

E: "I guess, in the progression it would, as far as I understand, come after the *mook jong*, but maybe you could say something about the air dummy?"

S: "Sure."

E: "So, maybe why does it come after, and what is the difference in intent or the difference in training between the two?"

S: "Again, I don't know the real answer. I can give you mine. You can say, 'why do we even do the air *jong*?' And I could say, 'well, maybe someone didn't have the means to have a *mook jong*, so that's all they could do.' I don't know. I don't know if it was an intentional thing, 'oh, we have to do it on the apparatus first, and then...' I just think things happen and then people learn from the experience, and then they create it as more of a structured teaching going forward, but I don't know if that's true.

"What the *mook jong* does is it gives you this solid, immovable object to have to deal with. So that's the most obvious thing, and the one thing we learned is, well, there's the distancing, and, then, there's also how do I change when I can't actually move it. Now, with the air *jong*, that last piece is gone, so we're not necessarily using it for that. What I've noticed is that, and I'm making this up—not now, but I have made this up for quite some time—what the air *jong* allows you to do [30:00] that the *mook jong* doesn't is to fully release on the strikes and the kicks. And as you're very well aware in our training it's not desirable to actually fully hit people. Number one, it's a lethal art, and not a sport; and, number two, these are people we like; and, number three, we don't want to injure anybody. And so, well then, how do we...well, one of the ways is that you hit a bag, but the bag's going to stop you. The air *jong* is where you get to actually do full releases on the hits while differentiating with your block.

"So, for example—I know this isn't going to go well for verbal audience—but if I have an apparatus in front of me and I go and do the *tan da*, well, the wooden arm is going to stop my *tan*, and then my lower strike is going to be able to continue. But, in the air *jong*, I don't have anything to stop my *tan*, so I have to be more mindful and actually stop my *tan* on my own, and pull the trigger on this. So, number one, it increases my mindfulness; number two, it allows me to actually hit with full force, to kick with full force. You're getting to learn how to continue to build the infrastructure to fully hit somebody without being injured. Because for all those years that you've been practicing the forms, and the kicks, now you're ready. Now you know you can really pull the trigger and not injure yourself. For me, that's one of the benefits, other than, 'hey, I don't have a *mook jong* to train with, or play with, so I have to do it in the air anyways.' And, especially when you're doing the kicks and the one-legged things, you can really challenge your balance. Try and stand up on one leg and do this, without putting your foot down—a fully extended *gum sau*. You need good balance when you're cranking that kind of energy and doing it on one leg.

"I think that's why. And, of course, before we take away a structure from somebody, we want to make sure that they've learned the proper movements on the structure. Because it helps the movements not get too, too wild and crazy and loose. So that's why I say we do the wooden dummy first and then the air *jong* afterwards."

E: “Keeps it a bit tighter. And focused in.”

S: “Yeah.

“And other than that, I’m not aware of, nor can I imagine, any other advantages or benefits or whatever.”

E: “But I guess it could, I don’t know if this happens with the dummy, but if you’re relying on the dummy for balance or something, if you’re pushing into it in a certain way, the air *jong* will take that away, so you’ve got to figure out how to do it on your own.”

S: “Yeah. I mean, you want to stick to your opponent, but when you strike, you want them to go away. And so that’s the thing, once you’ve been able to fully hit or fully kick, then you should be able to come down in your own balance, in your way. Not need to stick with that person.”

E: “I don’t know if I have any other particular questions. I don’t know if there’s anything else you think we’ve missed talking about the *mook jong* form?”

S: “No, I mean I think the only other goal to mind would be to look at different sections and talk about the applications or the understanding, but quite honestly, just like looking at Chum Kiu or Biu Chee, you really have to see the context in which those moves would come out. What isn’t shown in the *mook jong* is, well, the context that puts you into that position. It will show you a sequence of things that will flow, but not necessarily what put me in that position. This is someone, again, who maybe already has two hands on centerline or is solid there, and you have to change and they stick and follow you, you have to do two or three re-orientations and changing the line, and working *toi ma*, and all kinds of things. This is where it becomes a more complex, dynamic, and integrated aspect of the art; really, things are coming together now to more of a nondescript, specific—it’s more of a life-force of expression. If that makes sense.”

E: “Which speaks to what we’ve talked about in the past of being mindful or curious while you’re doing your forms; you’re not just doing rote repetition. You’re thinking, well, where does this, what am I doing here, what’s the intent of this, this motion? So to ask you *that* while you’re doing the dummy form: why am I doing this or that?”

S: “Or, like all the other forms too, first thing you do is you learn the precise movements properly. No power. And then I want you to play the *mook jong*, otherwise, if you just keep doing the same thing over and over, the *mook jong*’s playing you. [35:00] You’re not free. So that’s why, once you learn the basic movements, then you look at the *faat do*, and say, ‘ok, I’m going to take these two things and put them in the *mook jong*, or I’m going to focus really on the footwork, or I’m really going to focus on: as soon as I feel the wooden arm, I’m going to change, I’m not even going to stick and put a little *chung chi*. Just, on contact, I feel rigidity, bang!, I’m just going to quickly change and be super light like feathers.’ Even

though I may not do that for real, but I just want to train that other extreme. So it will move my rigidity a little bit over here to be a little bit more relaxed. Because I've done this over here.

"Play the *mook jong*. Don't let it play you."

E: "Which is true of all the forms."

S: "Exactly, and then you're free. I mean, I've probably said this in at least one other interview, it's nice to have Moy Yat remind us, but the whole purpose of your kung fu is to lead you to your personal freedom. Where you're not bound by unhealthy patterns, repetition, reactions—you actually have capacity for all kinds of choice based on some healthy grounded principles."

E: "Well I find the training program so interesting because it's a scaffolded kind of learning, you're always thinking, 'oh, I've got this, I understand this,' but there's so much, the learning's so circular, and you go back, and you're like, 'no, I understand one part,' and sometimes you misunderstand the part that you're supposed to. And you want to hold on to these different things you've learned, so 'I've got this,' but then it's like, no you let that go, and then you go onto the next...there's just a lot of training through the training of letting go."

S: "And how wonderful, what a great practice! Like Buddhism, right? It's like, don't be attached to this way of doing this drill or this technique because it will serve you at white sash, but it will actually limit you at gold sash. Like literally with training wheels. If you keep training wheels on, there's some things you can't do, because they get in your way. You walk with crutches. There's some things you can't do at the higher levels. Great, it keeps you standing up if you've got a broken leg, but if you want to do cartwheels and somersaults and whatever, those things are going to actually prevent you from doing them. It's like you've got to keep letting go, and keep letting go, and, on a more deeper level, you've got to keep dying to be reborn, die and be born. And we see those cycles, I don't know if you've seen them in your own, where you feel like, 'oh, I'm annoyed, or this doesn't make sense, or I suck, or I'm bored'—those are your death throws, that's you, you're dying, something's wanting to come through, and if you keep holding on, or doubling down on your old way, your death will be very painful and full of suffering, than if you surrender, and say, 'I need to do something different.'"

E: "And that's the ego coming in, too, and trying to hold on to that."

"When you first start out and you're going through the different sash gradings, and you have to present Siu Nim Tau each time, initially, you're like, 'oh, it's the same form, I've already learned the form.'"

S: <Wrong buzzer sound> "Sorry, you're not getting your sash anymore!"

*E:* “No, exactly! And you’re like, ‘oh no, what’s Siu Nim Tau for red sash, what’s Siu Nim Tau for green sash, how do I integrate everything else and go back and let go of some more of those training wheels and more of those crutches, and don’t hold on to the dummy arm too tight.’”

*S:* “Well if you’re still doing Siu Nim Tau like this...” <demonstrates>

*E:* “...slow and precise...”

*S:* “Yeah, you’re stuck. There’s no fluidity, there’s no...yeah, you got good structure, you got proper technique, but that’s not your kung fu. This is just movements that we want you to like <blowing-through sound>.”

“Yeah?”

*E:* “Yeah.”

*S:* “Ok.”

*E:* “Ok, thank you, Sifu.”

*S:* “It was awesome. Short and sweet, and didn’t skip on anything, so all the stuff’s there.”

*E:* “Great, thank you.”