

The Foundations of  
**Wing Chun**  
**Kung Fu**  
Volume 1



詠春



Volume 1 in a series of  
books on the system of  
**Wing Chun Kung Fu**  
by  
Sifu John Ryan Wahnish, M.S., L.Ac.

  
ENERGETICS  
PRESS

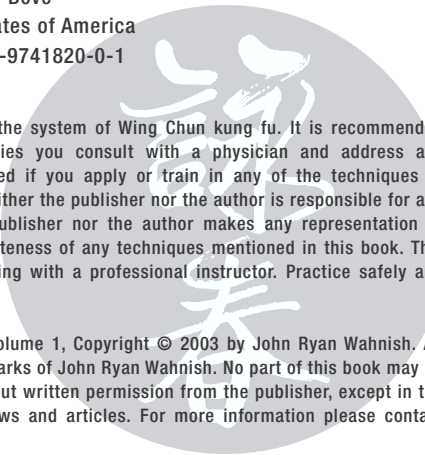
The Foundations of  
**Wing Chun  
Kung Fu**  
Volume 1

by  
**Sifu John Ryan Wahnish, M.S., L.Ac.**

Published by  
Energetics Press  
c/o John Ryan Wahnish  
636 Times Square Station  
New York, NY 10108  
The Foundations of Wing Chun Kung Fu, Volume 1  
Copyright © 2003 by John Ryan Wahnish  
Editor - James Collis  
Art Direction and Photography - Steven Bové  
Published and printed in the United States of America  
International Standard Book Number: 0-9741820-0-1

This book is designed to introduce you to the system of Wing Chun kung fu. It is recommended that before you begin your physical studies you consult with a physician and address any health-related concerns. You may be injured if you apply or train in any of the techniques of self-defense depicted in this volume, and neither the publisher nor the author is responsible for any such injury that may result. Neither the publisher nor the author makes any representation or warranty regarding the legality or appropriateness of any techniques mentioned in this book. This book is by no means a substitute for working with a professional instructor. Practice safely and responsibly.

The Foundations of Wing Chun Kung Fu, Volume 1, Copyright © 2003 by John Ryan Wahnish. All contents are copyright, property, and trademarks of John Ryan Wahnish. No part of this book may be reproduced in any manner whatsoever without written permission from the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in reviews and articles. For more information please contact Energetics Press.



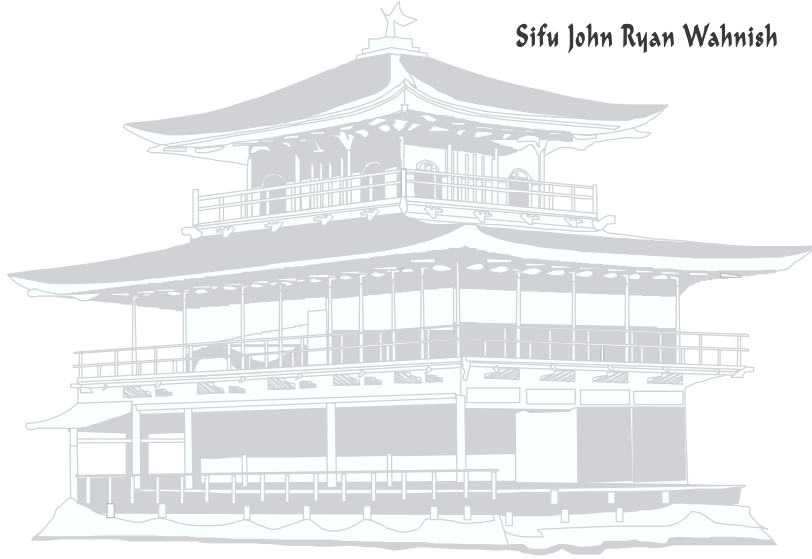
The Foundations of  
**Wing Chun**  
**Kung Fu**  
 Volume 1

**Table of Contents**

<i>Forward:</i>		Tut Sao	66
Philosophy by		Wu Sao	68
Grandmaster Philip Holder	6	Hands In Action	69
<i>Introduction:</i>		<b>5. Sil Lum Tao Form:</b>	73
Sifu John Ryan Wahnish	7	Opening Set	74
<i>Training Tips:</i>	9	Punch Set	77
<b>1. History of Wing Chun</b>	11	Tan Sao Set	81
History of Wing Chun	12	Gum Sao Set	91
Wing Chun Lineage	13	Pak Sao Set	98
What Is Wing Chun?	14	Low Bong Sao Set	103
<b>2. Theory:</b>	17	Bong Sao Set	112
<i>Concepts and Principles:</i>	18	Tut Sao Set	117
Center - and Central-Line	20	Closing Set	121
Radial Positioning Area	23	<b>6. Punching:</b>	127
The Six Gates	24	Getting Power in your Punch	128
The Three Rings of Protection	25	Punching with the Bottom Three	
Vision Placement	26	Knuckles	129
The Five Elements of Combat	27	The Wing Chun Punch	130
<b>3. Stances:</b>	33	Punch Pose	131
Front Stance	34	Wing Chun's Lead Arm	133
Neutral Stances	35	Striking Targets	134
Forward Stances	37	The Wing Chun One-Inch Punch	135
Stance Training	39	The Hook Angle Side Punch	136
Understanding the Stance and		Three Level Punching	137
Angle	42	Numeric Punching	139
Understanding the Stance and		<b>7. Kicking:</b>	145
Range	43	Front Kick	147
The T-Step	44	Side Kick	150
<b>4. Hand Positions:</b>	49	Round Kick	152
Bil Sao	50	<b>8. Wing Chun Exercises:</b>	157
Bong Sao	51	6 Pak Sao Exercises	158
Fook Sao	52	Capping Punch Exercise	171
Fut Sao	53	Bil Sao Exercise	173
Gum Sao	54	Bil Sao Exercise-Circular Attacks	176
Huen Sao	55	Bong Sao Exercise	179
Jut Sao	56	<b>9. Self Defense:</b>	183
Kan Sao	58	Front Choke Techniques	185
Lan Sao	59	The Head Lock	191
Lop Sao	61	Wrist Grab Techniques	194
Pak Sao	62	<b>Foundations Checklist:</b>	203
Quan Sao	63	<i>Closing Thoughts:</i>	
Tan Sao	64	Sifu John Ryan Wahnish	204
Tie Sao	65		

I would like to dedicate this  
book to my grandfathers, Ervin Wahnish  
and Milton Wasserman, with honor, love,  
and respect.

**Sifu John Ryan Wahnish**



I would sincerely like to express my gratitude to my Sifu, Grandmaster Philip Holder. I owe him many thanks for his wonderful knowledge and dedicated instruction. The art of Wing Chun is fortunate to have such an inspiring representative. He is a teacher's teacher, a true master, and my kung fu father.

I would like to thank Steven Bové, a special student of mine, for creating this book with me and showing so much love, support, and dedication for his kung fu and his kung fu family. My sincere gratitude to world renowned calligraphy master, Jin-Huai Wang for such a masterful expression of the Wing Chun characters used throughout this book. James Collis came on board as editor at the last minute and did an extraordinary job and I thank him for his efforts. Additional thanks to Jennifer Lee, a great Wing Chun practitioner and student, for her help and support. Thanks as well to Rick Hirtler, who was my photo partner in this book and a great student.

Lastly, my thanks to all my students at the Wing Chun Society of New York City for being such a wonderful group of practitioners.

Sifu John Ryan Wahnish



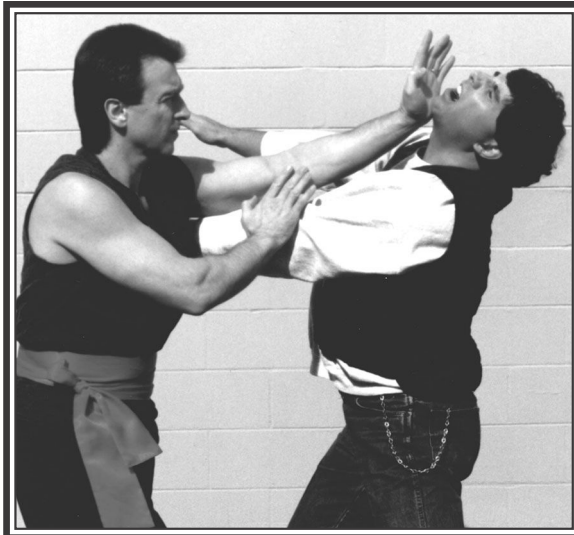
Forward:  
**Philosophy of Wing Chun**  
by  
**Grandmaster  
Philip Holder**

The philosophy underlying Wing Chun is to take control of your life and make the decisions that are right for you. Wing Chun is truly a combat martial art, but it is also much more. Practitioners of Wing Chun will hopefully spend only a small fraction of their lives fighting. It is important, therefore, to be able to use the same concepts and principles used in fighting to improve other, non-combat areas of your life. Each fighting principle can also be interpreted philosophically. I believe that the practice of Wing Chun and an understanding of its principles and philosophies should be a catalyst to putting each practitioner in the driver's seat of his or her life. The development of great fighting abilities should give each of us the ability to be kind, compassionate, and loving by overcoming the fears that often manifest themselves as anger and hate. The truly competent warrior is not boastful. The truly secure person is free from the need to impress others with his or her physical prowess and free from the need for approval from others. He or she can be understanding, accepting, and kind without the fear of being thought weak for his or her kindness.

The reasoning behind the philosophy is to help each of you tap into the inner power that we all have and to help you to take control of and responsibility for your own life. It is designed to

help you recognize how using positive energy and accomplishing goals of a positive nature are so much more powerful than negative thought and deed. Our worst enemy is often ourselves. Look inside yourself and overcome your demons of fear and insecurity and you will find a path to a happier life. No matter how many people you can beat in battle, you will find no lasting happiness in bringing harm to others. Competent fighting skills are important, but should be used only to protect yourself or those you love in times of danger. You must choose your battles wisely. Your fighting skills should be a catalyst to enlightenment. By helping you to gain strength of character and confidence, your skills should give you peace of mind, thereby eliminating insecurity and giving you the capacity to be at peace and in harmony with others.

**Grandmaster  
Philip Holder**



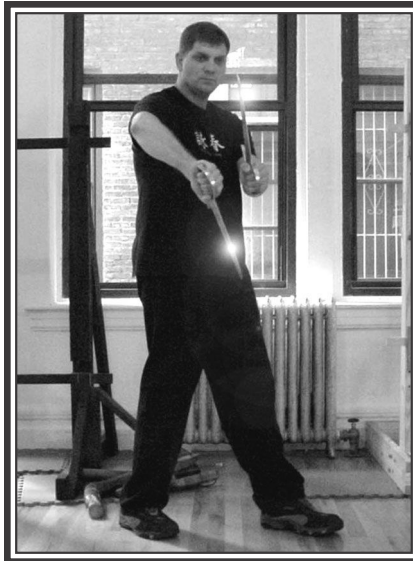
## Introduction: The Foundations of Wing Chun

Why another book on the martial arts? Well, this is not just another martial arts book. For some, it may be a stepping stone to a better path, one directed toward specific goals and an understanding of a solid foundation. Having a strong foundation is the same as planting a tree and nourishing the roots so they become strong. When the roots are strong, the tree can evolve, completing its natural destiny.

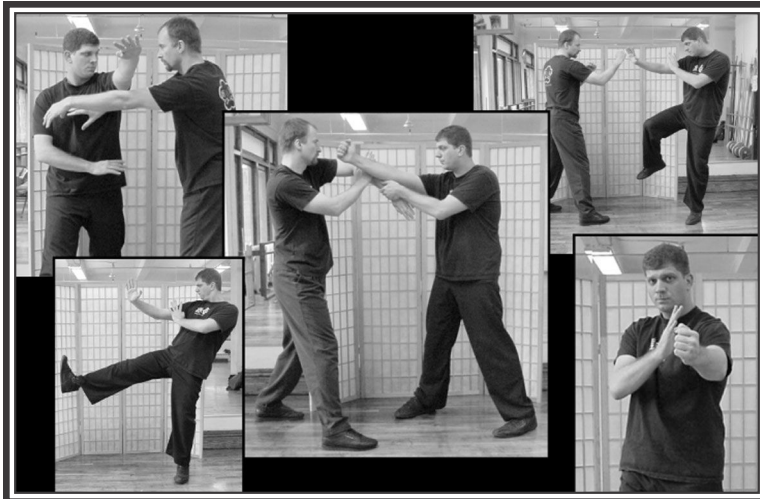
The characteristics of a true martial artist are those of a “Spiritual Warrior”: one that is honest, honorable, and wise. The Buddhists believed that the one who walks on the righteous path was never walking with the un-righteous. A martial art is a union of spiritual philosophy and the art of combat, as odd as that may seem. Wing Chun encompasses everything one could ever desire from a martial art: philosophy and great fighting skills, as well as inner strengthening. The properties of the philosophy are tools you can take right from your fighting and adapt into your everyday life. Wing Chun is more than a fighting art; it's a way of life.

I have a great love for this art, and teaching over the past decade has truly been a fulfilling experience that I wish to share. In New York City, I might touch a hundred or more students. However, with this book I can touch a much larger population (people who are on the same path, just in different places). Whether it is inspiration or education, I hope this book will be a tool to strengthen your foundation and help you reach your goals.

This book will help students, practitioners, and instructors truly grasp the essence of the foundations of Wing Chun kung fu. It is important for practitioners to really understand the art, not just follow along in class. This is my goal when teaching my students. I want them to understand this amazing art in its entirety. If you truly understand the foundations of what you do, then it's your kung fu and no one can take that away. I am in no way trying to replace instructors; books and training videos can be beneficial. However, they should be used as a supplement to one's private or group training with knowledgeable instructors. To this day I have not found any training tool that compared to studying with my Sifu. If you are serious about truly learning an art, find a teacher and some good training partners. You can learn from every martial artist, but remember the saying: “Jack of all trades, master of none.” It will be to your benefit to understand the foundations and become proficient in one art before diving into others. This is what I love about Wing Chun: it is a complete, realistic martial art, with internal and external benefits.



## 8 ☯ The Foundations of Wing Chun



Wing Chun is a truly beautiful combat martial art, which, like most martial arts, goes beyond fighting. There is a relationship between Wing Chun and an understanding of one's life purpose. If you study Wing Chun, there is no doubt that you will become a good fighter. However, you will soon realize that, while it is easy to hurt someone, helping yourself and others might be the true challenge. Wing Chun can help you develop the tools necessary to take control of your life and to make the correct decisions for yourself.

Learning an art can sometimes be similar to that of constructing a puzzle where you cannot see the picture on the front of the box. As you build the puzzle, the picture is still not completely clear (but you are learning more, piece by piece). With every addition to the puzzle, the answer becomes clearer, but it is not until the entire puzzle is complete that you are able to see the picture in its entirety. Every piece of the art of Wing Chun is crucial. When you put all the pieces together, then you will have a complete art. Therefore, to be confused in the beginning is normal; you will not

understand everything at first. However, with continued reading and practice, it will all become clear.

While reading this book, please keep an open mind. It is important for all martial artists to respect other martial arts. There are several different variations of Wing Chun being taught today, and it is important that all Wing Chun practitioners respect each other, no matter what the lineage. We are all kung fu brothers and sisters traveling on a better path. We can set a great example for this art that gives us so much by growing together rather than bringing each other down. Look at each other as being different, not better or worse. Let the concepts and principles of the system be the judge of what is right or wrong. If it follows Wing Chun principles, such as economy of movement, simplicity, etc., then it is Wing Chun. If not, then it is not Wing Chun. Trust yourself and your art.

I hope you enjoy this book and the others to follow. Good luck on your journey.

**Sifu John Ryan Wahnish**

## Training Tips

◆ *Wing Chun Is Simple.* If it seems difficult, stop and relax. I am constantly reminding students not to overdo it. I will demonstrate a simple side step and then have the whole class follow me several times. It's so easy that everyone does it without a problem. However, when we separate and pair-up with partners for an exercise, I see many beginning students having difficulty by doing too much footwork. I then show them the footwork again and they laugh at how easy it is and how much they are over analyzing something so simple. This has a lot to do with the next tip.

◆ *Trust Your Kung Fu.* The more you understand what you are doing and practice, the more you will develop a trust in yourself and your kung fu. I first teach my students how to do this with the 5th pak sao (Chapter 8). I train with a student in front of me and show him or her that I am out of their reach by extending my fist outward (safety range); now they know they do not have to worry about their physical safety. I will throw a few punches, slowly increasing speed, power, and my intention as they pak sao my punches without excessive movement or panic. Once I see that they have the pak sao down, I will continue to punch, closing the range between us. I also will substitute a few pushes for punches, just to mix it up. After this is done, the student sees how well their pak sao works and feels more comfortable using it the way it should be used. They have developed not only confidence, but also trust in the system of Wing Chun - a system which truly works.

◆ *Empty Your Cup.* I know it's an old saying, but it is true. You must empty your cup to receive knowledge. This does not mean to forget what you know - just be open to understanding that there is often more than one way to do something. I have found in my years of teaching that it is extremely difficult for a new student with prior martial arts experience to let go of their former training and embrace another discipline. With an empty cup, you can listen, learn, and practice - then make the decision that works for you.

◆ *Find A Practitioner.* The best way to learn is to find an instructor and practice. Visit several instructors and train with who you think will benefit you the most. In addition, when viewing a school, observe the students. The students are the ones you will be training with, so find training partners that you can trust and that are working on improving your kung fu as well as theirs.

◆ *Set your goals.* Set goals for what you wish to accomplish by studying martial arts and working out daily. Write down these goals and put a picture up that relates to them. Look at that image daily as a reminder of what you are trying to achieve. I give my students a handbook when they join and encourage them to keep notes and ask questions. Don't deviate from your goals unless they truly change.



*On the Internet:*  
[www.wing-chun.net](http://www.wing-chun.net)  
[www.wingchunonline.com](http://www.wingchunonline.com)  
[www.energeticscenter.com](http://www.energeticscenter.com)  
[www.TCMcentral.com](http://www.TCMcentral.com)

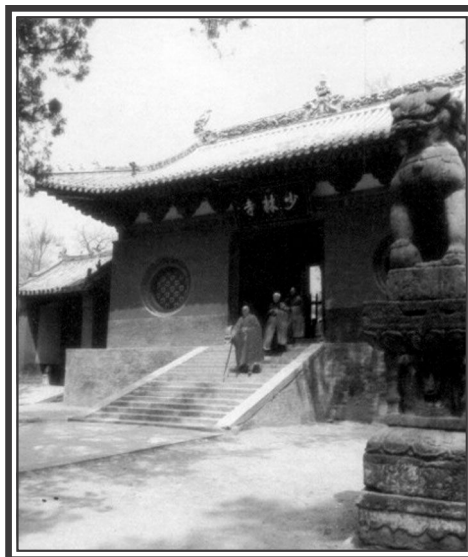


# 1. History of Wing Chun

The history of Wing Chun can be traced back to the Ching dynasty, over 275 years ago. The Manchus, who made up about 10% of the population, ruled the Hans and created many restrictions to keep them dependent on the small ruling class. Through the years, however, the Manchus gradually began to accept the Han culture and to respect the Sil Lum (Shaolin) Temple as a place of worship and sanctuary. Even so, to repress the Hans, the Manchus banned all weapons and martial arts training. Instead, the Hans began organizing secret rebel groups within the Sil Lum Temple.

Because the classical animal styles of kung fu took 15 to 20 years to master, it was necessary to develop a new style that would enable students to become proficient fighters in a much shorter time span. As the Manchu soldiers were often trained in classical kung fu styles, it was important that this new style be designed to be effective in neutralizing the existing techniques. Five kung fu masters pooled the knowledge of their own respective styles in order to come up with a new, more economical style, utilizing only the most effective methods of combat from each. What these five kung fu masters developed would create an efficient martial artist in only 3 to 5 years.

Before they could teach anyone the new style, a traitor within the temple opened the gates for the Manchu soldiers and the temple was burned to the ground. Only one master, a Sil Lum nun named Ng Mui, escaped. She later passed her knowledge on to a young orphan girl, who she named Yim Wing Chun (Beautiful Springtime) and who shared this knowledge with her husband, Leung Bok Cho. Through the years, the style became known as Wing Chun kung fu.



## 2. Wing Chun Lineage

It is very important for all kung fu practitioners to understand and respect each other's lineage, although it is more important to judge a practitioner or instructor on the quality of his or her art. I could map out charts showing you my lineage with Bruce Lee, Yip Man, Leung Bik, and so on, but that is not my goal with this book. What is important to understand of our past lineage and history is why this art was created.

Wing Chun was created by five masters as a combat martial art for defense against Manchu warriors. These masters pooled the entire common concepts and principles of each other's formidable systems to come up with one ultimately effective system. This system had to be learned in a short period of time and it had to be a system that could defeat all other existing styles, as the Manchu warriors were trained martial artists. The system could not rely on strength while the Hans were being repressed. These are the key elements that each practitioner extracts from the history. The major focus should be on the concepts and principles which are the foundations of your training. From lineage to lineage, Wing Chun's key concepts and principles are the same.



## 3. What is Wing Chun?

Wing Chun is a scientific yet theoretically based martial arts form. The specialty of a Wing Chun practitioner is close range combat. Wing Chun utilizes well-coordinated angular deflections with simultaneous attacks. A Wing Chun practitioner is agile yet powerful, delivering quick, close range punching and kicking skills rather than locks and grabs. Wing Chun is based on the concepts and principles of simplicity, economy of movement, and economy of energy.

### *Wing Chun Training Overview*

#### **FORMS**

**Sil Lum Tao** - Teaches how to form a good base, the fundamental hand positions, and how to move one's energy away from one's body through the center-line. This is the dictionary of our system.

**Advanced Sil Lum Tao** - Teaches how to form a good base, the fundamental hand positions, and how to move one's energy away from one's body through the center-line. In addition, this form teaches the start of footwork/hand coordination (unification of movement).

**Chum Que** - Teaches proper assessment of angles (hands and feet) and angle structure to allow safe movement while bridging the gap. It also coordinates multiple movements from Sil Lum Tao in combination.

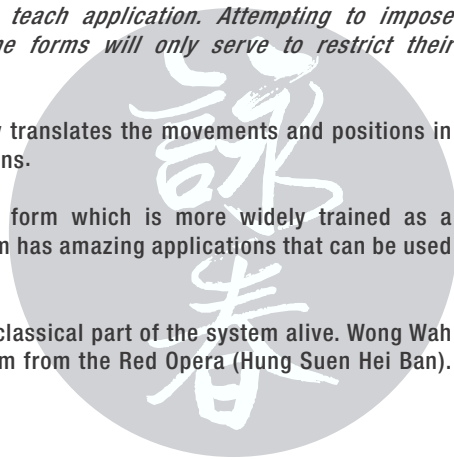
**Bil Gee** - Teaches the wrist rotation movement for finger thrusting, the elbow rotation for elbow strikes, recapturing the center-line, and additional footwork and coordinates additional hand movement.

*NOTE: In Wing Chun, forms do not teach application. Attempting to impose application on the movements in the forms will only serve to restrict their usefulness in battle.*

**Wooden Dummy** - The Wooden Dummy translates the movements and positions in the forms into textbook/root applications.

**Bart Jarm Dao** - This is a beautiful form which is more widely trained as a classical piece of this system. This form has amazing applications that can be used in knife fighting techniques.

**Dragon Pole** - Used today to keep the classical part of the system alive. Wong Wah Bo added the Dragon Pole to the system from the Red Opera (Hung Suen Hei Ban). Used as a long-range weapon.



*Other Training Modalities*

**Chi Sao** - Not a form of sparring and should never be viewed as such. Utilizing chi sao as sparring totally defeats its purpose. Chi sao is used to develop contact reflexes and the ability to interpret movement through touch.

**Self - Defense Sets** - For the purpose of simulating possible street encounters and should simulate as closely as possible real-life threatening situations.

**Battle Sets** - Pre-arranged applications against various attacks.

**Flow Drills** - Random defense against various attacks. This is a great time for practitioners to experiment with what they have learned.

**Micro Study Sparring** - Light sparring (not prearranged) where one can practice new applications in a less threatening atmosphere.

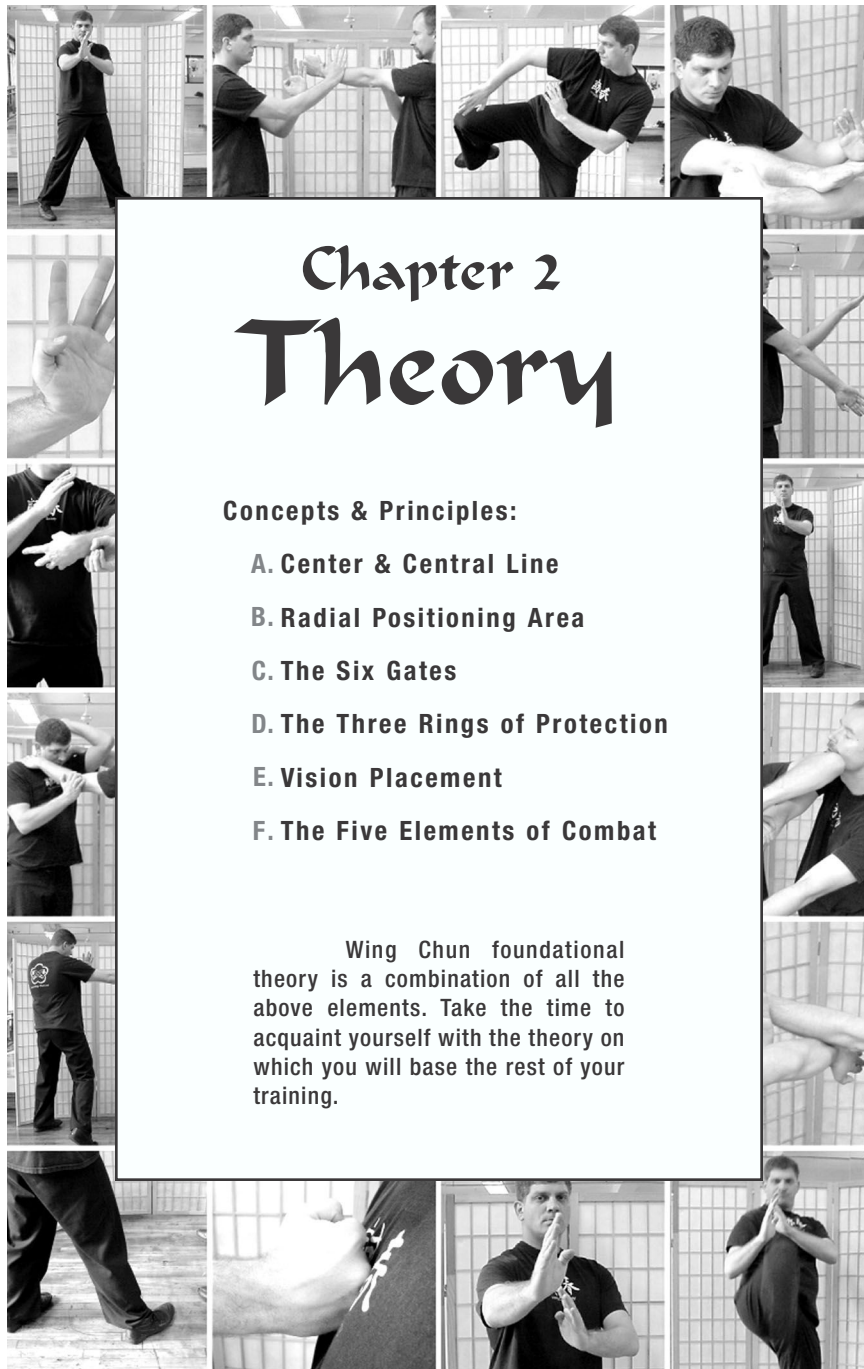
**Full Contact Sparring** - Full contact, virtually anything goes sparring. Protective gear should be worn for sparring. This helps the student learn to penetrate with powerful hits and to perform well under stress. Remember that Wing Chun was designed to enable the user to overcome a larger, stronger opponent. For this reason, mobility and the concept of never fighting force with force are very important.

Many of the forms and modalities mentioned are not depicted in this book but will be addressed in future volumes in detail.





*On the Internet:*  
[www.wing-chun.net](http://www.wing-chun.net)  
[www.wingchunonline.com](http://www.wingchunonline.com)  
[www.energeticscenter.com](http://www.energeticscenter.com)  
[www.TCMcentral.com](http://www.TCMcentral.com)



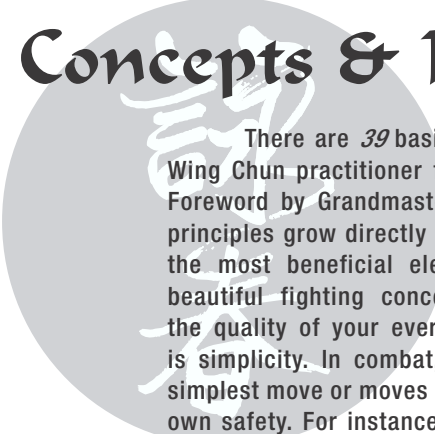
## Chapter 2 Theory

### Concepts & Principles:

- A. Center & Central Line
- B. Radial Positioning Area
- C. The Six Gates
- D. The Three Rings of Protection
- E. Vision Placement
- F. The Five Elements of Combat

Wing Chun foundational theory is a combination of all the above elements. Take the time to acquaint yourself with the theory on which you will base the rest of your training.

## Concepts & Principles



There are 39 basic concepts and principles that every Wing Chun practitioner follows (pg. 19). As discussed in the Foreword by Grandmaster Holder, all of these concepts and principles grow directly out of a fighting context. Once again, the most beneficial element of this art is to take these beautiful fighting concepts and to use them to enhance the quality of your everyday life. One fundamental example is simplicity. In combat, a Wing Chun practitioner does the simplest move or moves possible within the realm of his or her own safety. For instance, if someone threw a straight punch, we would not counter with a spinning back fist. A spinning back fist uses too much time and movement and also leaves your back exposed. In general, the more one tries to accomplish, the less one actually achieves. Instead, we use other concepts from our system, such as economy of movement and energy. By performing a movement that integrates this theory of simplicity with other principles, the practitioner can be victorious in each encounter. You can take this principle of simplicity into all realms of your life. Simplicity is often the key to success.

The concept of not fighting force with force is another great example of how you can apply a combat principle to the larger arena of your life. If you are ever attacked, you should assume that your attackers are bigger, stronger, and have accomplices and weapons; otherwise, they would not be attacking you. Therefore, you need to rely on techniques that do not use strength, but rather deflection and redirection—two concepts that rely on relaxation. This idea is applicable to most arguments you see - where one person starts yelling, the other follows, and the argument escalates. If you relax when someone is arguing with you, he or she might do the same or begin to see that escalation is unnecessary.

Throughout this book I will regularly discuss these concepts and principles and where they apply in your fighting and self defense. It is up to you to apply them in your everyday life. Wing Chun can enhance every aspect of your life, not just your fighting skill.

## Concepts & Principles of Wing Chun

1. Radial Positioning Area
2. Center- and Central-Lines
3. Six Gates or Zones
4. Angle the Stance
5. Three Lines of Defense (A.K.A. The Three Rings of Protection)
6. Simultaneous Deflection and Counter Strike
7. Face the Point of Contact
8. Whipping Power and Bone Joint Energy
9. Elbows In, Knees In
10. Contact Reflex
11. Economy of Energy
12. Economy of Movement
13. Simplicity (Less is more. Bring everything to its simplest state but no further.  
Make the smallest movement within the realm of safety.)
14. Confidentiality
15. Occupation of Territory
16. Energy Transfer (Offensive/Defensive)
17. Emotional Content/Personal Detachment
18. Join with the Energy
19. Line of Visual Perception and Peripheral Vision
20. Evasive Maneuvering
21. Angles of Deflection
22. Unification of Intent (Coordinated Body Mechanics)
23. Take the Inside (Circular: Get Inside the Loop; Linear: Shadow the Elbow)
24. Mobility
25. Levels of Threat—High, Mid, and Low level
26. Levels of Response—Management/Survival
27. Recognize the Threat
28. Threat De-Escalation and Elimination
29. Disruption of the Base
30. Tightening the Rope
31. The Tripod's Missing Leg
32. Lead Hand/Lead Foot Preferred Attack
33. When Kicking, the Heels Face Each Other
34. Take the Bridge
35. Seek the Tunnel
36. The Five Elements/Stages of Combat
37. Always Relax Your Mind; Your Body Will Follow.
38. Yin and Yang - Never Fight Force with Force (When the opponent tenses, relax/soften. When there is no obstruction, spring out. When the opponent retreats, go in.)
39. **DO IT!** (You cannot learn to fight unless you fight.)



詠春

## A. Center- & Central-Lines

You may have heard that Wing Chun practitioners work with a center-line principle. In fact, Wing Chun implements a theory not only of center-lines, but also central-lines. These lines will play a crucial role in everything you do within your training. The center-line is the line directly down the center of one's body. The central-line is the line from the center of your body to your opponent. With linear attacks, your center-line is away from your opponent while your central-line faces him or her. When dealing with circular attacks, the center-and central-lines merge (pg. 22).

From a defensive perspective, the center-line must be guarded at all times. All of the vital organs are located near the center of the body; therefore, one should not expose one's center to an opponent. From an offensive perspective, one can generate more power from the center of one's body. When you punch out from your center, you can get your whole body and hips into the punch. If you just throw an arm punch from the side of your body without using your center, you are missing a whole realm of power. Understand these lines, angles, and principles and you will understand the root of Wing Chun kung fu.

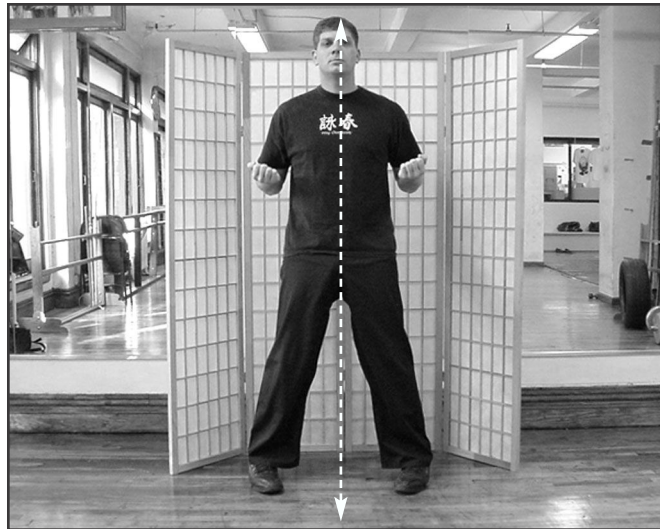


Fig. 1A - The center-line is the line running directly down the center of your body. All of our vital organs align with or near this line. In battle, you must protect this line. The center-line projects outward.