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, despite, or more correctly, because of his combat efficiency was well known for being humble and soft-spoken.

Some people may think, wrongly, that because he always won in many fights, Leong Chan was rough and aggressive. Far from it. He was humble and soft-spoken. The people of Fatt San called him "Mr Gentleman", or "Chan Sin Sang" in Cantonese.

Our beautiful and feminine young practitioner of Choe Family Wing Choon will be combat efficient, both in real fighting which rarely occurs nowadays as well as figuratively in meeting the demands of everyday life, which is a special benefit in our school. In actual fighting she will be able to apply her Wing Choon Kungfu for combat, and not bounce about like a kick-boxer. Although she is feminine, she will be able to handle opponents who are physically stronger and bigger in size. She will also be able to transfer her combat skills and philosophy to meet demanding situations in everyday life.

QUESTION 10

You have said that the most outstanding lesson that you have learned from Sigung Choe Hoong Choy is "profundity in simplicity".

Could you please give some examples of "profundity in simplicity" in Choe family Wing Choon?

Has practicing Choe family Wing Choon given you any "aha" moments that furthered your understanding or allowed for breakthroughs in the other styles of Kung Fu you practice.

— Chris

My sifu, Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, often mentioned the phrase, "Sum yap chean chuit", which literally means "deep enter, shallow emerge". Figuratively it means "something looks very profound, but is actually simple once it is explained". I translate the phrase in a more familiar English expression as "profundity in simplicity".

There are many examples of profundity in simplicity in Wing Choon Kungfu that many Wing Choon practitioners may not realize. This statement, of course, is never meant to belittle the Wing Choon practitioners involved, but is meant to help them to improve their art if they are humble enough to listen. It is also no surprise that many Wing Choon practitioners may not realize the profundity of their art because this profundity is explained in secrets normally kept only for selected disciples.

To be comprehensive in my explanation, I shall use examples from each of the four dimensions of kungfu, namely form, force, application and philosophy.

This concept of four dimensions in kungfu is itself a profundity. Not many kungfu practitioners look at their art in this way; they normally view their art only from the perspective of form, i.e. they only learn more and more techniques but have no idea of the kind of force particular to their art, do not know how to apply their techniques for combat, and have no idea of its philosophy.

This four-dimension concept was not taught to me by Sifu Choe Hoong Choy. I developed this concept when I wrote my first kungfu book, Introduction to Shaolin Kungfu, in the late 1970s. But Sifu Choe Hoong Choy's explanation of the profundity of Wing Choon Kungfu touched on all these four dimensions.

Explaining profundity in simplicity may be approached in two different ways though they are related. We may explain that Wing Choon Kungfu looks simple, but is actually profound. Or we may explain that profound techniques, skills or concepts in Wing Choon Kungfu are simple when explained. I shall use the second approach in this answer; the first approach is more appropriate for "simplicity in profundity".

Wing Choon form is meant for the small size against bigger and stronger opponents. If all other things were equal, it would be difficult for a Wing Choon

practitioner when an opponent employs chin-na or gripping attack on him. Taking Siu Lin Tou to be typical of Wing Choon form, there doesn't seem to be many counters against chin-na. In fact I suspect many Wing Choon practitioners would be in trouble if tiger-claw or eagle-claw exponents grip their arms. Chin-na is the nemesis of Wing Choon Kungfu.

How did Wing Choon masters in the past counter chin-na attacks. Although many Wing Choon practitioners today may not know of the counters, past Wing Choon masters must have countered chin-na successfully, otherwise Wing Choon Kungfu would have been eliminated. This was natural selection. If any martial art was inadequate, it would have been eliminated by natural selection in fighting as a matter of course.

If this was so, then why many Wing Choon practitioners today do not know counters against chin-na, yet Wing Choon Kungfu continues to prosper. The reason is that not many martial artists know how to apply chin-na techniques successfully. Today, if you are prepared to sustain injuries yourself, you just rush in to rain blows on your opponents, you would be considered a formidable fighter. If someone did that in the past, he would be killed instantly.

Wing Choon Kungfu has very effective counters against chin-na, its nemesis. This was a hallmark of a great kungfu style, i.e. not only the Wing Choon masters understood the innate weakness of the art, they could turn the table round on their opponents should the opponents attempt to exploit the innate weakness. Herein lies the profundity in simplicity of Wing Choon Kungfu.

Where are the Wing Choon counters against chin-na. They are found at the end of every sequence in Siu Lin Tou. Yim Wing Choon knew the innate weakness of her art very well, so she incorporated effective counters at every sequence so that she had sufficient practice.

If you grip the wrist of a competent Wing Choon practitioner, he will circulate his hand to release the grip, and thrust his fingers into your throat. If you grip his wrist with one hand, and his elbow with another, he will use covering hand to release your grip, and thrust a phoenix-eye fist into your solar plexus.

Many martial artists may say, "Well, these two counters may be effective, but they are just two counters against countless other chin-na attacks. What happens if opponents use other chin-na techniques?"

Here is where "sam yap chean chuit", or "profundity in simplicity", comes in. There are countless ways of gripping in chin-na, but all the grips may be divided into two main categories, single-hand grips and double-hand grips.

The first grip mentioned above is an example of a single-hand grip, and the second grip is that of a double-hand grip. Although there are countless ways of chin-na, by applying the principle of "sam yap chean chuit", we can use the same two principles to counter any chin-na attack!

The second dimension where we can examine "sam yap chean chuit" is skill. Wing Choon Kungfu is known for its skill of "inch-force", where you can injure an opponent within inches. This is a very useful skill for Wing Choon Kungfu where

economy of movement is crucial, unlike in external martial arts where exponents need distance to develop momentum for their striking impact.

To many people, even the concept of "inch force" is unbelievable. How could you damage an opponent from just inches away. Their problem arises because they think that damage is only possible with muscular strength, and in muscular strength it is necessary to pick up momentum. But this problem does not arise in internal force.

In Wing Choon Kungfu, internal force is developed by practicing Siu Lin Tou - if practitioners know how, and many practitioners do not know how. My glimpse of "sam yap chean chuit" in this respect was when my sifu, Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, showed me his performance of Siu Lin Tou in slow motion in a relaxed manner, thus enabling energy to flow.

This flowing energy is consolidated into internal force when used to strike an opponent within inches. Consolidating force is attained using the triple-stretch method, which is also found in Siu Lin Tou. But many Wing Choon practitioners today do not know this triple-stretch method. They perform Siu Lin Tou as isometric exercise, developing muscles instead of internal force.

Muscular strength is powerful, but it is not internal force. Muscular strength needs momentum to general power, unlike inch-force. More significant in daily life, energy is locked up in the muscles, which is detrimental to health.

Understanding this philosophy of internal force in Wing Choon Kungfu is very useful, but more important is to put it into practice in combat as well as in daily life, resulting in "sam yap chean chuit", or profundity in simplicity.

The third dimension is application. There are countless aspects of combat application, but we can sum up these countless aspects into one main aspect, i.e. how is Wing Choon Kungfu used by a small-sized exponent against bigger, stronger opponents. Like in Taijiquan, there are two reasons - internal force and mechanics.

If you have a lot of internal force, you can defeat opponents irrespective of their age, size and gender. If you use appropriate mechanics, you can beat opponents bigger and stronger than you. Of course, your task is easier when you have both internal force and appropriate mechanics.

As we have discussed internal force, we shall now focus on mechanics in Wing Choon Kungfu.

As in Taijiquan though the finer movements are different, the core of Wing Choon mechanics is in the waist. Those who insist on keeping the center-line, thus maintaining their frontal position, would have missed much of the advantage of waist rotation in Wing Choon mechanics.

A lot of my Wing Choon movements today involve waist rotation as it gives me many advantages. I cannot remember exactly whether that was what I originally learned from Sifu Choe Hoong Choy or it was my later innovation, but my Taijiquan practice has certainly much influenced it.

For example, suppose I am facing north, and an opponent is thrusting a cup fist into my solar plexus. Instead of maintaining my body facing north and moving my left palm from left to right to deflect the coming cup fist, like what many Wing Choon practitioners would do, I would rotate my waist slightly as I deflect the attack with my left palm so that my body would end facing north-east instead of still facing north. In this way I use less force to attain the same result as my deflection comes from the rotation of my waist. In the other example, the deflection comes from the left shoulder.

It is pertinent to mention that this pattern, "pak sau" or "slap hand", is performed in Siu Lin Tou without waist rotation. But in other kungfu sets in Choe Family Wing Choon, like in the Flower Set, "pak sau" is performed with waist rotation. My conclusion is that the focus of Siu Lin Tou is to develop internal force, including in "pak sau", so keeping the body in a frontal position is desirable, whereas in the Flower Set, the focus of the same pattern is combat application, so rotating the waist is advantageous.

Those who have learnt the principle of "sam yap chean chuit" will understand the profundity of applying this simple principle in a great variety of combat applications. Those who have not learnt this principle, or whose training is limited to only Siu Lin Tou, would have missed this opportunity.

In other patterns in Siu Lin Tou, waist rotation is used. In "bong sau" or "guard-hand", for example, it is waist rotation, and not the strength of the defending arm, that deflects an opponent's attack. In "lap-sau" or "pull-hand", found in the Cham Kiew section of Siu Lin Tou of Choe Family Wing Choon, it is waist rotation in conjunction with footwork that pulls an opponent to fall forward, not the pulling strength from the shoulders. All these examples manifest the principle of "sam yap chean chuit" or profundity in simplicity of the application dimension of Wing Choon Kungfu.

We shall now examine profundity in simplicity under the fourth dimension of any kungfu, i.e. philosophy. There are many different ways of addressing this philosophical dimension in relation to profundity in simplicity, but we shall address it to a very important question, though not many people actually ask themselves this question. Why do we practice Wing Choon Kungfu?

Our answer is to enrich our life. In more particular terms, it is to give us good health, vitality, longevity, combat efficiency, mental clarity, and spiritual joys. In other words, by practicing Wing Choon Kungfu, we aim to be free from pain and illness, to enjoy our daily work and play, to live to a ripe old age, to use Wing Choon skills and techniques to defend ourselves when needed, to be stress-free and be able to think well, and to be relaxed, peaceful and happy.

So, if you habitually exchange blows with your classmates in free sparring, you are not free from pain and illness, and are also unable to defend yourselves. If you are often tensed, angry or nervous, you have not attained spiritual joys. In other words, you have not achieved your aim of practicing Wing Choon Kungfu.

There is much profundity in the aim we have set for practicing Wing Choon Kungfu, or any style of kungfu. Yet, to attain the aim is quite simple, i.e. practice

it correctly. This is a manifestation of profundity in simplicity.

Yes, practicing Choe Family Wing Choon has given me many "aha" moments. One outstanding example happened just a few years ago, i.e. many years after I learned from Sifu Choe Hoong Choy.

I was lying in bed one night on the Blue Mountain. While teaching there, I was also preparing myself to teach a Special Wing Choon Course in Penang a few months later. I was thinking of the pattern, "Seong Pai Fatt" or "Double Worshipping of the Buddha", at the start of Siu Lin Tou, and recalled reading that it was a very powerful pattern. I jumped out of bed and performed a few patterns of "Double Worshipping of the Buddha" in total darkness. I was surprised to hear and feel some thunderous sounds, "boom boom boom", bouncing off from a wall. I decided to stop, least Rama, the owner of the Blue Mountain, thought an earthquake had happened. "Aha!" I suddenly realized why Ng Mui, the teacher of Yim Wing Choon, was so powerful despite her age and slender figure.

Another "aha" experience I still remember was when my sifu, Sifu Choe Hoong Choy, demonstrated to me a combat application of "thap chou" or "hammer-fist". Although it was called "hammer-fist", the pattern was a thrusting out of a phoenix-eye fist at an opponent's solar plexus.

Just seeing the application once enabled me to realize why the pattern was called "thap-chou". It opened up for me a whole range of combat applications, manifesting a hallmark of Wing Choon Kungfu, i.e. striking down an opponent as soon as he moves!

It is very effective, but also very vicious. It shows no mercy, killing or maiming an opponent in just one move. It may not be practical in today's law-abiding society, where the Taijiquan techniques of pushing away opponents, or the more drastic but still very compassionate Shaolin chin-na would be more appropriate. But if a situation warrant its, like in a life-death challenge match, this technique, of course with the necessary skill, can fell an opponent, regardless of his size and strength, in just one move. This is Wing Choon Kungfu. It is not raining a series of chain-punches on an opponent and he still can fight.

Another "aha" experience occurred during a session when Sifu Choe Hoong Choy taught me the Six-and-Half-Point Staff. I do not mean to be presumptuous and I mentioned this in good faith, all of a sudden all the other fighting techniques using weapons, especially those I saw in movies, appeared third-class. By comparison the techniques of Six-and-Half-Point Staff were so direct and effective. I was already good with weapons after learning the Flowing Water Staff from Sifu Ho Fatt Nam. The Six-and-Half-Point Staff enhanced my combat efficiency further.

These "aha" experiences from Choe Family Wing Choon furthered my understanding and contributed to breakthroughs in the other kungfu styles I practice.

"Thap-chou", for example, enhanced my understanding and application of

Shaolin tiger-claw and Taijiquan single-whip. Previously, I could use "Fierce Tiger Descends Mountain" as a defence move, and "Single Whip" as an attack. With better understanding, I can now incorporate attack in "Fierce Tiger Descends Mountain" and incorporate defence in "Single Whip", applying them as "defence-cum-counter" and later as "no-defence-direct-counter".

These "aha" experiences also enrich my chi kung teaching and healing. The realization that chi flow, which was a manifestation of profundity in simplicity, is necessary in developing internal force like in Siu Lin Tou, later contributed to my understanding it was chi flow, and not the exercise itself, that relieved patients of their pain and illness. It might not be the only contributing factor, but certainly it added to the contribution to later breakthroughs, which eventually led to the development of our chi kung healing to such a high level that it could be employed to overcome any disease. This development also illustrates the importance of breadth and depth.

The break-throughs due to the realization of chi flow occur not just in kungfu and chi kung but also in our daily life. Many people have kindly expressed their amazement at my quick and coherent way of thinking. In a Zen course in Zurich, for example, I could give an impromptu talk immediately after being given a topic. I could do so because I let my mind flow, which was a logical development of chi flow.

Many profound attainments in Wing Choon Kungfu are actually simple when we know their philosophy and practice. This was what Sifu Choe Hoong Choy often said, "sam yap chean chuit", or "deep enter shallow emerge". A taste of such profundity in simplicity will be found in the coming Wing Choon course in Barcelona.