

“I’d love to hear you talk about the three sections of Chum Kiu, if you wanted to.”

“So, I mean, I could probably speak for several hours on this, so what I’m going to share is by no means exhaustive, and by no means do I know all of it. That’s the beauty of this Wing Chun system, is if you study and explore and experiment, you’re going to have some wisdom that’s going to come to you that maybe I’ve missed. I’m just going to sort of bring forth the ones that are maybe really most relevant, noticeable, or important for you to find your own kung fu.

“In the first section—so Chum Kiu’s broken into three sections—so in the first section, one of the things you’re going to notice is you’re only shifting. So you are turning the horse but you’re not doing any stepping or kicking at this point. So again we start things to incrementally become more and more dynamic slowly. So the first section, we’re just learning how to shift. We’re learning how to start to actually release energy through the structure of our hands without using so much brute muscle force. Again, in Siu Nim Tau, which is a static horse stance, all we have is muscle to actually move the limbs; we’re not turning or shifting or stepping to generate energy. In Chum Kiu, one of the things you now have to let go of, one of the training wheels you need to take off of, is to not use arm muscle so much to make the techniques happen in your hands—that you have to connect that shifting energy that you generate from turning your body to then let that transmit through to the shoulder, the elbow, the wrist, and, then, to release. And that the only muscles that you’re going to be activating are the ones that add structure; for example, keep the shoulder nicely snug in the socket and keep the elbow in, or wherever the elbow needs to be, or change the hand or the wrist position to just be where it needs to be—so that’s really the only time you’re going to be using muscle in its highest ideal expression. But then you let the energy release through the arms.

“So when you do the double *biu sau*, one of the first sort of release movements like that, that’s coming from your *daan tin*—that the arms as they release out forward are very relaxed and loose but there’s structure in there that focuses that energy and power, so that when you release it, it has a cleanness, it has a *jing* to it, and it would actually do its job quite easily. Then, when we start to shift, we’re moving into the *lan saus*, shifting back and forth. And so here you’re using these really big shifts to just start to learn to how to generate power while staying and maintaining the stable structure within the *Yi Chi Kim Yeung Ma* horse stance that you have in Siu Nim Tau. And so we start to rotate on the heels. But it’s not just turning the body from side to side. There’s some very subtle biomechanics that we have to do which is, you know we don’t want to rise up and down out of our stance by straightening the knees out when they shift, but we’re pushing off of the floor from one of the heels to generate a little bit of power by pushing from the floor, and then as soon as we sort of get that movement primed, we then laterally turn the hips, shoulders, and elbows all in one structured movement to accelerate and generate even more power. But it doesn’t start from me just turning your upper body and hips, it comes from the heel driving into the floor, but instead of extending the knee upwards, we then transmit that intent laterally by then connecting the heel to the knee to the hip to the shoulder to the elbows in the *lan sau*, turning and shifting. So it’s all one structured movement, but there is a sequence starting from floor, even though it may look like one clean movement. Ok, it’s very subtle at the higher-end expression [4:17/30:00] of it. But beginners, you might see them sort of extend the knee a little bit more as they try to push off the floor and shift their weight a little bit from left to right. Those are natural, normal things, but then when they feel the proper sequence, then they make it smaller, and smaller, and smaller, and smaller. This is one of the really important skills that we’re trying to cultivate as you play the form.

“Now, of course, these subtle things only come after we’ve learned the basic movements—right, as with all of the forms, you have to learn the structure and the precise movements properly first, and then you start exploring the form to get to the real gold within it. As I said before, in Chum Kiu, it’s about generating power, changing centerline, it’s coordinating hands and feet, all of those things.

“Let me just take a moment: you’ll notice, not just in Chum Kiu but possibly especially in Chum Kiu, there’s a lot of hand replacement. The three palm strikes, the three covering the elbows and hand replacement on the *tan saus*, there’s so much of that in that form than in some of the other ones, so you have to remember that this isn’t by accident. And that the threes, at least as I understand it as it has been explained to me, in Chinese philosophy or ideology, the three is a number of infinity. When we do hand replacement, it means you’re always replacing your hands in Wing Chun. As one goes forward the other one always, always comes back just enough so that both hands don’t get trapped—and that the metaphor here is that you always have another bullet in the chamber of a semi-automatic weapon: one fires off, the other one pops in, so you’re always having something to have on centerline for defense in case the first lead hand wasn’t good enough, but then you also have something to actually fire offensively. So your hands are always moving together: two hands move as one motion. So remember earlier, I talked about these really good habits we have, well, hand replacement is one of them: anytime a hand moves, the other is moving with equal speed, force, and intention. So that as one initiates movement, the other one does the same, and as the lead hand arrives, the second one arrives with the same intention, speed, and *jing*. And that, again, becomes an unconscious habit in your kung fu all the time. So you never have to worry about your centerline being defended, or the ability for you to continuously run attacks from it. This is reinforced within the first section—all sections actually—of Chum Kiu.

“Also, you’ll notice in a couple of the movements, especially from the *go bong sau* dropping down to the double *tan*, that when we first learn those movements we sort of do the *go bong sau*, pause, and then drop the elbow down and then put the *tan sau*. But when you’ve learned that movement, then what you’re doing is you’re learning how to release that energy by fully extending those *go bong saus* and by releasing and letting go; naturally, if you do that the elbow will just snap down and recoil without any effort. This is an energetic expression of the art, that anytime you block or hit, when you’ve let go of the energy, it’s gone, you have an empty sensing hand that then is also occupying and covering centerline. Especially techniques that fully extend and then the elbow is locked out for that full extension for a moment, you have to have a habit that then allows your elbow to just snap down naturally to then cover the centerline appropriately.

“Same principle goes with your punch. When beginners learn punching in Wing Chun, we fully extend the punch and lock the arm out, we hold it there: we’re standing on salute for a while. Well, it’s an artificial curriculum to learn how to punch for real. And so the first thing is if you’re going to hit somebody, you have to learn to fully extend that arm and really let go of the energy. So we train that over and over and over again so people don’t sort of jam up their punches with short little movements without full extension. But then it’s an artificial thing—I don’t want to be standing out there with a locked out arm, holding it there for someone to grab, do a joint block or whatever else—so later on as we train, more advanced, I’ll fully extend that punch but it’ll naturally just drop the elbow down and recoil into a structured position that’ll be sensitive, on centerline, and ready to hit again.

“So the transition from the *go bong sau* to the *tan* should also have that flavour. So again that’s a mnemonic, that when you fully extend any technique in Wing Chun you have to come back to that natural, beautiful little bend in the elbow that we like, that natural recoil. And then the two pieces of

that are that it protects you, it makes it very difficult for someone to actually grab your hands when you extend them because every time you hit, [9:17/35:00] boom, it's retracting and pulling away, going back into the chambers. So your hands are disappearing every time after you hit.

"What else might be in that first section I can speak of. I'm just sort of visually going through the form here. Yeah, when we start shifting from the *lan sau-wu sau* position into the *kwan sau*, or *bong sau* with a guard hand position, you'll notice that our wrists go to, what I would call that original line of attack that we had where our shoulders and hips were square and *doi yeng*, so if you're facing the mirror, the wrists would go to that straight-line place, but when we shift back, our shifting is just a little bit off of that original line. Now obviously my centerline goes where my shift does so the centerline does change, but in the form my wrists are going to maintain where the original centerline was as if I was facing the mirror square. And what that is then telling you is that when I am engaged with somebody with some energy, and they're coming towards me, and I need to shift to change the line, I can't bring my wrist to my new centerline and leave that original line that that person is attacking on because I'm leaving it wide open. So I want to shift my structure and centerline but I want to keep my wrist on the original one until I can change with a new hand technique, replace, step in, square up, and then totally control that line. Now, for people who haven't trained this form, you're not going to have a clue of what I just said, and even some of you who have been training it. But without a visual demonstration, it's going to be hard to understand, but again it's something different that we do than when we're doing a drill where someone punches or if we shift we always make sure that you know we keep everything lined up. Well, in the form, the wrists are going to be on the original line of attack, even though I've changed my centerline by shifting my hips and shoulders subtly. Because again the practical application here is if I bring my wrist with my centerline while engaged with somebody else, I'm leaving open that original line of attack, and I'll get hit. So I don't know if that makes sense just from someone who's been exposed to the system a lot but hasn't played Chum Kiu yet or not so I'm just sort of curious how that lands in terms of you hearing it."

"Well, I know we've done drills, I've done a drill where we step off and we're changing our centerline, but we're staying at the old centerline still with our hands and it gets—it can seem confusing because it seems like then we have two centerlines almost."

"<Skype dropout> you stay on that first line of attack. You need to keep something there until you can fully change, square up, *doi yeng*, with hands, body, and feet, to then redirect your attack onto them. But if someone punches, and you want to shift the line, and you move your hands out of the way then they're going to hit you. You have some diminished structure behind that technique that's going to stop them, but there's still some structure there. So ideal structure is when your wrist and centerline are lined up perfectly, but in reality it's like I've got to leave my wrist where that attack is as I change my centerline. But it's not like you're going to stand there for five seconds, you're going to change your centerline very quickly, take a new line and do a hand replacement, and step in and have everything lined up again when it's complete. So, again, we're breaking down these things in micro-skills or micro-sections, and that's what this one piece in the first section of Chum Kiu helps you to do, but then also helps you to remember—that's again another mnemonic—that you know if you're going to shift, make sure that you keep your wrist on that original line of attack."

“We talked about the pushing, the pulling, and the forward energy—so there’s a lot of pulling energy that comes from the shifting to the *bong sau* back into the *lan sau*. So you’re playing again with the pulling energy with that piece.

“Now, as we move into second section Chum Kiu, things become even a little bit more dynamic. So we now introduce the front kick and then the step <Skype garble and dropout> ...the sort of static stance from Siu Nim Tau. [14:17/40:00] <Skype dropout> ...while maintaining balance, timing, sensitivity, structure, coordination, all of those things, so that brings the <Skype garble> forward with that. But doing it with movement, so things become more and more challenging, more skillful. So we introduce the front kick in Siu Nim Tau. So, again, to be able to fully extend a kick while changing the centerline, while then stepping down and maintaining hand and foot coordination, again, this is the <?> in terms of <?> going on here. And one of the things you’ll notice is that in the first, when we’re just doing the shifting, your weight for the most part stays about 50-50 on both legs. Because even though you’re shifting, your structure is always squared up and in a static position towards an imaginary opponent or partner. But if I’m going to kick I have to shift my weight towards the back leg so that when I kick I’m not going to visually or energetically transmit any kind of signal to somebody that a kick is coming. I’m just going to be able to launch that front foot right to the centerline without communicating it with any upper body movements or with any change of balance going forwards or backwards, and if someone actually had their hands on me they would feel ‘oh, Jim’s bringing his weight to the back leg and he’s actually going to get ready to kick.’ It’s sort of like, it’s going to be energetically invisible with the rest of my body; the only thing that’s going to move is the kick. So when we get into the stance to deliver the kick, we shift our weight to the back leg. So that’s different than in the first section where we keep the weight more or less 50-50 on each leg.

“Now, the other thing that we have to notice is that this is a form and, in Wing Chun, in terms of the most ideal, conservative expression of the art, is, because kicks diminish our balance, because we’re lifting one leg off the ground, I don’t want to do those gratuitously. I will use a kick when I have to or when I’m put in a position that I have to. So what that means is if I’m engaged in a bit of a grappling or a tussle or a push or whatever else, and then someone will push my whole structure onto the back leg, that frees the front leg to actually fly and kick right away. In the form, I don’t have someone pushing me onto the back leg, so in the form we do this intentionally as if somebody did push us onto the back leg. So that when we do this mindfully over and over again, you’re going to have, again, this kinaesthetic mnemonic that any time your weight goes to the back leg that kick should be running to centerline. Just as an unconscious habit. Because someone is basically trying to take away your balance. So just a reminder about that. And because even though we’re pushed onto the back leg, we’re still keeping our forward energy, our *chung chi*, sticking forward, so when I do kick, it’s only going to be when I have someone else’s body to stabilize against. Not by leaning into but by pushing my forward energy from my *daan tin* and sticking to their structure. So their body then becomes the stabilizing leg that I’ve lost as I kick. So on a felt sense, I still have two legs on the ground: one is my back leg, the other one is the other person’s body who’s pushing into me—I’m stabilizing myself against that pressure, and then I’ve got this free leg to actually kick. So you want to train that felt sense of being on a back leg is the queue to run the kick right away.”

“So is that sort of—in Chum Kiu, doing the kicks without having that stabilizing force—kind of, again, an example of the range of, the full range of movement? You wouldn’t kick on your own, but if you had something that pushed you back, that’s training it so that that’s the absolute zero point at which you would kick, or something.”

“Yes, and again you’ll have different practitioners or teachers who may say, ‘well, I’ll kick when I want to kick,’ and that’s fine. Again, I try to be as pure as I can in terms of the middle of the bell curve: all the teachings of Wing Chun. If I kick, even though I will train lots of balance, and all kinds of other things on one-legged drills, I am not as stable or as balanced or as relaxed or anything else on one leg than when I am on two. So for me it’s risky, for me, to intend to actually [19:17/45:00] throw a kick out there, unless I’ve got contact with someone else’s body to stabilize or to at least feel something of what might be coming towards me with my leg.

“And then we also start to do the stepping and the kicking in the second section. So you’re then learning how to move laterally, you shift, and you’re kicking, so again the dynamism within the movements becomes more complex and more integrated. Always including coordinating hands and feet, as we’re shifting, stepping, kicking, and moving, we’re playing the balance, and then finding centerline. You can see how this form really starts to help integrate the theories, the principles, and the attributes in a repetitious set of movements. Some of which will have direct martial self-defense applications, and others are just giving your hands and feet something to do. Of course, they will all be Wing Chun techniques that will have some sort of application under certain circumstances, but not necessarily in the way that they are choreographed or sequenced in the form. Ok, it’s a form, it’s a tool to help you; it’s not something to be a slave to. Ok. Any questions on second section?”

“I don’t think so right now.”

“And then third section we start really moving with bigger steps, coordinating hands with the *dai bong saus* and the *tan saus*, moving forward, learning how to step backwards, learning how to turn and face somebody as if you’ve been pushed. There’s some more specific direct applications that you could use from the form. But again the dynamism just increases in terms of changing the centerline, with bigger movements, with coordinated hands and feet, on and on and on. And so again the kick is also continued to be used, but we also now introduce the side kick. We introduce the side kick in this form. And again the hand replacement shows up in there. So again, I don’t know if there would be anything more specifically different that I would comment on in the third section, other than the increased dynamism of playing with those attributes: so, you know, the coordination, balance, timing, relaxation, etc. etc.”