



“Highly  
recommended!”

—*Wing Chun Illustrated*

# Wing Chun In-Depth

**Skills for Combat, Strategies for Life**

MUNAWAR ALI KARIM • LOUKAS KASTROUNIS

## *Advance Praise for Wing Chun In-Depth . . .*

Aristotle once said, “the most difficult thing in the world is to discover and know yourself.” One way to do this is to interact with a real friend who will play the role of a mirror and help you “see” yourself and assist you in achieving self-realization, self-confidence, and self-control.

Reading Plato’s dialogues, we often cannot recognize who is the true author (Aristotle the master, or Plato the student). This matters less than the content itself. Something similar is happening in this book. What really matters is that Wing Chun is preserved and transferred to future generations. Like Plato, these authors invite you to question and analyze yourself by accepting current circumstances and remaining focused to find your own truth and to deal with the complexity and challenges of your own life. This book will help you discover your inner self, allowing your skills and abilities to be revealed and your imagination explored.

*Wing Chun In-Depth* begins with the origins and history of the Wing Chun system. It explores the contributions of Ip Man and Bruce Lee through the social and political environments of their times. The authors focus not only on sophisticated martial skills but on principles, mental values, attitudes, and philosophies that these masters taught for success in life. It continues with an examination of Wing Chun skills including the economy of motion, effort, and natural reactions with forward energy. The work is also precisely illustrated with hundreds of enhanced photographs.

The authors complete this book by offering the readers various strategies on how Wing Chun’s universal principles can work as a stabilizing force in life. Wing Chun is a way of thinking. It helps overcome anger, stress, bias, and mental blocks. It replaces them with calmness, charm, and intelligence so that we can confront the most difficult opponent: ourselves. In Wing Chun, every obstacle is an opportunity to find a natural way. This book will inspire the remarkable journey of Wing Chun and bring out the very best in all who take it.

—Vasileios Manousakis Colonel GR (A)

If you are looking for a book on Wing Chun that covers both the practical aspects of applying the techniques in combat as well as the philosophical side of the martial art, then this is the book for you. I have read many books on Wing Chun, and this is by far one of the most comprehensive and well-written books I have come across.

Loukas Kastrounis has been teaching martial arts for over thirty years to many martial artists of different styles, law enforcement officers, security firms, and the military at home and overseas. He is a highly creative instructor with a unique approach to training that helps students achieve their goals quickly and effectively.

*Wing Chun In-Depth: Skills for Combat, Strategies for Life* is a must-read for anyone passionate about Wing Chun and martial arts. This is one of those books you will be able to reference time and time again. I highly recommend this book for everyone!

—**Lafayette Harris**, Wing Chun martial arts instructor

A solidly researched, beautifully narrated deep dive into the philosophical, historical, and technical aspects of Wing Chun. Fascinating history combined with great narration and revealing insights that make Wing Chun relevant for all of life's challenges. Highly recommended if you love history, martial arts, and strategy.

—**Erwan Le Corre**, author of *The Practice of Natural Movement*

I was fascinated to understand how Wing Chun practitioners can gain mechanical advantages through natural movement and gain *freedom* through imitation and repetition. It's as though the practitioner is a work of art [becoming] a masterpiece. Reading the history of Wing Chun practitioners drew me in deeply, a veritable who's-who of Wing Chun.

—**Eric Brown**, former US Navy SEAL,  
Naval Special Warfare Center Instructor of the Year (1993)

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## Preface

Dear Reader,

This book is the product of an interaction between a Wing Chun master and one of his students. When Sifu Loukas Kastrounis asked me to write down his teaching in the form of a book I felt both honored and humbled. Honored, because it was a sign of the great deal of trust that my teacher was placing in me. Humbled, because I recognized the enormity of what was being asked. Over the four or five years that followed I tried to pay close attention to Loukas's words, teaching methods, and interactions with his students and his peers. I also sought as much as possible to craft a work that translated the spirit, beauty, and "rawness" of his Wing Chun teaching to the literary medium. This, I felt, was the most honest way to give expression to the richness of what Loukas has to offer as a Wing Chun teacher.

The "rawness" of his teaching lies in its uncut honesty. Observing Sifu Loukas delivering a seminar or teaching a class, it becomes clear that he is openly sharing his Wing Chun as he received it himself. Such teachers are rare in this age, and for this reason I felt it was important to trace Loukas's lineage and share the story of Wing Chun as far as it is known. This is done in the first part of the book. The intention here is to inspire you to commence, or to continue, your journey into this beautiful and profound practice that is rooted in Chinese heritage and tradition. The second part of the book provides a summary of Wing Chun as a system. This section is deliberately concise, like Wing Chun itself. It is designed to provide an overview of Wing Chun as a whole, serving as a ready reference for beginners and a useful reminder for more experienced practitioners. The third part of the book looks closely at how Wing Chun practice and principles translate into real fighting skills. The final and concluding part of the book explores the strategic fruits of Wing Chun as a practice which provides not only skills for combat, but also strategies for life. Within it are gleanings of wisdom and hidden treasures for everyday life inside and outside the kwoon, the office, the school, the dojo, and the home. The narrative voice in this book fluctuates between Loukas and myself. Sometimes the teacher speaks for himself directly. And other times he speaks through the interpretive voice of his student.

If you enjoy this book and benefit from what it has to offer; if it inspires you to take up Wing Chun, or continue your practice from a new perspective; or if it sheds light on how Wing Chun provides strategies for life, not just for combat; then this effort has not been in vain, and I can rest assured that the book has achieved its purpose.

Munawar Karim  
Reading, Berkshire

## INTRODUCTION

The competent Wing Chun practitioner moves with a sophisticated understanding of body mechanics. He responds to dangerous forces with mechanical efficiency. He appears to effortlessly redirect hostile force to a position of personal advantage. He understands how to align his body and limbs correctly to produce maximum leverage and remove an incoming threat to his centerline. The scientific term for this is mechanical advantage. But don't be fooled: while the Wing Chun practitioner does indeed have a deep, intuitive grasp of body mechanics, his body is not in fact responding mechanically. It is responding naturally and freely. The Wing Chun adept is not a slave to his art—although his path to “mastery” began with imitation. His art is now his. He owns it and it's his guide in difficult situations.

There is little margin of error in following that guide. But surprisingly this is not an art that teaches techniques. Wing Chun is a martial art that focuses on principles, energy work, body mechanics, and efficiency of movement. There are only three hand forms in Wing Chun: *Siu Nim Tau*, *Chum Kiu*, and *Biu Jee*. With the diligent practice of these forms and patient self-reflection, a Wing Chun student is guided on a life-long journey of self-discovery that teaches much more than how to deal with physical threats. At its essence Wing Chun teaches us how to find our balance when most people have already lost their own. It teaches us how to respond to stupid questions with intelligent answers. It teaches us when to walk away and when to walk on. It teaches us how to carry on moving forward when everything is dark around us. And for these reasons it is much more than a science. It is a tradition whose roots lie forgotten in the history of ancient China, but whose branches extend throughout the world. There are many blossoms on this tree but few fruits. In the life-long work of Sifu Loukas Kastrounis the tradition evolves, and the fruits are plenty...



## THROUGH THE TEMPESTS OF HISTORY

### China at the Time of Grandmaster Ip Man's Birth (1900s)

Louis Lassen is serving up the world's first hamburgers in New Haven, Connecticut, and the Wright Brothers are setting the stage for the first controlled power flight. J. M. Barrie is working on a play entitled *Peter Pan* and the British Labour Party has just been founded. In a few years' time Albert Einstein will publish his theory of relativity and Henry Ford will produce the first Model T. Shortly after that the unsinkable *Titanic* will sink; a Duke in Europe will be assassinated, igniting the First World War; and the Arabs will revolt against the Ottoman Empire. It is the early 1900s. The Old World is receding into the past and the modern world is slowly emerging. The Age of Empires is unraveling. The Ottoman Empire in the West and the Qing Empire in the East will soon crumble under the weight of these changes. But along with them, the much younger Western-colonial empires will also come to a swift end: Britain is struggling to hold on to its global imperial possessions and is engaged in a bloody war with the Boers in Africa. In India there is great resentment against the British Raj. The French in Tunisia, the British in Egypt, and the Italians in Ethiopia (and then later in Libya) are finding that the locals would much rather be independent of their colonial masters. Meanwhile Britain, France, Germany, the United States, Russia, and Japan are all engaged in a "Great Game" to take, by hook or by crook, as much of the riches and resources from the decaying Qing Empire of China as they can.

In the West great leaps are being made in technology and science. Marconi is about to transmit the first wireless signal across the Atlantic; Pierre and Marie Curie have already discovered radium; Wilhelm Rontgen has identified X-rays; Alexander Bell has invented the telephone. The great science and learning of the East, and particularly of China, that once produced such world-changing inventions like the printing press, gunpowder, silk, and paper, and from whence the Great Admiral Zheng-He's fleet once circumnavigated the entire globe at a time when most Europeans still believed the world was flat—that East and that great Chinese civilization seem irrelevant in this brave new world of European dominance. To most Europeans, and to the Japanese, Americans, and Russians, China seems very much like a culture with very little to offer the world—except for its hoard of treasures and ancient artifacts, which are ripe for plunder.

## 2

### ALIVE AND WELL

#### Bringing Wing Chun Out of Myth and into History

Ip Man was born in Foshan, Guangdong province—a once-thriving town at the heart of the Pearl River Delta, rich in iron deposits, manufacturing, and handicrafts. Foshan was also rich in martial arts practitioners. However, over time Foshan had grown less important and less wealthy as new port cities were opened up by the foreigners. The people of nearby Gunagzhou, who once upon a time were major consumers of Foshan exports, now had other sources to supply their needs. And yet in the early 1900s, with all that was happening elsewhere in China, Foshan was still a well-to-do city. The Boxer Rebellion had been crushed, foreign powers had a tighter grip on China than ever before, and martial-arts societies were considered with suspicion. Martial arts masters responded to these developments in different ways. Some continued the practice of their arts privately and no longer taught openly. Others practiced with small groups of close friends or family members. Still others attempted to distance martial arts from the subversive secret societies of the past. Perhaps most famous among these was the Jing Wu Athletic Association (founded around 1910), which sought to consolidate and preserve core elements of the Chinese martial arts and present them to modernity as a form of Chinese athletic pursuit on a par with boxing, fencing, and other “Western” sports.

But traditional martial arts are much more than physical exercises. Those who practice such arts are enriched by them, and if they become great practitioners of those arts, they go on to enrich them further still. Ip Man was destined to be one of these great masters.

\*

It’s 1910 in Foshan, Guangdong Province. A decade has passed since the Boxer Rebellion in the north. Some martial arts associations and schools are now teaching openly again. Among them is the Hung Sing Association specializing in Choy Li Fut Kung-fu and attracting many semi-skilled workers around Guangdong province. In the next ten years or so, the Jing Wu Association will also attract lots of followers with its modern presentation of the martial arts. The Jing Wu Association will leverage its connection with successful business owners to attract young, educated, middle-class students. There are smaller traditional schools of martial arts in Foshan too. Martial arts competitions and tests of strength are

### 3

## GROWING AND CONTINUING

### Two Legendary Students of Grandmaster Ip Man

**F**ebruary 1, 1954. Ip Man has been in Hong Kong for the last four years. The British colony has changed considerably since he was last here as a student. But Ip Man has changed too—he is now around sixty-years old. He has lived through several wars, foreign occupation, and revolution. And of course he is an accomplished master of Wing Chun.

Through the introduction of a friend, he has been teaching Wing Chun to members of the Restaurant Workers' Union at Hoi Tan Road in Kowloon. Initially there are only a few students but the numbers have been growing slowly. Today is a particularly quiet night. Tomorrow is Chinese New Year's Eve and most people have other things to do. Suddenly a young lad walks into the school. His cousin has told him there is a sifu here who teaches a form of boxing from Foshan in Guangdong province. The young man has witnessed some of this teacher's students in a challenge match, and he liked what he saw. He wants to know how good these students really are.

To everyone's surprise the young man asks if he can spar with one of Ip Man's students. Is this a challenge? As always, Ip Man is calm and polite. The young man spars with the first student and makes short work of him. Ip Man asks him to cross hands with another student. Again the young man defeats him easily. "Why don't we play together?" says Ip Man.

And so the old Ip Man and the young upstart touch hands. The young man has obviously studied boxing. He launches punches at Ip Man, but the old man hardly seems to move. As the young lad moves around and launches another attack, Ip Man steps forward, forcing him against the wall. The lad suddenly finds his hands pinned at the elbow while the old man launches a burst of light punches at his head and chest.

But the young lad is not deterred. He tries again—now skipping lightly on his feet, bobbing and weaving, jabbing to the right, hooking with the left. But again Ip Man pins his arms effortlessly and launches a shower of light punches. Enough? Not yet. The young upstart steps back. Perhaps he launches a few kicks; perhaps he tries a feint. But the end is still the same: the old man has him up against the wall. And the punches come flying in.

There are slightly different versions of this encounter. But what's clear is that the young man has found the teacher he's been looking for.

## 5

# WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?

## A Concise Overview of Wing Chun

In the previous section we suggested that if the best representatives of different martial artists were compelled to agree on the smallest number of essential principles, to come to a consensus—not about technique—but about the “concepts” that are the most important in a fight, if they were being honest and frank, they would come up with a list that describes the foundations of Wing Chun. These foundations may be expressed in different



**Figure 5-1.** Sifu Loukas carefully scrutinizes Nick’s “fook-sau.” The keen eye of the master looks out for many fine details in his student: the use of two hands—one pulling back, one going forward; the center of gravity of the body; the central line theory—crossing the elbow through the centerline. The body should be in perfect stillness.

## 6

# SIU NIM TAU

## The First Form, the Last Form

“When the highest type of men hear the Way, with diligence they’re able to practice it;  
When average men hear the Way, some things they retain and others they lose;  
When the lowest type of men hear the Way, they laugh out loud at it.  
If they didn’t laugh at it, it couldn’t be regarded as the Way.”

—*Lao Tzu, Te-Tao Ching*<sup>21</sup>

**S**iu Nim Tau (“The Little Idea Form”) is the first of three “empty hand” forms the Wing Chun practitioner learns. Actually “learn” is not quite the right word here. As long as a person practices Wing Chun they will *study* the first form over and over again, and they will practice it every day.

The three “empty-hand” or non-weapon forms are:

1. *Siu Nim Tau*: “Little Idea Form”
2. *Chum Kiu*: “Seeking the Bridge”
3. *Biu Jee*: “Thrusting Fingers”

After the student has learned these forms they are then introduced to the Wooden Dummy movements and the two weapon forms—the Long Pole and the Butterfly Knives.

All of these forms are embedded or encoded within the first form. In other words Siu Nim Tau contains within it the concepts and principles of the entire system. For this reason alone it needs to be performed slowly and thoughtfully. As one’s Wing Chun improves, so does one’s understanding of Siu Nim Tau, and as one’s understanding of Siu Nim Tau improves, so does one’s Wing Chun. It is therefore the beginning and the end form of Wing Chun.

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21. Robert G. Henricks, (trans), *Lao-Tzu Te-Tao Ching: A New Translation Based on the Recently Discovered Ma-Wang Tui Texts* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1992), 9.

The first form teaches us how to delete the myriad thoughts that are going through our brain, to quiet the mind. Not to *think*, but to *feel*. When done correctly it teaches us patience. Loukas recalls that his own teacher used to say that in a fight we must never rush in, never fight angry, and only hit when the opportunity arises. This is just one of the many “attitudes” that Siu Nim Tau teaches.

Many Qigong (Chi Kung) practitioners who have come to study Wing Chun have been amazed by the advanced Qigong and energy work contained in Siu Nim Tau—particularly the first part of the form. Like some of the most advanced Qigong forms found in the so-called “internal” or “soft” arts, its movements are outwardly quite simple, but performed slowly with attention to energy and body alignment, they enable the practitioner to develop an extraordinary understanding of *rootedness* necessary for advanced energy work. Typical of advanced practice, the skill in performing Siu Nim Tau lies in paying attention to the details and letting the form reveal to you an understanding of your own body structure and alignment.

Among the many things that this form prepares the student for is touching hands and testing one’s Wing Chun with a partner. It does this by developing the ability of the student to move his body without thinking; to refine and improve his structure; to “bypass” the mental block that often hinders or delays an appropriate response and free the practitioner to move swiftly without hesitation.

At The Basement school, students who could not do a long first form were not allowed to touch hands with other practitioners. A novice can be recognized by how quickly they perform the Siu Nim Tau. Sifu Loukas’s beginning students are advised to increase the time spent in the form gradually. Beginners should not perform Siu Nim Tau in less than fifteen minutes. Advanced practitioners should be performing the form for thirty minutes to an hour every day.

Another mistake that beginners make is rushing to memorize the hand shapes and arm movements without paying attention to the details. In order to perform Siu Nim Tau correctly you should pay attention to:

1. The movement of the hands (these should move in a constant flow without stopping. As much as possible, you should follow the path that aligns correctly to your centerline and body structure.
2. The position of the hips
3. The position of the shoulders
4. The position of the spine
5. The elbows
6. The horse stance

This may sound like a tall order but by paying attention to the following points you can begin to develop a good understanding of Siu Nim Tau.

Make sure the upper body does not slouch. Stand as if there is a string or line of energy extending out from your spine and upper body pulling your head upward. This is sometimes

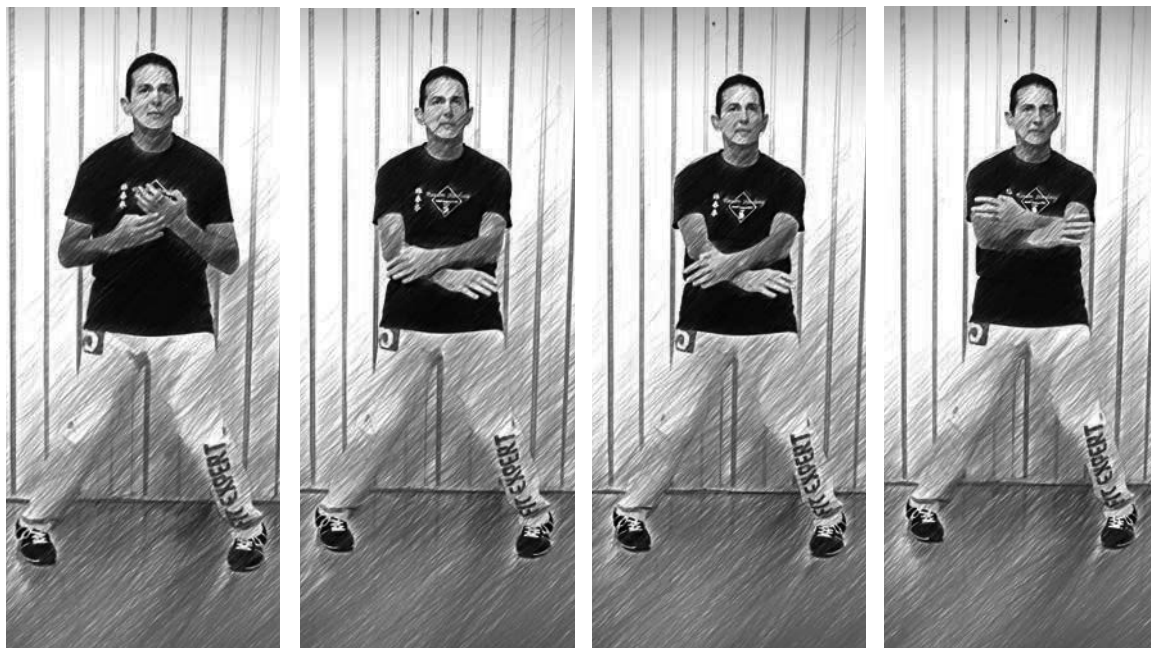
called *rising yang energy*. Keep your knees bent and your feet pigeon-toed in the horse stance. Rotate your pelvis thrusting your hips forward and upward and squeeze your thighs together as if holding a ball between them and rooting downwards from your lower body. This is sometimes called *sinking yin energy*.

When you begin to practice Siu Nim Tau in this way, energy is generated from the heels up through the lower body to the hips, from the hips along an imaginary line connecting to your elbows, and through your arms into your hands, making the hands feel like a whip. This is called *lat sau chi chung*—“forward hand energy.”

With diligent practice, the *lat sau chi chung* becomes more pronounced, and the practitioner is able to feel the hands moving like a whip, driven with energy generated from the lower body and through the hips into the elbows. “Only when the first form is practiced in this manner,” says Sifu Loukas, “is the whole body engaged in the form. And only then do we have mind and body connected, working together.”

Wong Shun Leung would remind Sifu Loukas that when someone is thinking before executing a “technique” they are not doing Wing Chun. This needs to be remembered at all times—during the forms, when doing drills, when practicing *chi-sau* with a partner. This idea of “not-thinking” starts to become a reality when you can relax and be at ease with Siu Nim Tau while at the same time performing it as accurately as possible.

### Sim Nim Tau: The Form Step by Step









## 8

# MASTER CLASS 1

## Training to Fight Without Fighting

*“Therefore those who win every battle are not really skillful—those who render others’ armies helpless without fighting are the best of all.”*

—Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*<sup>22</sup>

When you see Wing Chun being practiced it doesn’t look like fighting. It is a mistake to think too much about fighting when you are practicing Wing Chun. The secrets of this art are in its forms. When the forms become second nature to you and you understand their significance, then you come to realize Wing Chun’s potential in a fighting situation. In other words, although working with the forms and practicing Wing Chun will definitely make you capable of dealing with a fighting situation competently, if you are only thinking of fighting while practicing and learning Wing Chun, you will not absorb what the forms are meant to teach you. You have to look beyond fighting techniques in order to really gain the benefits from Wing Chun, even in a situation of confrontation.

But make no mistake about it. Wing Chun is a fighting system. But before we can talk about fighting we have to develop the correct mental condition—the right state of mind. And this cannot be bought. Paying your fees and attending class is not enough to develop this state of mind. Moreover the state of mind is not purely “intellectual.” We are not talking here about rational thought processes. Ultimately what is needed is for the body to absorb the principles of Wing Chun so that they become natural responses in any given situation. This is what is meant when we say, *feel, don’t think*. Bruce Lee was famous for saying this. Most people just think it’s a cliché and don’t realize what he meant. A Wing Chun practitioner should come to understand this and strive for it.

You cannot simply “learn” Wing Chun like you might learn a fact at school. You have to think of Wing Chun as a game. You “play” Wing Chun. When you think of learning some-

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22. Thomas Cleary, tr., *The Art of War* (Boston: Shambhala, 1999), 90.

# 9

## MASTER CLASS 2

### Avoiding the Mexican Stand-Off

#### (Chi-Sau And Developing Forward Spring-Loaded Energy)

*“The great mistake is to anticipate the outcome of the engagement; you ought not to be thinking of whether it ends in victory or defeat. Let nature take its course, and your tools will strike at the right moment.”*

—Bruce Lee

**W**hen doing chi-sau it is important to offer the opponent/partner energy. This is critical. Imagine two boxers trying to train together to improve their skills. If they square up facing each other in their guards but do not offer each other a threat, they won't learn from each other. The point is not to be aggressive but to offer your partner something to play with or, if you like, work from.

For example a common mistake is to assume a fook-sau hand position that offers no forward energy. This habit can develop from an incorrect practice of single-hand drills.



**Figure 9-1.** Incorrect fook-sau. Here, Nick's fook-sau lacks energy.



**Figure 9-2.** Sifu Loukas corrects Nick's fook-sau.



**Figure 9-3.** Correct fook-sau position. “Now the partner has something to play with as the fook-sau energy is moving forward.”

This feeling is important for cultivation of *lat sau chi chung*—or forward spring-loaded energy. So when you train try to cultivate this energy. Its essence is embedded in the repeated emphasis on forward punching, on structure and correct alignment of arms with the upper and lower body. All of this encourages simple, direct, forward energies.

Before you touch your partner’s hand you can experiment with him to see if he is “connected.” If your partner assumes a *tan-sau*, test the connection by applying a gentle force along his arm. If your partner is connected—if his arm is aligned correctly—the force will transfer along his arm, through his hips down to his feet. The natural response will be that his foot will step backward and his entire structure will move accordingly.

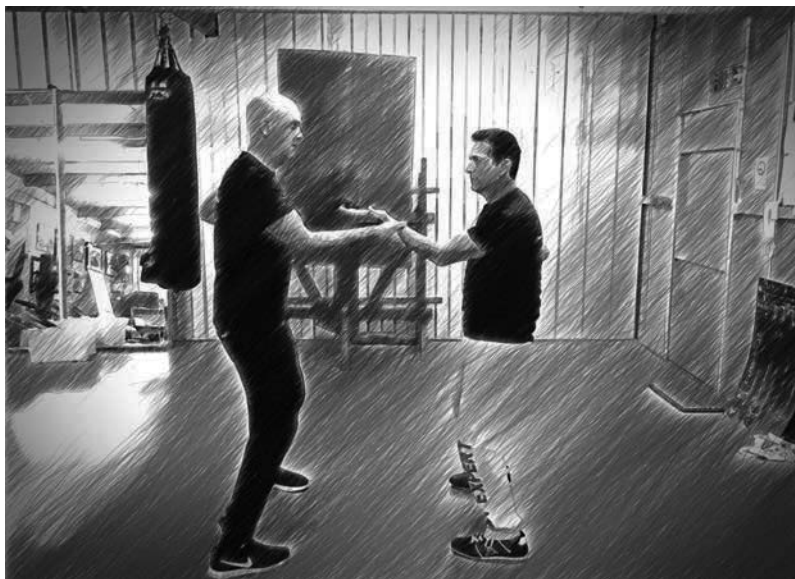


Figure 9-4



Figure 9-5

Figures 9-4 through 9-9. Testing the correct alignment in tan-sau to see if your partner is connected. Nick tests Sifu Loukas's "connection" by applying forward pressure through his tan-sau palm. The energy from Nick's forward pressure channels naturally into Sifu's tan-sau palm and

## 10

### MASTER CLASS 3

#### “No Technique as Technique”

(Chum Kiu Concepts, The Beginner Mind, And Self-Discovery)

*“The person who says it cannot be done should not interrupt the person doing it.”*

—*Chinese Proverb*

It is not uncommon for beginners to do things in chi-sau without understanding the full meaning of what they are doing. The meaning becomes clearer and the understanding grows with practice. Imagine if you are engaged in chi-sau with someone and in the course of the quick-paced exchanges they perform what looks to you like a very bad lap-sau. You remember your teacher telling you not to lap-sau like that. You should not stop your chi-sau practice and point out to your partner that their lap-sau was wrong—even if you have the best of intentions. Because it was not in fact a lap-sau; it was a lan-sau (a lifting block, bridging or deflection technique)! And if it worked in the spontaneous situation arising from the dynamic interplay of chi-sau, then all the better—there is something for both of you to learn from that. Chi-sau allows you to experiment in a controlled environment where you are under pressure and subject to uncertainty: two factors that are ever present in all confrontations.

Now imagine as a beginner you execute this lan-sau. You have never heard of lan-sau. Perhaps in your mind you are doing lap-sau. Perhaps you think to yourself, “That was a rubbish lap-sau.” Better not to think too much. In the words of Bruce Lee, “Feeel! Don’t think!” Be natural and learn from the doing. Don’t worry too much about this technique or that technique, whether your bong-sau was correct or your lap-sau was proper. As a beginner you may not realize exactly what you are doing, but so long as you adhere to the basic principles, body structure, alignment, and efficiency of Wing Chun, and so long as what you are doing works—then that’s all that matters. What more could you ask for?



So it depends on your understanding. We cannot say in chi-sau, “Excuse me that is wrong! You’re not allowed to do that.” The system is open for exchange of ideas and practice. And so beginners can train with more experienced practitioners and each can benefit from the other by keeping an open mind.

In the following sequences and accompanying commentary we seek to help you glimpse some of these finer points of Wing Chun. The sequences have been chosen carefully to demonstrate the principles already outlined and to reveal deeper layers of Wing Chun including its versatility as a fighting art that includes not only striking and kicking but also grappling.

### Visual Cues: “The One Who Hits Last Gets to Go Home”



Figure 10-1



Figure 10-2

#### **Nick executes a bong-sau to deflect Sifu’s attack.**

Nick pivots simultaneously with his bong-sau in response to Sifu’s attack. Because bong-sau has to be used as a throwing technique this simultaneous pivoting is necessary. Notice how Sifu’s body is thrown off his line of attack as a result.



**Figure 10-3**

**Nick's bong-sau has been lifted too high.**

Sifu has caused Nick's elbow to go above his shoulder making Nick vulnerable to being thrown down. Nick's structure is now broken and we can clearly see that he is in danger.



**Figure 10-4**



**Figure 10-5**

**Sifu corrects Nick's structure by bringing the bong-sau into the correct position.**

He then tests Nick's bong-sau by applying pressure to the elbow (Figure 10-5). If the structure is correct Nick's bong-sau will absorb the pressure, or alternatively Nick can step forward and move his elbow toward Sifu's centerline. Note that he has to step with his right leg (the same side as his bong-sau) in order to make this effective. If his structure is not correct he will not be able to do this.



Figure 10-6

**Following the adjustments, Nick ends up in a position where he has avoided Sifu's other hand and he is not vulnerable to be hit by Sifu.**

He has also set up Sifu to be able to counterattack his next strike. Often people think to stop a punch with bong-sau but actually bong-sau is a preparation to set up the next attack. Bong-sau is an intermediate phase to avoid the danger and set up the counterattack. It's not an attack in itself.

## BEYOND FIGHTING

## What Wing Chun Can Teach Us About Life

MUNAWAR ALI KARIM

*“The true value of sword-fencing cannot be seen within  
the confines of sword-fencing technique.”*

—*Musashi Miyamoto (A Book of Five Rings)*

We began this book with stories of some of the great Wing Chun masters of the past. Just as they were instrumental in the development and transmission of Wing Chun into modern times, there is no doubt that Wing Chun itself was an important factor in how they dealt with the very real challenges of their own lives in their own times. From opposing foreign occupation, surviving against the backdrop of the Second World War and the communist revolution, to rising above gang-culture, tackling racist stereotypes and introducing a new cinematic art form to the world, each of them seems to have applied the principles and strategies of Wing Chun to achieve success outside of the training hall and the battlefield. For some, like Bruce Lee, the achievements have been dramatic, impacting in some way the entire world. For others the success has, perhaps, been more personal. What is clear however is that Wing Chun, when understood deeply, has the potential to not only train us in how to deal with the realities of physical combat but also to teach us how to deal with the complexities of our everyday lives. As we come to the end of this book we would like to leave you with some clues about how Wing Chun can provide you with not only skills for combat but also strategies for life.

As we have seen, the effectiveness of Wing Chun rests on the fact that it is driven by principles rather than being a selection of choreographed techniques. As a practitioner develops in his ability to instinctively move according to these principles in a combat situation, he experiences the truth of those principles. If, as you practice Wing Chun, you can take the feeling of that experience and translate it to other aspects of your life, you will come to realize the deeper aspects of an art that enhances the quality of everything you choose to do. Take another look at the lives of some of the great masters of Wing Chun whose histories we

## About the Author

**Munawar Ali Karim** is a combatives instructor, natural movement coach, Montessori educator, and martial artist with an interest in history and sacred tradition. He is the author of *Liberty's Jihad: African Muslim Slaves and the Meaning of America*, a “compelling and illuminating ... work of historical criticism” (*Kirkus*). He holds undergraduate degrees in law and Japanese and a postgraduate degree in modern history. He began studying martial arts at the age of twelve with a Shotokan Karate master who also taught a hybrid style derived from Hung-Gar Kung-fu and Southern Praying Mantis (Chow-Gar). In his early twenties Munawar was invited to work for the Japanese government as an international relations specialist. Living in a small town in the Kiso Mountains along the *nakasendo*—the old road between Edo and Tokyo—Munawar studied Shorinji Kempo whilst deepening his understanding of ninjutsu, samurai, and sufi teachings. On returning from Japan, Munawar continued to pursue the martial arts including Shaolin Kung Fu (under 33rd generation Shaolin Monk Shifu Zheng Ke Wang), Wing Chun (under Sifu Loukas Kastrounis) and Brazilian Jiu Jitsu (Gracie lineage).



In 2008 Munawar made the decision to leave his position as a corporate lawyer to pursue his interests in the development of mind, body, and spirit through teaching, writing, and personal practice. In 2009 he founded a not-for-profit Montessori Primary and Liberal Arts Secondary School to help young people of all backgrounds access an elite education rooted in traditional values. Aside from his formal practice of martial arts, Munawar enjoys epee fencing, poetry, and traditional archery. In 2019 he founded Deenway Dojo to share his interpretation of the martial way (*budo*) with others. Munawar describes his *budo* as following the maxim of the great “sword saint” Musashi Miyamoto: *bun bu ichi ryu* “Pen and Sword in Accord,” and the spiritual teachings of the Sufi masters.

## About the Author

**Loukas Kastrounis** is a third-generation direct descendant of Great Grand Master Ip Man through Sifu Wong Shun Leung. He completed the Wing Chun system with Master Nino Bernardo at the now legendary “Basement” school of Wing Chun in London. Master Wong was better known as Gong Sau Wong—*king of talking with the hands*—and was Bruce Lee’s foremost Wing Chun teacher. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s Wong was undefeated in all of his challenges and recognised as one of Ip Man’s best students and as the foremost instructor of the legendary martial artist and film star Bruce Lee. Master Nino Bernardo was one of the few who had completed the Wing Chun system in Hong Kong under Wong Shun Leung. Loukas was also taught Kali by Nino Bernardo (whose Kali lineage comes directly from world-famous Bruce Lee student and Kali master Guru Dan Inosanto). Loukas has been teaching Kali and Wing Chun to beginners and seasoned martial artists alike since 1992. Many advanced teachers and practitioners of Wing Chun, Karate, Taekwondo, Aikido, Kali, JKD, and boxing have taken instruction from Sifu Loukas. He has also provided specialist instruction to security firms, bodyguards, and law enforcement officers, including the military.



In 2000 he choreographed fighting scenes at the Sonning Mill Theatre in Berkshire (UK). In October 2003 Loukas was presented with the Hall of Fame Award by *Combat Magazine* at an award ceremony in Birmingham, UK, in recognition of his commitment to the development of Martial Arts in the United Kingdom and around the world. He has been featured in a number of martial arts magazines and newspaper articles in the UK and abroad and has been interviewed twice live on BBC Radio Berkshire. In September 2008 Loukas played a leading role in an action-combat martial arts film *Game Over*. This film was screened at various short film festivals around the world including the 2009 International Film Festival in Rome. The film won first position at the Tokyo Short film festival in Japan (2009), and second place in Hollywood, USA (2010).

In 2012 Loukas was interviewed by several Greek newspapers and the magazine *Rhodes Mirror*. In 2012 Kosmos TV broadcast an interview with Loukas discussing his Wing Chun teachings. This proved to be very popular, resulting in Kosmos TV broadcasting a half-hour documentary on Loukas’s work in 2013. In 2014 the BBC aired a documentary focusing on Loukas’s Wing Chun school in Reading, Berkshire. Loukas continues to teach Wing Chun in the UK and Europe, including to members of the armed forces. He is also founder of the European Wing Chun Association and travels frequently to teach and conduct seminars around the world.

"This book will inspire the remarkable journey of Wing Chun and bring out the very best in all who take it."

—Vasileios Manousakis,  
Colonel GR (A), NATO

"One of the most comprehensive and well-written books [we] have come across."

—*Wing Chun Illustrated*

"This is one of those books you will be able to reference time and time again."

—Lafayette Harris,  
Wing Chun martial arts instructor

"A solidly researched, beautifully narrated deep dive into the philosophical, historical, and technical aspects of Wing Chun. Highly recommended."

—Erwan Le Corre, author,  
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- The legendary origins of Wing Chun.
- Its historical development and its present evolution from Ip Man and Wong, Shun-Leung.
- Insight into Bruce Lee's relationship with his teachers.
- Forms, training drills, and techniques to develop oneself into a skilled fighter.
- Wing Chun as a practice which provides skills for combat and strategies for life.



S. DHALIWAL



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**Munawar Ali Karim** is an author, historian, and combatives instructor with over three decades of martial arts experience. He studied Ninjutsu and Samurai traditions in Japan and trained in Shorinji Kempo, Shaolin Kung Fu, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, and Wing Chun. In his writing, coaching and personal practice he seeks to realize the maxim of Musashi Miyamoto: "*Pen and Sword in Accord.*" Munawar Karim resides in Reading, Berkshire, England.

**Loukas Kastrounis** is a third-generation descendant of Ip Man through teacher Wong Shun Leung, and second-generation Kali Eskrima-Arnis instructor through Dan Inosanto. He has been teaching martial arts since 1992, including law enforcement officers and the military. His work is featured in the British and international press and he is a *Combat Magazine* Hall of Fame inductee. Loukas Kastrounis resides in Wokingham, Berkshire, England.

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