

E: “I find it interesting, because again when I said it first looks really odd, but then as you get closer you start to realize how interesting it is as a training tool, in a similar way to *chi sau* where you’re like ‘how did someone come up with this?’. Like how did somebody come up with this way of, I mean a lot of *chi sau* seems kind of like ‘well, let’s save time; let’s, instead of stepping back, coming forward’—and also that’s working on something different—but how do we just work on this series of micro-skills where we’re already engaged and, here, we’ve got this tool where we can already keep practicing something in a specialized kind of context using this tool.”

S: “I don’t know the history of the evolution of how the *mook jong* came in. Other Chinese martial arts do have a wooden man, so this didn’t start with Wing Chun. I think it was more popularized or maybe more streamlined in our art, but obviously different styles were using this. My understanding, from my own experience, not from any stories, but my own understanding, my own intuitive understanding, is, and I’ve heard my Sifu say this a couple of times too, is, I don’t have a training partner, so somebody decided to build one of these things to practice on. It could be something that is that simple, and then it evolves from that to like, ‘oh, maybe we should add another arm, or why don’t we make a series of forms instead of me just punching the thing, and, and, and, and, and...’ So where we are now is it’s now more complex, dynamic, intentional sort of thing, whereas before it could’ve been old school punching bag, but it was made out of wood. I don’t know if any of that is true; and I think that’s the beauty of a lot of these arts is these things aren’t sort of algebraic formulas that are objectively true; they are story, they’re myth.”

E: “Coming from Siu Nim Tau and Chum Kiu, in a certain sense...teach us our ideal game, in a certain way. Or that’s one way I’ve heard it spoken of, and Biu Chee, the next, the third form, teaches us something not ideal, something that’s gone wrong or the emergency hands. I’m wondering, with the *mook jong*, where it follows that sort of progression, how do you view that, are there elements of all of those different ideal form plus emergency forms, emergency hands still there?”

S: “I think for me if I was to say there’s a progression, I would’ve put Biu Chee after the *mook jong*. Because the *mook jong* is still in this non-compromised, idealized state of Wing Chun. So I can make up another story as to why that might be. Maybe people didn’t have a lot of time, maybe they had a certain amount of time, and they needed to get to, ‘hey, what’s the 911 of this stuff?’, and the *mook jong* maybe some other time, but I just need this basic fighting stuff, and if this doesn’t work, tell me about the elbows and all this other stuff. So that’s the thing, especially the older I get and the more exposure I get—in my trip to China a few months ago it really sort of highlighted this—is Wing Chun is so vast in its understanding, stories, mythology, interpretation. And I’m continuously humbled about my ego that wants to funnel it down to how I understand and how it’s been taught. I still think it’s better, but when I’m actually looking at the truth of all the clubs that came out of China and the stuff they’re doing, I mean that’s where Ip Man learned it was in China, it was around before Ip Man was, does that mean it all gets discounted because he was some wonderful prophet who took it to the next level and then everything... So all that stuff gets pretty messy, right?”

“Related to your question, the simple answer, is I don’t know. I don’t know why they made it the fourth form; maybe other schools, it’s their third...I mean, when I first came to train here in Victoria with one of the Sifus at the [20:00] YMCA, and not knowing my background, I was a new person, and we’re doing *chi sau* in the first class and we’re doing movements from the *mook jong*. Is he wrong? I don’t know. Is that

the best way, the most efficient way to teach the most amount of students? I don't know. You've got to look at, yeah, there's a lot of diversity out there around the specifics of the curriculum and then how it's actually taught and in what order. We have a standard, we think it's wonderful. So, like I said, the real answer to that, I don't know, but if I was to reorganize the universe, I would probably have put Biu Chee after the *mook jong*. Because I don't see anything from Biu Chee, other than the *huen mas*, that are relevant for what's going on in the *mook yan jong* form."

E: "Interesting. I don't know if we want to talk about this form section by section because there are, I guess, eight sections, so I don't know if that's something you would want?"

S: "You know, I don't think it's, for this type of conversation and for its purpose, I don't think going through every little piece or section...because each of them are going to have that same essence around distancing, around *fon sau* and hand replacement and changing, and dynamic footwork. And there's just all kinds of different series of movements that help you focus that. I mean, there's new techniques or new applications that are introduced that we don't typically show or use or talk about in the earlier stages. But, I mean, if there's specific things that you've seen, I'm happy to answer those."

E: "I don't know. So thinking about it as the solid immovable object, I guess I would wonder how does that—so not going section by, not a specific thing, but again returning to the general sense—how does that help one become more...does that help one become more integrated, because you've spoken about the form being a more integrated form, but is that in part, does that have something to do with the *mook jong* as the solid immovable object?"

S: "Yeah, because the depth of integration occurs that when I can't go, Ta da! I won, I'm in!, it's like, oh I got stopped, I got to change. Oh I got stopped, I got to change. It brings that person's ability to keep movement after being stopped or thwarted. Especially for people like me, who are big, and don't oftentimes get stopped or thwarted. So the *mook jong* is a really awesome tool for me to practice that essence of it, because very few people can move me. I can take the centerline without using brute force just because of my size, skill, and technique, and structure. I have so many advantages. Right, so that it's a rare person who can shut me down, and if I don't train, on contact, when I feel hard, instead of 'oh, I'm going to go harder,' if I don't train to like, 'oh, I've got to change right away, like <snaps> without even probing too much, like right on contact, learn how to do that—because there will always be someone bigger, stronger who will give you this rigid energy and the moment you feel it, if you don't train how to actually quickly let go and re-adapt, you're going to get trapped in that locked up 'oh I have to fight them' and then I get tense, and then, I have no kung fu. I'm literally trapped in my own resistance and fear. So if I don't train the habit of letting go right away and surrendering and just changing the line, or if I come in and to literally allow the *mook jong* to bounce me back out to the appropriate new line—that's to me one of the beautiful things—is that when I fully commit to the step, even though I know I can't walk through it, if I have good structure and I keep my weight back, as I step in, I feel a reverb that bounces me out, which actually creates energy for me to step and change, and then it takes less energy and work for me to actually step. Because I'm using the energy of the bounce to then just flow around it. For me, that's also a nice essence that the *mook jong* teaches you."

E: "Saving energy."

S: "Saving energy. But if I just go in and, <bup!>, I'm hard and stick, as opposed to just come in and let it bounce off, and then in that bounce it's like, 'oh, right [25:00], there's the new line.'"

E: "And there's that non-attachment, too."

S: "Yeah, you don't care. You don't care. I'm going to get there eventually, right, so as long as you're patient and trust, you don't care."

E: "It seems like there's, obviously there's a benefit to it for everybody, but it seems again—it brings us back to that, again, the mythology—but that Wing Chun was developed by a smaller person, that the *mook jong* would have such a benefit for somebody who can't use muscle. Anybody can use muscle against them if you're smaller. You can't out-muscle the dummy, obviously."

S: "Not unless you have an axe! Even then it'll take a few swings."

E: "It's interesting to think about also responding to something that at first glance doesn't seem responsive. It's a piece of wood, but you're talking about bouncing off it, and using that kind of energy or absorbing that and using that, redirecting your energy from that."

S: "It's a bad metaphor, but you can think about it, the path in life, sometimes the path in life is found by stumbling in the dark against the two walls. Maybe not the most elegant way to find the path, but you're still in the path, as long as you've got some regulators in there. The *mook jong* gives you that. It tells you exactly where the 'no's are. It says don't come here. Ok, I change. And then it says, 'yeah, and you can't come here either.' So you're just constantly training. And there are some techniques that you get to fully release, and it would be a strike. But others I might get blocked or, when you're coming down with the *gan saus*, it's like, 'no, I've got to change.'"

E: "I wonder also—I think there's three things here but I've forgotten what the third one is—but when we're, when we come in with a technique, and especially if we've trapped the person's hands, and they've got several choices they can make: they can leave, in which case we just step in, continue in; they can become stiff, or hard, or try to fight it, in which case you've got kind of a dummy snapshot there; and I think there was a third one which I can't remember. It seems like there's mini-dummies that sort of emerge while you're training or fighting."

S: "Yeah, it's very, very consistent with things we've said before, in terms of the Wing Chun fight philosophy. When you go to centerline, someone will try and move you, and then you just hand replace; or they leave, and then you hit them; or they fight you, and then you change. And, really, that's, for me,

that's the simplicity of the art—is the fight philosophy comes down to basically three scenarios of which we over-train ridiculously. But, like *The Art of War*, you have to make sure that you're only going into those battles that will allow you that. So that's why we don't initiate, that's why we don't go looking for trouble, that's why we draw that person to have to come to us. And then we've got them. It's like, 'ok, now we're playing on my board.' So, philosophically, you have to make sure that we're living our life that way too."