



By Vivian Wong Bourren & Hector Bourren





**T**HE kung fu style of Wing Tzun has forms within its curriculum. A form is a choreographed set of specific techniques done in a sequence. These forms have been created for very specific and important reasons by the founders of the system. The first form of Wing Tzun is called *Sil Lin Tao* (little first practice 小念頭). This form has hidden secrets within its sequence of movements, and without a qualified instructor, the techniques and concepts cannot be discovered by mere observation. The form itself consists of eight sections, but also has an opening and closing routine. Some sections are done soft, others hard, and some a combination of both. The sections also have different speeds. The first form consists of approximately 160 techniques. Dissecting the form further, there is a particular section that plays a vital role within all of the martial arts.

The forms within a style of martial arts are important for a number of reasons. At the simplest level, they serve as a warm-up routine to loosen and relax the body so as to avoid injury during intense training or sparring. It is a way to remember the techniques we have learned, so they become second nature. It is also a way to develop stamina, strength, accuracy, flexibility, and hand-and-eye coordination. Obviously, our ancestors chose certain techniques and particular patterns for a reason. The co-founder of our style, Ng Mui, spent a lifetime collecting knowledge on the Shaolin Temple's history as well as studying the martial arts and developing the Wing Tzun forms. With all of

her knowledge and experience, she combined certain techniques in the form because they work best in a fighting situation.

Wing Tzun's first form teaches numerous lessons and has many deep hidden concepts. This form is done in the stationary horse stance throughout. The focus is on the wrist, which is the first powerhouse. The concept of fighting from the centerline of our bodies is practiced. Since it is done in the horse stance, without footwork, proper balance and stability are established. Some secrets within the form reveal how to develop short-range power (inch hit) and anti-Chin Na techniques (which counter grabs and locks). One section is done extremely slowly and softly. When people observe the form, this slow section puzzles them. This article will shed light on this section, arguably the most important part of the first form.

## Background

The section, called "Three Prayers to Buddha," has its roots in the Wing Tzun co-founder's background as a Buddhist nun training in the Shaolin Temple. Within this section of the form, *wu sao* (protection hand) is done three times. This technique resembles someone in prayer. While the founder intended this section to correlate with Buddhism and meditation, no particular religious background is necessary to accomplish the intended goal; and in modern times we focus only on the technique and its concept and do not affiliate it with Buddhism itself. As mentioned, it is done extremely slowly and softly. Some have related the section to the popular internal style *taiji* (太極) and have gone as far as saying Wing Tzun can be considered an extension of *taiji* because of their similarities in imitating the snake and crane. Other similarities include the concept of developing energy-flow fight-

ing called "push hands" in *taiji* and *chi sao* (黏手) in Wing Tzun. Many people wonder why a martial artist would practice fighting or perform a form slowly if a real fight is done at a very high rate of speed. They are further puzzled as to why a person would train to fight - not using power and tension but rather softness and relaxation. The main focal point of this section of the first form is to emphasize deep, slow breathing.

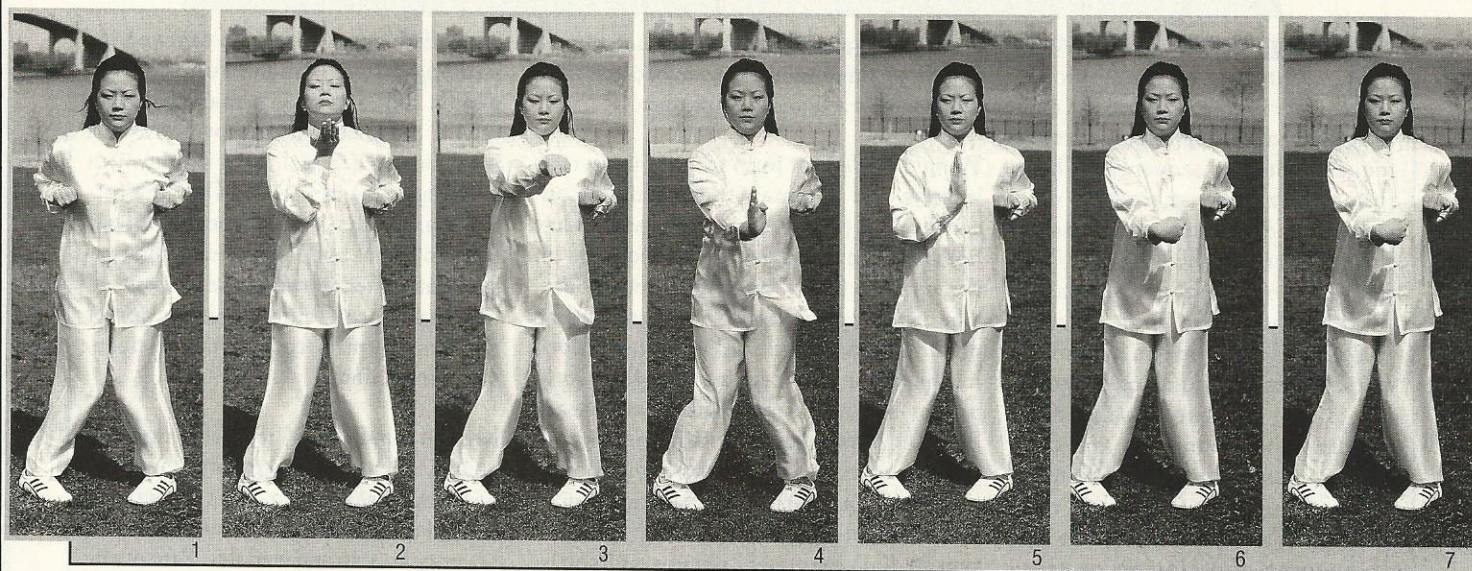
Keep in mind that Wing Tzun was created by a female who combined internal with external training. The ignorant or cynical may believe that a woman could never beat a stronger male. Part of the secret of the ability of a smaller person to defeat a larger opponent is found within the "Three Prayers to Buddha" section of the first form. I do not believe it would make sense for a female to rely on her size or external power alone, as these are not her strengths. Therefore, the concepts rather than the techniques will be emphasized, allowing all martial artists to relate to this information no matter what particular style or technique is practiced.

## Internal Aspect

Why exactly is the form done so slowly, softly and relaxed? As mentioned before, Wing Tzun is both an external and internal style. Doing techniques slowly and softly develops the internal aspect of Wing Tzun. Internal is being able to control your mind and body at a higher level than an average person. Doctors believe that the average human being has only tapped into a small percentage of their mental ability, roughly 10%. Every year we hear of amazing discoveries of how our minds can heal. It is possible to have

**THIS FORM HAS HIDDEN SECRETS WITHIN ITS SEQUENCE OF MOVEMENTS, AND WITHOUT A QUALIFIED INSTRUCTOR, THE TECHNIQUES AND CONCEPTS CANNOT BE DISCOVERED BY MERE OBSERVATION.**





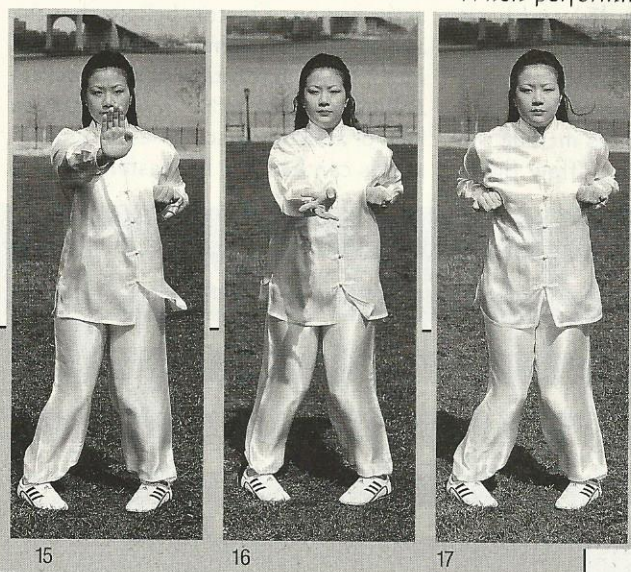
your mind move or control your body's extremely powerful, untapped energy. We have all heard of, witnessed, or even experienced a supernatural strength in an emergency situation. The common example is the mother who lifts an automobile that is crushing her child. With today's scientific advances, part of the mystery is explained. We have discovered that a tendon called the Golgi tendon, which is controlled by the nervous system - ultimately, the mind - causes your muscle to relax or shut down when it feels too much pressure will be used, protecting our bodies from major injury. It is believed that phenomena like the above are possible because our minds do not allow our Golgi tendon to shut the muscle down, allowing the flow of energy. Perhaps in the near future, scientists and doctors can discover more about how our bodies accomplish such

incredible feats without injury. Internal does not rely on your actual external muscle strength but rather the transfer of energy and power. I have met people in my life that have achieved great feats with their bodies, such as professional athletes and Special Forces military soldiers. One theme that was always common when I asked them how they achieved a higher level than the average person was their state of mind, being in the "zone." Were these people born with special mind power? I do not believe so. As the saying goes, nothing comes easy in life. These people did a lot of kung fu. By this I mean, they have spent a lot of time and dedication training their minds and bodies. We start little or small practice and then build from there, which is the meaning of *Sil Lin Tao*.

when he is stiff. Executing a technique slowly also allows your mind the time to think and concentrate on your intentions. What am I actually doing to my opponent with this particular technique? Picture in your mind the final outcome before it occurs. Let's incorporate proper breathing, which is so important in martial arts. Proper breathing is not only important in martial arts, it is important for your health in general.

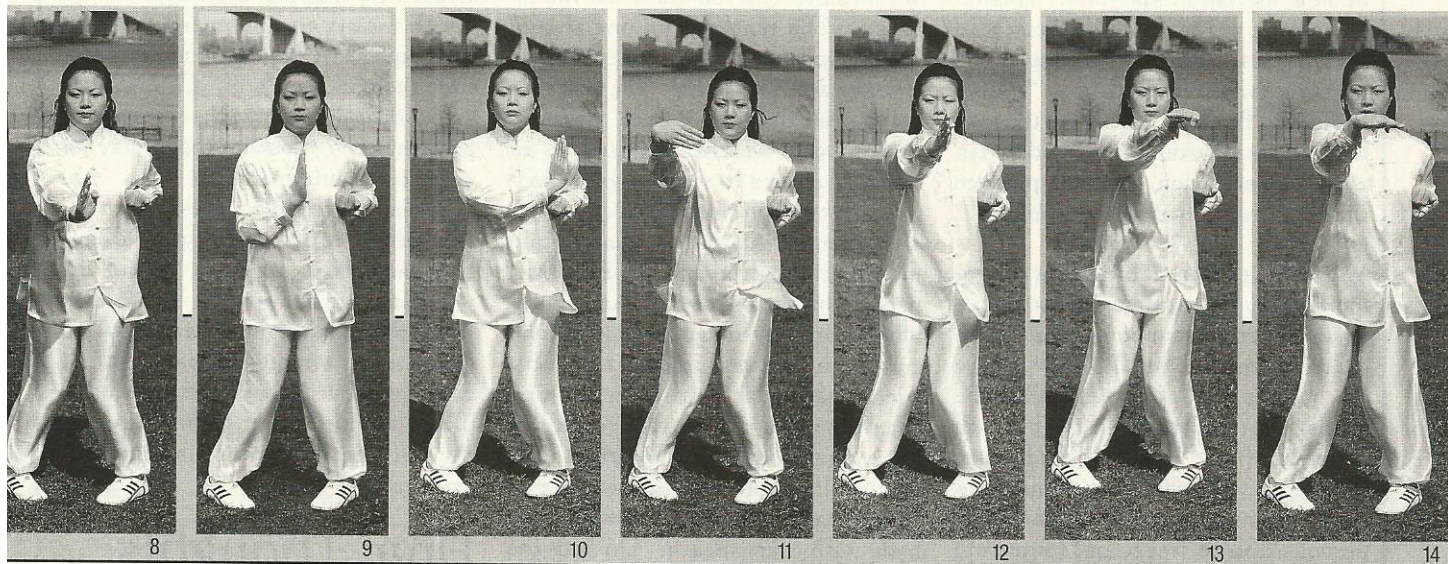
## Important of Breathing Qi

Proper breathing has helped people with problems such as anxiety/panic attacks, stress and other nervous system disorders, to name a few. The source of energy in our bodies is oxygen. It is transferred to our bodies through the blood stream. Without oxygen or air flowing to our muscles, they can not achieve their potential. Deep, controlled breathing creates a calmness that is necessary in a fighting encounter. How many times were you told in school to take a deep breath in order to calm down so you could concentrate and function better? Being soft and relaxed with calm, deep breathing allows the mind to operate at a more efficient level. The mind can envision and process things slowly yet produce quick positive results. As a child, I've always correlated a statement that the famous hockey player, Wayne Gretzky, said on this particular concept to martial arts. He stated that while playing a hockey game, he observed everything as if it were played



When performing a form slowly, one can relax one's muscles and nervous system. The importance of this lies in being able to conserve your energy, and let it flow freely using your entire body. Stiffness restricts speed and stability of power. Stiffness also causes you to telegraph your intention to your opponent. A trained martial artist can easily control and redirect an opponent's energy





#### **"Hidden Secrets Within Wing Tzun's First Form"**

- 1: Vivian in the horse stance with fists chambered (*Yee Jee Kim Yeung Ma*)
- 2: *Tan Sao* Technique
- 3: Following Through with *Tan Sao*
- 4: Circles wrist and applies *Wu Sao*
- 5: Brings hand back from the *Wu Sao* position
- 6: Changes to *Fook Sao*
- 7: Extends *Fook Sao* out
- 8: Circles wrist again and applies *Wu Sao*
- 9: Brings hand back from *Wu Sao* position and repeats steps 4-9 once

**BEING SOFT AND  
RELAXED WITH  
CALM, DEEP  
BREATHING  
ALLOWS THE MIND  
TO OPERATE AT A  
MORE EFFICIENT  
LEVEL.**

10: Blocks with a *Chang Sao*

11: Circles to outside

12: Strikes the collar bone

13: Inside Snake block

14: Outside Snake block

15: Anti *Chin-na* technique

16: *Lop Sao*

Vivian returns to the fists chambered (the entire sequence, steps 2-17, is performed by left hand as well)



in slow motion in his mind. This really caught my attention. I thought to myself, this is what my Sifu was trying to teach me about the "Three Prayers to Buddha" section of the first form. If we slow our thoughts down in a fighting situation, we could produce the best results with our technique.

You would think that breathing is common sense, but common sense sometimes is not so common. I have seen practitioners of Wing Tzun who have reached the level of knowing all of the forms, yet they still hold their breath when they fight. Within seconds, they become out of breath and cannot continue fighting. This causes them to be nervous and to freeze up, forgetting what techniques to use. I have also seen so-called high-level students taking very short or irregular breaths. Often, this leads them to be out of breath and exhausted after performing the first form. This, combined with tension and nervousness, can finish a fighter within seconds. That approach is wasted energy. While performing the "Three Prayers to Buddha" section, you practice good breathing habits.

## How to Breathe

Take in a deep, slow breath through your nose and let your diaphragm expand with air. Fully exhale through your mouth, letting your diaphragm

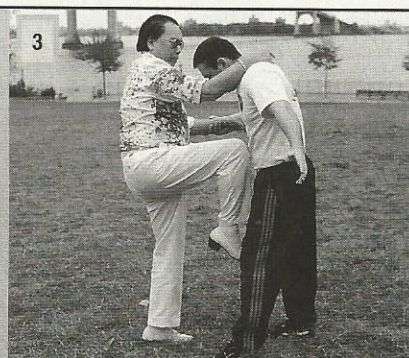
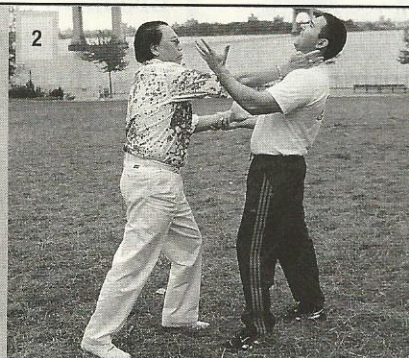
shrink slowly as you did when you inhaled. The reason why one should breathe in through the nose is because the nose acts like a filter. The nose also helps even the breath pace. Furthermore, in cold weather, it heats the air before it arrives to your lungs. Obviously, when you need more air due to an extreme situation, we can obtain more air through our mouth. For a brief period, this is not too bad; but eventually, breathing through the mouth will create dryness and irregular breaths. Since the mouth is a larger opening than the nose, it is ideal for exhaling, allowing the stale air and carbon dioxide to exit our bodies. Concentrate on your breathing, and rejuvenate your body with every breath. Think of the air or energy flowing through your whole body. Remember to place your tongue on the top of your mouth while you are breathing in. That will help your energy flow properly and not allow you to bite your tongue during a fighting encounter. Time your exhaled breath with a strike. Remember to breathe properly when you are in a tense situation, which is usually when we forget. Practicing the form will build good habits of staying calm. When you are out of breath during a tough sparring session, try to calm your breathing down by doing the breathing exercise just mentioned, and keep your spine straight. Don't bend over at the waist and hold your knees, all that does is restrict the amount of air flow into your lungs.

Breathing helps the transfer of qi, which means air and energy. Many techniques in Wing Tzun train to disrupt the opponent's qi. One way to achieve this is to strike the mouth with an open hand, blocking the airway for even just a brief period of time. Another is by striking a pressure point, disrupting the flow of energy. We have all heard the expression, "I had the wind knocked out of me." This occurs when the diaphragm (solar plexus) is struck and is temporarily paralyzed. It does not allow the opponent to breathe. These are intelligent techniques that do not require great amounts of strength.

## Final Thoughts

All martial artists can benefit from the internal aspect. Sometimes we look into things too much. Concepts such as internal power or qi are either seen as myths from the movies or too difficult to obtain. It may be simpler than you think. One way to master these skills is to practice the first form of Wing Tzun. ☺

Vivian Bourren and Hector Bourren are both disciples of the Sum Nung/Yuen Kei San Linage. Vivian is a disciple of Sifu Leung Dai Chiu and Sifu Dr. Teddy Wong and Hector is a disciple of Sifu Dr. Teddy Wong. For more information log onto [www.omniwingtzun.com](http://www.omniwingtzun.com).



- 1: Hector grabs Sifu Dr. Teddy Wong's right arm and attempts to steal a chain from his neck
- 2: Sifu Dr. Wong escapes Hector's grip with a left hand *Tan Sao* while simultaneously blocking Hector's left hand with his right hand, following through with a collar bone strike
- 3: Sifu Dr. Wong grabs and pulls the back of Hector's neck while simultaneously striking with his right knee
- 4-5: Sifu Dr. Wong finishes Hector off by using an inner circle throw

