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Wing Chun – Chinese Martial Art

By George Royal

Brief History:

Wing Chun (also known as Wing Tsun, Ving Chun or Ving Tsun) is one of the most popular types of Chinese martial arts. Though it's basically an unarmed combat technique, Wing Chun may include weapons as part of its course. The origin of Wing Chun can be traced back to China, but the real history of its creation has long been a topic of much debate. The most credible suggestion regarding the origin of Wing Chun dates back to 1700 AD in the Henan Shaolin Monastery.

When the Qing forces raided and ravaged the Southern Shaolin temple, a nun named Ng Mui fled to the distant Daliang Mountains, the only survivor. Ng Mui already had knowledge of Kung Fu in the Shaolin temple, which she assimilated with a new form she had learnt while observing a battle between a snake and a crane. She taught this new combat style to her adopted daughter whom she named Yimm Wing Chun. The new system was refined and then passed on from generation to generation, and was eventually named Wing Chun, after Yimm.

The modernization of Wing Chun started in Hong Kong during the 1950s under a Grandmaster called Yip Man. The discipline began to gain real popularity in Asia and the West when actor Bruce Lee became one of the most famous Wing Chun practitioners.

The Concept of Wing Chun:

Wing Chun is based on three basic principles – Practicality, Efficiency and Economy of Movement.

1. Practicality: Techniques such as Palm-up Hand (tan sau), Wing Arm (bong sau), Slapping Hand (pak sau) are designed to maim the most sensitive or vulnerable parts of the opponent's body such as throat, groin, eyes and lower torso. Many movements and techniques in Wing Chun are often meant to be fatal.

2. Efficiency: Wing Chun does not use force against force, in order to gain the most efficient manipulation of the body's energy. It believes in accurately timed and appropriately positioned little movements, and counter-attack is based on the opponent's own force. This concept is also called

Contact Reflexes.

3. Economy of Movement: This is a linear concept in which movements are based on an imaginary pole running vertically through the center of the body. The Center Line spreads out from this Mother Line, and since most of the vital points of the body are located along the Center Line, many offensive and defensive movements are based on this line. The Central Line, on the other hand, is the shortest path between the fighters where most of the combat exchanges take place.

Wing Chun Forms:

There are three basic forms in Wing Chun:

1. Empty Hand Form: This form has three more sub-forms – Siu Nim Tao – the foundation of the art,

Chum Kiu – focus on advanced footwork and entry techniques, and Biu Jee – extreme short-range or long-range techniques, low kicks and sweeps, and emergency techniques.

2. Weapon Forms: The Dragon Pole and Butterfly Swords are the two forms of weapons incorporated in Wing Chun, categorized under advanced training.

3. Wooden Dummy or the Muk Yan Jong Form: A dummy made from several wooden posts represents a human opponent. The contraption is used to perfect angle, position, and footwork.

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Kung Fu: History And Basic Principles

By George Royal

The Term:

Historically, the term "Kung Fu" is not really featured in any ancient texts. It was first coined by a Frenchman named Jean Joseph Marie Amiot, a missionary who lived in the 18th Century, in reference to Chinese martial arts. Kung Fu is also called Gongfu, Wushu, or Kuoshu, and originally denotes expertise in any skill, and not exclusive to martial arts.

Brief History:

The practice, philosophy, and concept of Kung Fu can be traced back to ancient Chinese texts such as Zhuang Zi, Dao De Jing, and Sun Zi Bing Fa (Art of War written by Sun Zi), all written between 1111–255 BC. These texts contain passages related to the practice, propagation, and principles of Chinese martial arts, or Kung Fu as it is known today.

Wing Chun – Chinese Martial Art

One theory regarding the first written history of Kung Fu suggests that the Yellow Emperor, who reigned from 2698 BC, wrote the first treatise on Chinese martial arts. Others give credit to Taoist monks for introducing an art form that resemble modern Tai Chi around 500 BC. Then in 39–92 AD, Pan Ku included "Six Chapters of Hand Fighting" in his discourse on the history of the Han dynasty (Han Shu). As the popularity of martial arts progressed, a physician named Hua T'uo also wrote his own treatise entitled, "Five Animals Play" in 220 AD.

Kung Fu had become a common word in the West beginning in the late 1960s, popularized by martial arts movies and TV series. The Western world today has also seen an immense upsurge in the creation and production of martial arts movies starring great actors/masters such as Jackie Chan and Jet Li.

Basic Principles:

The concept of Kung Fu revolves around three basic principles - Motivation, Self-discipline and Time.

According to experts, the real motivation behind learning Kung Fu is inspiration and not force, which should come from an inner craving to learn and develop the mind and body. Motivation here is the fundamental driving force. There is no external or worldly gain for the learner, and the only reward is that of knowledge, skill, strength and wisdom.

In Kung Fu, discipline is complementary to motivation. Discipline puts motivation into deed and action. A learner has to make an effort into what he has been motivated for, and self-discipline helps him get started and guides him to achieve that goal. Therefore, without discipline, motivation is just a dormant state of mind.

Time is the path to perfection in martial arts. Once motivation and self-discipline have set in, a learner has to spend a considerable amount of time putting mind and body into practice. A truly inspired learner does not have the privilege to waste time, stay idle or indulge in fruitless activities. Everything done by him/her should reflect real motivation and self-discipline.

Variants and Styles:

With the passage of time, numerous variants and styles have come up in martial arts, or Kung Fu. Some of the more popular ones include Karate, Escrima, Wing Chun, Jujitsu, Judo, Tae Kwon Do, Shaolin, White Crane, T'ai Chi Ch'uan, and Bagua Zhang.

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