



Abstract

This article analyzes the keys to motion in the second empty-hand form of Wing Chun gongfu: Chum Kiu. The focus is on the proper maintenance of the body's central axis and its motions, which helps with the development of Wing Chun power and the foundations of delivering that power. The form includes short bridges, stepping, turning, and kicking. The motions are built on the structural foundations created by regular practice of the first form, Siu Lim Tau.

WING CHUN'S CHUM KIU FORM

A STUDY IN STABILITY AND MOBILITY

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"Chum Kiu trains the stance and the waist.
The arm bridge is short and the step is narrow.
Eyes are trained to be alert. The qi flows in perpetual motion."
~ Augustine Fong (n.d.)

Introduction

Differing martial arts systems attempt to address some common problems: the use of the proper engine for power development; developing a delivery system for speed and accuracy; efficient energy use; and proper mind control and spirit. As a southern Chinese art, Wing Chun has both short- and long-hand motions, but is no exception in its own diligent pursuit of all-round martial development. This article's focus is on the concepts of motion in Wing Chun's second form: Chum Kiu (Bridge Seeking).

There are different interpretations of the art coming from different lineages. The author's teacher (*sifu*; Man: *shifu*) is Augustine Fong (b. 1950), a distinguished student of Ho Kam Ming of Macao, who was a distinguished student of the late Ip Man (1893-1972) of Fatshan (Man: Foshan) and Hong Kong.

The Second Form's Place in Wing Chun

A complete Wing Chun curriculum would include the three hand forms, the wooden dummy (*mok yang jong*) form, staff (*kwan*), and double knives (*bot jam do*). Each form has applications in various kinds of two-person sticky-hands (*chi sao*) timing and motion drills.

The devil, they say, is in the details. The three Wing Chun forms are loaded with details. One never outgrows the first form,² *Siu Lim Tau* (The Little Idea), which includes much detail on balance, structure, integration, stability, and the key families of hand motions (Chaudhuri, 1995). The Wing Chun forms are primarily for developing the body, mind, and spirit and the blending of the art's internal and external elements. When the skills are developed in each form, there is a progressive path of development drills. This is accompanied by forms of sticky-hands and crossing-hands (*gor sao*) for testing principles and understanding in each developmental stage.

*All photographs courtesy
of J. Chaudhuri.*

According to one story, when Ip Man met Leung Bik, son of the great Leung Jan, Leung Bik asked him whether he had learned Chum Kiu, a significant marker of motion and skill development. Leung Jan, who taught Ip Man's two major teachers, gave a good account of himself in staff usage in Fatshan, the home of a number of gongfu masters, including Wong Fei Hung (1847-1924). Leung Bik reportedly outmaneuvered Ip Man in a contest, then proceeded to teach him Wing Chun principles and concepts. Weapons work in Wing Chun is best learned after some mastery of the hands and motion. Unlike some of the Filipino blade and stick arts, Wing Chun develops the empty-hand motions before introducing the weight of weapons held in the hands. Ip Man blended the harder Wing Chun he learned from his teacher with a softer version he learned from the son of his teacher's teacher, creating a formidable version of Wing Chun.



AUGUSTINE FONG IN THE
FUNDAMENTAL STANCE
CALLED “TWO-SHAPED CHAR-
ACTER, SQUEEZING THE GOAT
(CAN. YEE GEE KIM YEUNG MA;
MAN. ER ZI QIAN YANG MA).

二字籍羊馬

Axis Control

Chum Kiu doesn't work well without first having reasonable mastery over the first form, Siu Lim Tao. The form uses a bottom-heavy pyramid structure based on linked triangles to maintain balanced control of the central axis or the mother line. The line runs from the top of the head through the center of the body to the ground and is held in place by the flexible “character two, goat clamping” stance. Slight spinal adjustments help keep the structure stretched enough for energy to flow up and down and to the hands. The axis is related to the spine and meridians, but it has its own importance as the source of balance and harmony with the force of gravity. A good axis is a key to Wing Chun power. The central axis and yoga's lotus posture (*padma-asana*) are both after the proper gravitational alignment of the spine—one for martial purposes, the other for meditation (*dhyana*). The alignment allows internal energy (*qi* in Chinese-Mandarin or *prana* in Sanskrit) to flow up and down freely. Good axis control is important for directing energy and for the mechanics of motion. After controlling the stillness and balance in Wing Chun's first form, one is ready for martial motion. Moving on to a dynamic platform involves understanding the turning stance (*chor ma*), the Chum Kiu form's central stance.

Chor Ma: The Turning Stance

In the turning stance, the vertical axis remains supple but steady and erect and gently stretched without any musculature tightening. All joints work together in the Chum Kiu turn, or *chor ma*. With the slightest turn, the bottom-heavy Wing Chun stance can create a speed and power that shoots out through the hands like an arrow in the basic punch or like a snake strike in using the bridge or the fingers.

Proper practice avoids overturning, allowing the stance to take and redirect any pressure or resistance. With practice and guidance, the moves can become subtle and small at close quarters. One also can redirect, defend, or attack per opportunity, intent, and will. Large turns and steps can be used for closing distance or for filling space, or even creating space and repositioning. Wing Chun Chum Kiu motions can be used for shooting in, as well as for close-quarters work.

The turning and stepping motions in the Chum Kiu turning stance use the entire foot on flat ground in the motion's development stage. Later, one can adjust to rough or soft floors by lifting the foot to avoid stress on the knees. Adjustments link development to application in varying environments. In the ground connection, Ip Man's training used the center of his heels while using the rest of the foot for controlling the ground connection and adjusting balance. The center of the heels provides a pivot point that allows the feet to turn on flat surfaces without being lifted. Controlling with the feet and



A SMALL CHUM KIU
TURN RESULTS IN JOY'S
FEET BEING INSIDE OF AN
ATTACKER'S LEAD FOOT.



FONG IN THE TURNING STANCE (*CHOR MA*), ALLOWING A 180-DEGREE DIRECTIONAL MOVEMENT.

toes prevents throwing the main axis off. The use of the heels doesn't involve leaning back or forward on them. With training, all of the joints assist in stability and mobility.

The Role of the Shoulders

The best of Ip Man Wing Chun involves square-body work and facing an opponent. There are other styles that use a slanted body. Having a square body allows one to turn 180 degrees on a dime with equal balance on both feet without taking a step. This allows for the hands to be balanced and ready to play together in coordinating defense and attack with near simultaneity. The square body can be helpful for two-handed work such as in the butterfly palms (*po pai*). In addition to the mastery of the turn, the Chum Kiu form includes several stepping motions. When the turning and stepping are integrated, there is greater power generation. The Chum Kiu form has a section where one steps up and uses both palms in a forward motion. These two-handed, square-bodied butterfly motions are developed again on the wooden man dummy, so power can be released by the strong, but flexible, structure efficiently and not held back in tightened arm muscles.

The vertical axis and its cleanly circular turning with balanced feet and joint drilling are important ingredients in good Chum Kiu. The generation of Chum Kiu power enhances the work of the elbows, which are important energy-origination points (the beginning punch practice, for example) and transmitters for the bridges (*kiu*) and hands. Springy, flexible, and strong elbows provide the key links between the shoulders and wrists. The Wing Chun concept of the body divides it into six "gates," or doors, if viewed from the front or back. The main vertical axis is crossed by two horizontal axis lines, one at the heart level and one near the groin. Horizontal-leveled Chum Kiu turns allow for quick movements, permitting the elbows to move from one horizontal or vertical level to another and helping to protect the gates.

In the *chor ma* turn, well-aligned knees, ankles, and toes get the motion going, with the feet and heels on the ground. Without proper alignment, undue stress is placed on the knees. The power generated from the ground torques its way to the waist, where it gets a major boost at the body's center point (*dan tin*; Man: *dantian*). A slight spin beginning at the bottom can create a power chain and produce a quick, powerful spin at the top when needed.



The Role of the Waist

The waist plays a vital role in Chum Kiu, since it connects the footwork to the hands and the upper body. The waist needs to be an important power transmitter. Like many Asian arts, the *dan tin* is very important for motion assistance and storing energy. The main *dan tin* lies on the center axis with other energy points up and down the axis. The central axis-based use of the *dan tin* contrasts with the silk reeling *dan tin* rotation of Chen style taiji training. The axis rotation assists in the drilling of the joints used in Wing Chun motion. For Wing Chun, it is drilling, and for Chen style, it's silk reeling (Man: *chansigong*). The power system also is different from karate, which emphasizes the hips, and the shoulder loading of Western boxing crosses and hooks. The center-line orientation of Wing Chun's Chum Kiu also makes for straighter and more direct motions than a beginner's Choy Li Fut, which is a style with more swinging punches.

The first form's basic motions go through subtle modifications because of Chum Kiu's turns and steps. Thus, the guarding hand (*wu*) in Chum Kiu appears to shift from the center of the chest. The appearance is deceptive, because the guarding hand is still on the new line connecting one's axis to that of the other's axis. The axis-to-axis center line remains important but the Chum Kiu turns can create different angles and options for the elbows to aim the hands at the target.

Further in the development process, in *chi sao* or various sticking-hand drills, subtle variations in positioning the guarding hand, the controlling hand (*fok*), or the wing hand (*bong*) will occur because of the shifts in the centerline dynamics between two people doing sticky hands. Improved eye focus and awareness with stable and balanced, but quick and controlled, Chum Kiu and sticky hands training leads one further along the path of creative and spontaneous action. The Chum Kiu turns and steps provide a basis for adjusting to forces coming from all sides. Examples include the *chor ma* turn, frontal stepping, stepping back, turning and stepping, and joint alignment. All steps are accompanied by hand motions, and there are key kicks in Chum Kiu, as well.

ABOVE:
A CHUM KIU TURN
CHANGES HAND
POSITIONS AND ANGLES.



RIGHT:
FONG'S CHUM KIU TURN
(NOTE FEET) OPENS A LINE
FOR A BAR ARM CONTROL
AND CHOP. FONG'S ELBOW
TO RIBS AS POWERED BY
A CHUM KIU TURN.



Close-Quarters Explosive Short Power

The hand motions derived from good Chum Kiu can deliver explosive short power (*bau ja geng*), Wing Chun's version of taiji's explosive power (Man: *fajing*) at one inch or less. The better the joint coordination, the better the power delivery. Chum Kiu stances and motions also can deliver power when contact is made to the legs. The combined stability and mobility of Chum Kiu stance work can upset a grappler's balance and platform, diminishing the effectiveness of their hands in shooting for the legs. Sprawling isn't the only possible option in response to a takedown. Changing the power line, attacking, or side-stepping are also possibilities. The key is controlling an individual's vertical axis and the center line or lines between two or more people.

Ho Kam Ming gets impatient when asked about being taken down. He says that, generally, any Wing Chun practitioner who gets taken down needs to learn or relearn the structural integrity of good Sil Lim Tau and the coordinated and aligned Chum Kiu forward and turning motions applied instantaneously upon contact.

In addition to stance, footwork, and handwork, there is breathing, looking, and timing. At the Chum Kiu development stage, distinct Chum Kiu motions find their way into sticky hands practice. These include piercing, catching, and bar arm. These motions can be used for defending, striking, throwing, or joint control or breaking. The eyes are especially alert in Chum Kiu, adjusting to rapid motion without losing focus and with the head moving with the body. The breathing is natural and proportionate to the exertion involved. There is no special emphasis on exhalation, shouting, or snorting. Spontaneous and reflexive action directs the energy wherever bridging occurs or is made.

The control of intent; the natural breathing; the Siu Lim Tau body structure; and the Chum Kiu turns, steps, and other footwork create the Wing Chun version of the ideal of stillness in motion. The motion can be short, long, and at different speeds and timing, yet follow clear paths to the center of things. There are various forms of power in Wing Chun, the discussion of which is beyond the scope of this article. Chum Kiu plays a vital role in all Wing Chun power development.

As the proverb at the beginning of this article points out, Chum Kiu trains the stance and the waist. The arm bridge is short, and the step is narrow. The eyes are trained to be alert, and the internal energy flows in perpetual motion.

Development and Application

It should be noted that the forms, including Chum Kiu, are for development in the Wing Chun art. The sticky hands exercise helps sharpen understanding of the development and forces involved in contact and timing. In actual conflict or application, Wing Chun strategies, principles, tactics, practice, and experience help adjust and operationally link the development to the unique situations that arise in the real world. In application, a straight punch can be bent at the elbow hinge, though for development, the punch is extended fully. The body's joints, like coordinated springs, can release as much power as necessary, while conserving the rest for more work, flow, or follow-up.

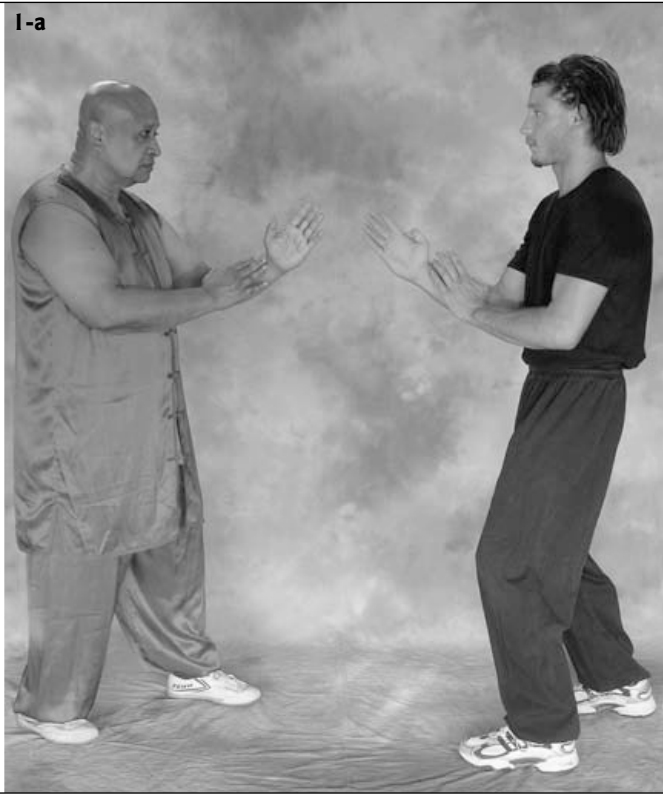
Technical Section

The following technical section will demonstrate the practical advantages of using Wing Chun principles as found in Chum Kiu. The proper maintenance of the body's central axis and its motions helps with the development of Wing Chun power and the foundations of delivering that power.



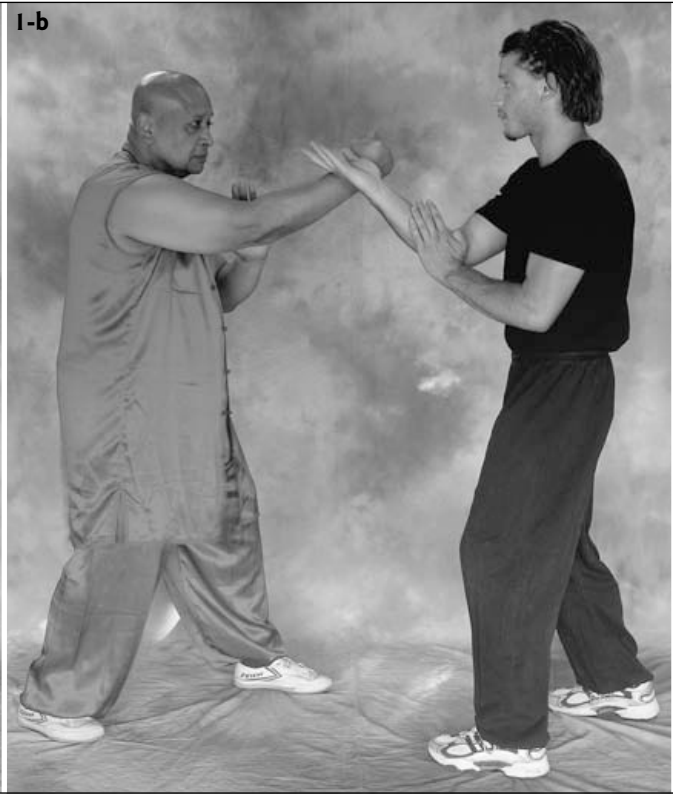
A CHUM KIU TURN
CHANGES HAND
POSITIONS AND ANGLES.

FAJING 發勁



I-a

I-a BASIC FACING POSTURES.



I-b

I-b JOSH CONTROLS JOY'S PUNCH WITH AN OPEN-PALM DEFLECTION.

I-c JOY'S TURNS (*CHOR MA*) CREATING AN OPENING.



I-c

I-d HE EASILY CONTINUES WITH A PALM STRIKE.

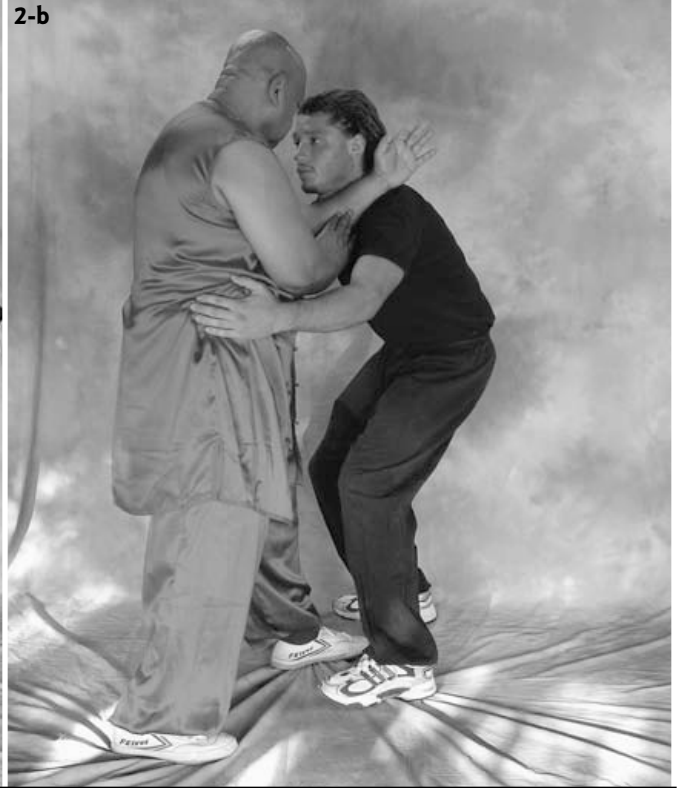


I-d

2-a



2-b



2-a JOSH READY FOR A GRAPPLER'S ADAPTED GRECO-ROMAN BODY GRAB.

2-b IMMEDIATELY UPON GRAPPLER'S TOUCH, JOY'S *CHOR MA* DISSOLVES AND CONTROLS THE POWER OF THE GRABBING MOTION.

3-a JOSH BLOCKS JOY'S PUNCH WITH A BOXING GUARD.

3-b TURNING (*CHOR MA*) ALLOWS JOY TO REPOSITION, CONTROL, AND PUNCH WITH THE OTHER HAND.

3-a



3-b



4-a JOSH GOING FOR A SHOOT TO THE LEGS.

4-b JOY'S CHUM KIU STEP AND TURN MOTIONS JAMS AND CONTROLS HIS OPPONENT'S CENTER LINE.

4-c JOSH'S HEAD IS QUICKLY TURNED WITH THE MOTION.



5-a JOSH PREPARES TO ATTACK.

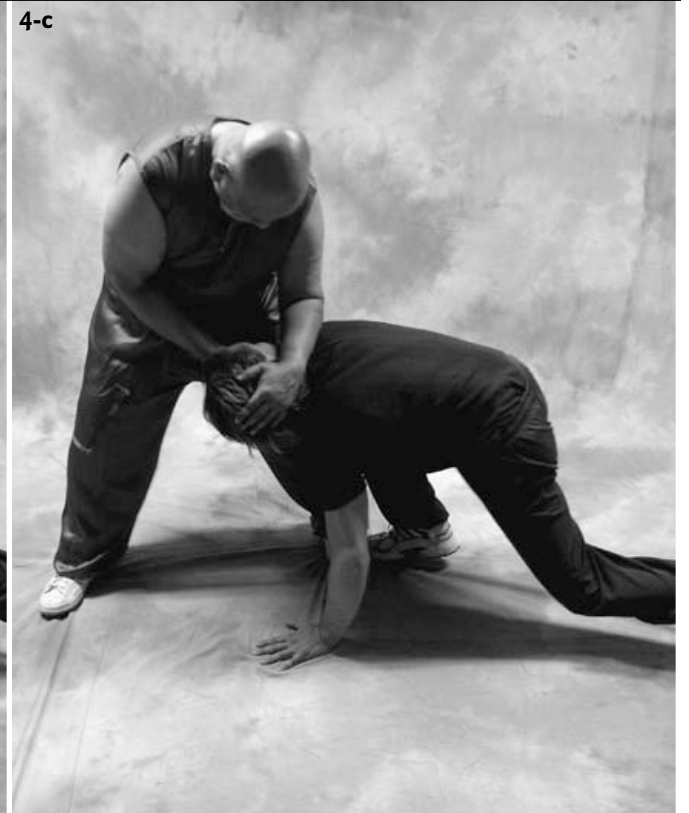
5-b JOSH BEGINS TO KICK.



4-b



4-c



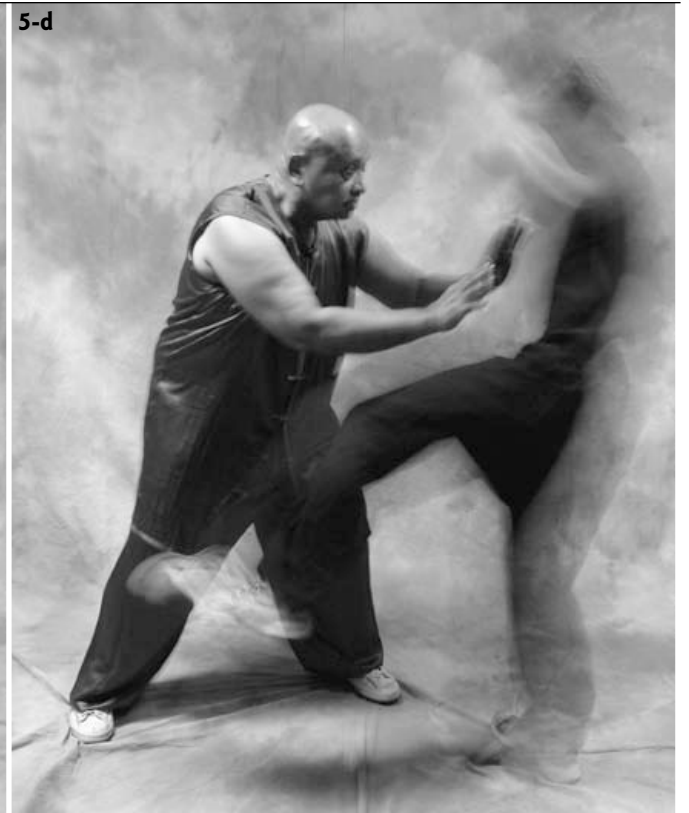
5-c JOY ADVANCES WITH BUTTERFLY PALMS, STOPPING JOSH'S MOTION.

5-d OFF-BALANCE, JOSH BEGINS TO FALL.

5-c



5-d





6-a DANA ABOUT TO PUNCH JOY.

6-b JOY STEPS IN, DEFLECTING USING HIS LEFT HAND, AND TURNS TO THROW A HOOK TO LIVER.

6-c A FOLLOW-UP TURN AND A PUNCH TO THE KIDNEY.

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	<u>Cantonese</u>	<u>Pinyin</u>	<u>English</u>
鏢指	biu jee	biao zhi	shooting fingers
膀手	bong sao	bang shou	elbow up/wing hand
八斬刀	bot jam do	ba zhan dao	eight-slash knives, butterfly knives
黏脚	chi gerk	chi jiao	sticky legs
黏手	chi sao	chi shou	sticky hands
尋橋	Chum Kiu	xun qiao	Seeking the Bridge
轉馬	chor ma	zhuan ma	turning stance
丹田	dan tin	dan tian	“red/cinnabar field”
短橋	dyun kiu	duan qiao	short bridges
佛山	Fatsan	Foshan	Buddhist Mountain
伏手	fuk sao	fu shou	controlling/covering hand
圈手	huen sao	quan shou	circling hand
橋	kiu	qiao	bridge
桿	kwan	gan	staff
攔手	lan sao	lan shou	bar arm/hand
拉手	lop sao	la shou	grabbing hand
木人椿	mok yan jong	murenzhuang	wooden man dummy
師父	sifu	shirfu	teacher, instructor
小念頭	Siu Lim Tau	Xiao Nian Tou	The Little Idea
攤手	tan sao	tan shou	palm up/open and spread
詠春拳	Wing Chun	Yong Chun	Forever Spring
護手	wu sao	hu shou	defensive/guarding hand

6-c



TEACHERS

Ho Kam Ming	何金銘
Ip Man	葉問
Leung Bik	梁壁
Leung Jan	梁贊

MASTER AUGUSTINE
FONG WITH THE AUTHOR,
JOY CHAUDHURI.



Conclusion

Wing Chun's second form, Chum Kiu, provides the foundation for Wing Chun motions without sacrificing the fundamental principles of stability, energy flow, and hand motions that are developed through repeated practice of the first form. The Chum Kiu form teaches footwork, stepping, turning, coordination for proper kicking and adjusting to shifting lines, and angles or power paths. The form provides keys to training for contact.



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