

Wing Chun Kuen: A Revised Historical Perspective (Part 2: Red Junks, pirates and secret societies)

Abstract

In the previous article, the Wing Chun 'myth' was dismissed due to the lack of supporting evidence for the existence of the Southern Shaolin Monastery. It would appear that the Southern Shaolin Monastery and the subsequent account of its destruction was based on the verified Northern Shaolin Monastery.

In this article, an alternate historical account for the development of Wing Chun is provided, where fiction becomes fact. This is achieved through analysing how and why Wing Chun developed within a travelling Cantonese Opera Company during a turbulent time of China's history, where piracy and political violence were prevalent.

Introduction

From the first article, the historical accuracy of the Wing Chun legend was discussed with the 'traditional' historical accounts of Ng Mui and the Southern Shaolin Monastery being questioned due to the lack of any verifiable evidence. The core argument centred on establishing whether the stronger historical account of the Tiandihui, who share the same history in part, with Wing Chun, could accurately verify the existence of the Southern Shaolin Monastery.

Although the Tiandihui 'foundation account' which is shared with candidates at initiation ceremonies make reference to the Southern Shaolin Monastery, historical records of the Tiandihui do not provide the location for the Monastery. It is most likely that the Guanyinting Pavillion, a small roadside temple was where the Tiandihui first met, although given the size, it is very unlikely to have been a working Monastery. Additionally, given the parallels between the Tiandihui's 'foundation account' and the

verified historical sources from the Northern Shaolin Monastery, it would appear that the 'foundation account' was a direct copy from the Northern Shaolin Monastery.

At some point however, historical records do become more robust: while the authenticity of Ng Mui and indeed, Yim Wing Chun lack any evidence, historical figures from Wing Chun's more recent history can be verified. While for some, dismissing the existence of Ng Mui or the Southern Shaolin Monastery may be uncomfortable, Wing Chun's history is far more interesting as discussed below.

Wing Chun Lineage

As discussed in the introduction, there is a point where the Wing Chun 'myth' becomes verifiable, where there is a fusion between the account of the destruction of the Southern Shaolin Monastery (and the subsequent escape of Ng Mui, who in turn taught Yim Wing Chun), and the verifiable existence of specific Wing Chun practitioners. The time and place where Wing Chun can be reliably traced is during the mid-nineteenth century, specifically to the Red Junk Opera Company (or Hung Seun Hei Ban) (Chu et al, 1998; Ritchie, 1997). The historical evidence of the Red Junk Opera Company has far richer detail than that of the Tiandihui or that of Wing Chun accounts.

The Red Junk Opera Company performed Cantonese Opera, a form of theatre based on the myths and legends of the 'Three Kingdoms' (the Tan, Sung and Ming dynasties) (Raban, 1992). The Red Junk Opera Company travelled between villages with their performances being integral to special festivals (Carstens, 1993; Ram, 1994). Within such performances, a martial arts theme was often prevalent, where the opera integrated stylised combat within a mixture of song, dance, drama, and acrobatics (Carstens, 1993; Raban, 1992). According to Arlington (1930/1966: 3), to the untrained gaze of the foreigner,

One goes away under the impression that it never fell to his lot before to have been in such a pandemonium of unearthly sounds and grotesque sights, and he probably inwardly registers a vow that no earthly power shall ever induce him to suffer such an infliction again. He imagines himself in a madhouse

Although Cantonese Opera can be dated back to the Han dynasty (206 BCE to 220 CE) (Foshan Museum, 2006), it became widely established during the Jiajiang reign of the Ming Dynasty (1522-1566) (Hong Kong Heritage Museum, 2005). During this time, the earliest organisation for Cantonese Opera was established in Foshan, the Qionghua Guildhall (Photos1 and 2): indeed Foshan is referred to as the 'cradle' of Cantonese Opera (Foshan Museum). At its time, Foshan was a commercial centre, with the nineteenth English traveller W.C. Milne referring to Foshan as 'the Birmingham of China' (Mackerras, 1975: 148).

Photo 1: A replica of the Foshan Guildhall at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (Author, 2006).



Photo 2: A replica of the Foshan Guildhall at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (Author, 2006).



The importance of Foshan must not be underestimated in the development of Wing Chun: it is a place where Yip Man's family originated, also where the Red Junk Opera Company were based, additionally given the trade and commerce, also given its location to the Pearl River Delta in the Guangdong Province, the Red Junk Opera Company travelled the waterways between settlements on Chinese, flat-bottomed Junks (Ritchie, 1997).

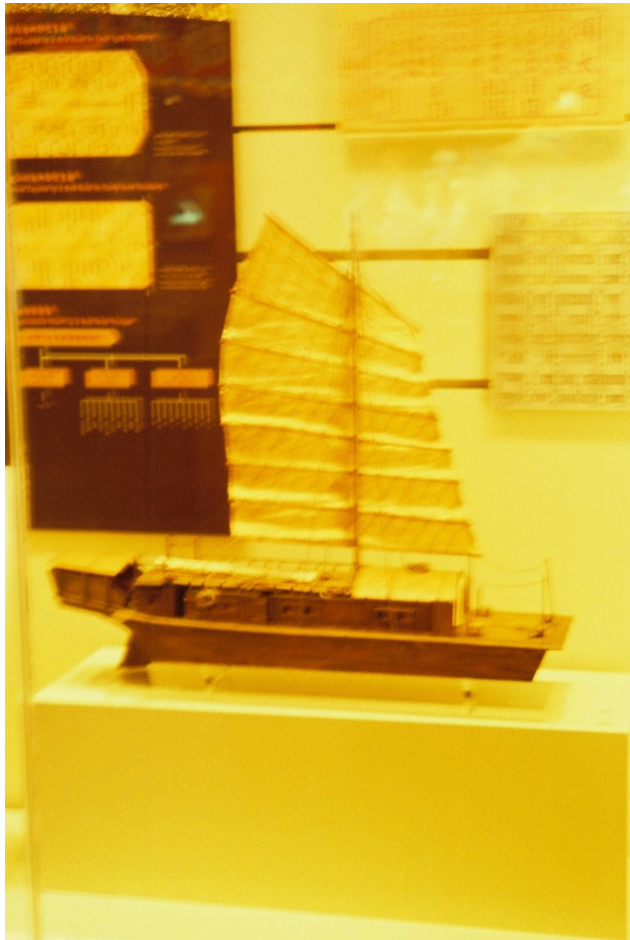
Such mobile opera companies were termed 'pen-ti pan' performing drama for the benefit of ordinary people (Mackerras, 1983). The pen-ti pan lived throughout the year on large junks, accepting invitations from villages and staying at each place for only a few days before departing (Mackerras, 1975, 1983; Mackerras and Wichmann, 1983). Such travelling opera companies are known to have travelled by boat since the seventeenth century, although the Red Junks have only been recorded since the mid-nineteenth century (Ward, 1989). The Red Junks travelled in pairs, one boat referred to as the 'Heaven Boat' and the other, the 'Earth Boat'. It is at this point that the parallels between Heaven and Earth Boats and the 'Heaven and Earth Society' or the Tiandihui, can be linked, albeit such a link may be mere conjecture.

Unlike the more familiar Chinese Junks (for example the Red Junk that symbolises Hong Kong, Photo 3), the Red Junks from the opera company were a different boat altogether (Photo 4).

Photo 3: Red Junk in Hong Kong (Author, 2006)



Photo 4: Replica model of a Cantonese Opera Junk at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (Author, 2006).



Chinese feet wide (or 26.67 metres long and 3.33 metres wide according to Chinese measurement, or 29.72 metres long and 3.71 metres wide according to Hong Kong measurement) (Hong Kong Legal Information Institute, 2010). If the photos of the Cantonese Opera Junk in Photo 4 is compared to the previous Red Junk in Photo 3, also a 'typical' junk (Photos 5-7 below), the dimensions and structure are significantly different.

Photo 5: The 'Duk Ling' an example of a Chinese Junk in Hong Kong (Author, 2006)



Photo 6: On board the Duk Ling Junk. Note that room is limited. (Author, 2006)



Photo 7: Author on board the Duk Ling Junk, 2006.



These boats were akin to travelling hostels, which housed up to 133 men between both boats of the Red Junk Opera Company (Ward, 1989). Between the pair of Red Junks, according to Ward (1989: 237) there were, *'62 actors, 12 musicians, 11 management staff, 9 costume men, 10 property men/stage hands, 2 barbers, 4 laundrymen, 7 cooks, 12 boatmen, 4 guards'*.

A core historical figure in Wing Chun history similarly appears in the history of Cantonese Opera, Cheung Ng. Cheung Ng is reported to have travelled from his native Wu Pak (northern China) to Foshan. Cheung Ng was also known as Tan Sau Ng, for

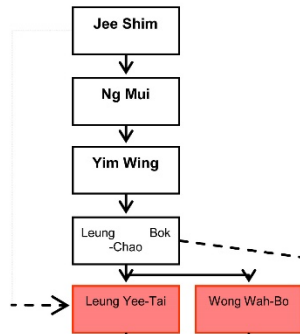
his superior 'Tan Sau' technique (a principal technique within Wing Chun, translated as 'palm up hand' a defensive technique) and there appears to be support for his existence through his mention in various texts (e.g. Chu et al, 1998; Yip and Connor, 1993). Specifically, Yip and Connor (1993) referred to a book by Mak Siu Har, '*A Study on the History of Chinese Opera*' which discussed how Cheung Ng established the Hung Fa Wui Koon (the Chinese Artist Association) in Foshan after 1736. Yip and Connor (1993) also cited another source purportedly verifying the existence of Cheung Ng, Mang Yiu's (1968) '*A History of Chinese Opera: Volume III*', published by Chuen Kay Literature Publishers, whereby Cheung Ng is referred to as 'Master Cheung' or 'Jo-Si' (Founding Master). Unfortunately, however, the British Library have been unable to obtain the two texts mentioned here for further analysis.

In relation to the history of Wing Chun, Cheung Ng is reported to have been instrumental to the development of the style, although there is a paucity of verifiable sources to support this claim, aside from oral testimony that has become documented in recent mainstream Wing Chun publications.

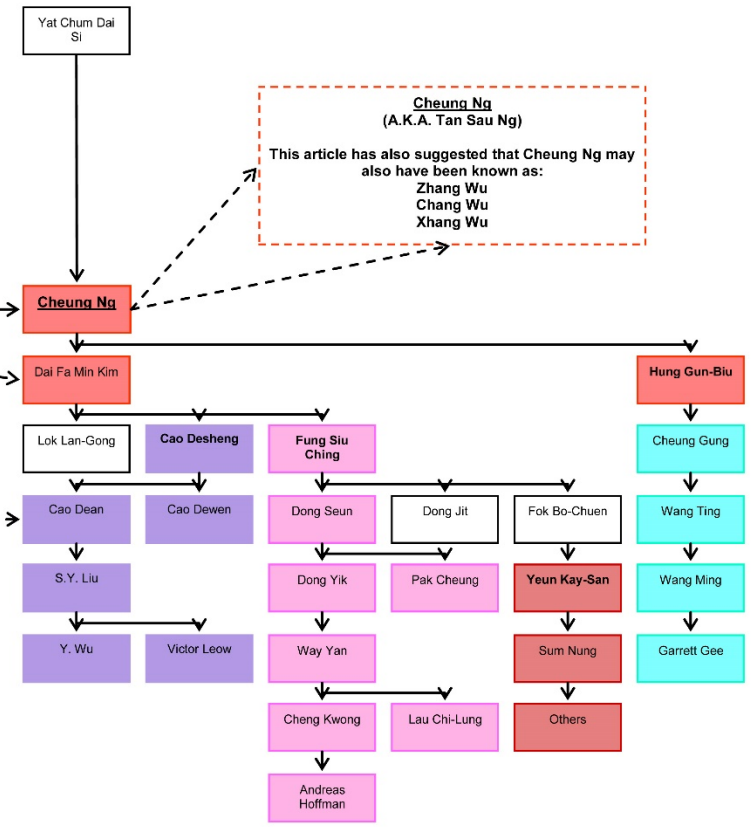
From Cheung Ng a variety of members of the Red Junk are alleged to have learnt and refined Cheung Ng's techniques over the following century, with notable practitioners such as Wong Wah-Bo, Leung Yee-Tai, Dai Fa Min Kam, Leung Bok Chau and Gao Lo Chung (Chu et al, 1998; Yip and Connor, 1993). These are summarised in Diagram 1 below.

Diagram 1: Wing Chun Lineage (adapted from Chu et al, 1998: 122-3)

Southern Shaolin



Northern Shaolin



Key:



Note: This diagram has been produced from the various lineages discussed by Chu, Ritchie and Wu (1998). Whereas the authors provide their own lineage diagram (pp.122-3), the correlation between the different lineages can be confusing. Consequently, the diagram produced here demonstrates greater synthesis of lineages.

Some names have been omitted for brevity however this diagram attempts to demonstrate how various lineages intercept. Participants interested in their own lineage would easily be able to locate a key figure listed here associated with their lineage. Bold lines indicate direct transmission from teacher to student. Dashed lines indicate partial transmission.

What is explicit in this diagram is how key members from the Red Junk Opera Company are the fundamental 'ancestors' of the various lineages: indeed, the names listed for the Company are the first verifiable sources that exist in Wing Chun history.

The importance for confirming Cheung Ng's existence would be a further problem for the assertion that Wing Chun developed from Ng Mui following the destruction of the Southern Shaolin Monastery. Indeed, Yip and Connor (1993) asserted that if Cheung Ng brought his skills to Foshan during the reign of Yung Cheng, this would predate the destruction of the Southern Shaolin Monastery by at least forty to fifty years. Unfortunately, due to the deficiency of substantiated sources, further research into the link between Cheung Ng and Wing Chun has remained problematic. Furthermore, despite extensive research into Cantonese Opera, although there are occasional references to the Red Junks, there are no further verifiable sources relating to Cheung Ng. However, Brandon (1993: 57-8) discussed an individual, whose account appears synonymous with Cheung Ng, that of Zhang Wu.

The famous actor of Guangdong opera was Zhang Wu in the 18th century. He came from Hubei Province, where pihunag music was practiced, so perhaps he was the person who introduced the style to Guangdong. Zhang Wu settled in Foshan, took on students, established a troupe and founded the Qianghua Guildhall for actors.

The parallels between Cheung Ng and Zhang Wu are that both came from the Northern provinces; both are reported to have introduced or influenced Guangdong opera; both settled in Foshan; both took on students and established opera companies; both founded a guildhall for actors. A third person who similarly shares the aforementioned attributes to Cheung Ng and Zhang Wu is that of Chang Wu, as discussed by Mackerras (1983: 57-9)

The companies of the Kwangtung Opera regard as the founder of their style of

drama an eighteenth-century actor from Hupeh called Chang Wu. There is a tradition, whose foundation in fact there seems no reason to doubt, that Chang performed for a while in Peking in the 1720s or 1730s, but was then exiled from the capital because the Ch'ing government considered his acting subversive.

From field research, a plaque at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (2006) discussed a fourth individual, Xhang Wu, stating, 'This statue of Master Huaguang who, along with Masters Tian and Dou and Master Xhang Wu, is a god worshipped by the artists of Cantonese Opera.' (Photo 8).

Photo 8: Statue of Master Huaguang (Author, 2006)



In a previous journal article, Buckler and Klijn (2013) discussed the parallels between the four names of Cheung Ng, Zhang Wu, Chang Wu, and Xhang Wu. Accordingly, the four names relate to the same person and can be explained as different phonetic translations of the same name in Chinese characters, 張五. Zhang Wu is the Pinyin

translation of the Mandarin pronunciation of these characters, with Xhang Wu being a more unusual phonetic translation. Cheung Ng is the phonetic translation of how the characters would be pronounced in Cantonese. Consequently, given the association between the four interpretations of the name and the historical evidence in support, Cheung Ng existed and it would appear, was known for a core technique from the Wing Chun syllabus, 'tan sau'.

Although Cheung Ng has been verified by different sources as having existed in relation to Cantonese Opera, there is further evidence in support of his development of Wing Chun through his involvement with revolutionary activities.

Revolutionary Activities

Predominantly the Red Junk Opera Company were involved in Cantonese Opera, however there is evidence that the Company was involved in revolutionary activity, which in turn may provide justification for the development of Wing Chun (Chu et al, 1998; Ritchie, 1997).

Ritchie (1997) discussed that due to the mobility of the Red Junk Opera Company, along with their use of disguise from their costumes, and stage names, the Red Junks were an ideal hiding place for revolutionaries. Such revolutionary activity was instrumental during the time when the Qing Dynasty overthrew the Ming Dynasty, akin to the civil wars that ravage countries nowadays. In relation to the development of Wing Chun, Chu et al (1998) asserted that the pragmatic, short-range combat techniques, symbolic of Wing Chun, would have been utilised effectively when fighting on boats, in narrow alleyways, small rooms, and so forth.

Furthermore, according to Chu et al (1998: 107-8) the actual name 'Wing Chun' albeit

ascribed to a mythical woman taught by Ng Mui, may have inherent revolutionary undertones:

- *The name Wing Chun was used to honour and remember the Wing Chun Tong (Always Spring Hall) of the Siu Lum Temple [Southern Shaolin Temple];*
- *The name 'Always Spring' was formed from the name of revolutionary leader Chan Wing-Wah and a combination of the characters yat (sun), tai (great), and tin (heaven), referring to the Ming dynasty and Heaven and Earth Rebellion;*
- *The name is a reduction of the revolutionary slogan: 'Wing yun chi jee; mo mong Hon yuk; Dai day wui chun' (Always speak with determination; Don't forget the Han nation; Again will return spring) [whereby the first word 'Wing' and the last word 'Chun' are used as the shortened version].*

Additionally, Chu et al (1998) reported that different Fujian martial arts have used the name 'Wing Chun', for example White Crane (Wing Chun Bak Hok Kuen) and Hung Ga Kuen (Wing Chun Kuen) shared a common purpose in overthrowing the unpopular Qing rule. (As a further point of interest, the characteristic clasping of the hands with the left open hand covering the right clenched fist, inherent within different Chinese martial arts as a greeting, is also symbolic of the Ming Dynasty, represented by the moon, covering or overcoming the Qing Dynasty, who were represented by the sun. Consequently such a 'sign' or 'token' held two meanings: a greeting but also a symbol of unity to overthrow the Qing Dynasty. See Photo 9).

Photo 9: A sculpture in Nathan Road, Hong Kong, titled 'Cheng' or 'Please' although also a political symbol of revolution (Author, 2006)



A further association between Cantonese Opera, revolutionary activity, and the implicit link to Wing Chun is evident through the analysis of fraternities, or secret societies, and their involvement with rebellion (Carstens, 1993; Heidhues, 1993). Indeed, ter Haar (1997) reported that during the 1853-4 occupation of Shanghai, the Tiandihui (or the Triads) expressed their status to the common population by dressing theatrically to resemble kings and generals. Further evidence is discussed through two Triad manuals in the British Museum (Or. 8297D from circa 1853 and Or. 2339 from 1864-1881), where Triads are dressed in costume, make up, and posing dramatically.

The 1853-4 occupation of Shanghai occurred during the Taiping uprising (1851-64) as a result of China's defeat by Britain in the Opium War (Heath and Perry, 1994; Mackerras, 1975, 1983). A fundamental Taiping leader was Li Wenmao, a Cantonese Opera actor, who organised three armies which consisted of a large number of actors (Brandon, 1993; Mackerras, 1975, 1983). Ultimately the rebellion was defeated, however Li Wenmao withdrew to Kwangsi where he captured several cities and established an independent kingdom (Mackerras, 1975). The Foshan Museum (2006: online) provided additional detail in relation to Li Wenmao's role,

In 1854, Fenghuangyi Cantonese Opera performer Li Wenmao and Chen Kaihe, the leader of Guangdong Tiandi Assembly, rose up in Guangzhou, changing the members of several thousand red boats into soldiers, wearing opera costumes and red muffle, called 'Red Muffle Army'. The insurrectionary soldiers fought with Cantonese Opera vaulting skills. After capturing Foshan Town, they set Qionghua Guild Hall as headquarter. The insurrection of Cantonese Opera performers led by Li Wenmao is an unprecedented event in the world history of opera.

In 1854, Fenghuangyi Cantonese Opera performer Li Wenmao and Chen Kaihe, the leader of Guangdong Tiandi Assembly, rose up in Foshan and other places. the soldiers, wearing opera costumes and red muffle, were called 'Red Muffle Army'. Li Wenmao led the Red Boat 'Three Armies' (Wen Tiger, Meng Tiger and Fei Tiger) fighting in Guangdong and Guangxi, captured Xuzhou and Liuzhou and set up Dacheng State, and Li Wenmai was called 'Pingjing King'. The risers issued coins and laws. The insurrection by Li Wenmao gave an important attack on Qing Dynasty, remarkable in Chinese history, especially the opera history.

Although Cantonese opera performers were significant within the Taiping Rebellion, the performers were also involved in other political campaigns. Wong (2001) discussed the role of such actors in the 1905 boycott campaign, an anti-foreign protest. During this protest, the boycott leaders visited the Cantonese Opera Guildhall in Foshan, persuading the performers to use their mass appeal and talent to generate support for the movement. The reason for using such performers related to being able to communicate to large, mainly illiterate crowds though addressing the boycott within their performances, also through the distribution of flyers. As Wong (2001) reported,

the actors' guilds disseminated boycott messages wherever they performed, furthermore commenting that the Red Junk Opera Company had a significant role in spreading the boycott message due to their wide sailing circuits.

A further potential association which may link Wing Chun and revolutionary activity through the Red Junks is the use of a weapon resembling a Chinese style meat cleaver. Of the two weapons in Wing Chun, the Baat Cham Dao (or Baat Jam Dao) or 'eight cutting knives' (also interpreted as 'eight slash knives' more commonly referred to as 'butterfly swords') are similar in appearance to weapons used by the Tiandihui.

In relation to the weapon used by the Tiandihui, Booth (1999: 265) describes them as having a 'flat, razor-sharp blade, about 25cm long and 12cm wide with a wooden handle.' Within Wing Chun the Baat Cham Dao are of a similar dimension to those outlined by Booth albeit with a more rounded tip and a prong to trap offensive weapons (see Photo 10).

Photo 10: Baat Cham Dao (Author, 2016)



Ultimately there are evident links between Cantonese Opera, secret societies, and Wing Chun as discussed here. Although some of the links may appear tenuous, the following discussion provides further justification for the development of the Wing Chun style. Indeed, in a separate article I have asserted that all martial arts originally develop from a justification: nobody develops a combat system without having a reason to do so, consequently the link between the short-range, pragmatic style of Wing Chun is explored through the wider socio-political perspective within China, during the time that the Red Junk Opera Company were operating.

Additional explanation and justification for the development of Wing Chun

Previously, the link between Wing Chun and Cantonese Opera has been discussed through the involvement of Cheung Ng and through revolutionary activity. However, while Cantonese Opera is characterised by expressive, large and lavish artistic gestures for the audience, Wing Chun techniques are designed for close-quarter, pragmatic combat purposes, with little resemblance between any operatic techniques. Consequently, how can these polar opposites of combat be resolved? This is explained through the political atmosphere prevalent in Southern China during the late-eighteenth to early-nineteenth centuries.

During this turbulent political time in China's history 'xujue', or 'collective violence' was prevalent. Due to such violence and political unrest, people grouped together for protection, as evidenced through the development of fraternities and secret societies. In particular, such groupings occurred in mainly coastal regions due to an increase in piracy, both at sea and on land.

In the first part of this article, Prof. Dian Murray's research into the Tiandihui was fundamental in dismissing the Southern Shaolin Monastery, however she has also extensively researched the increase in Chinese piracy, discussing how piracy

transformed from a few struggling banditti to a confederation of between fifty to seventy thousand pirates in the Kwangtung Province within a twelve-year span, between 1793 and 1805 (Murray, 1987).

In her work, Murray (1987) asserts that the increase in piracy was multi-faceted: the ecological conditions of the waterways of the Pearl River Delta combined with overpopulation, land shortage, increased trade, and the reliance on Vietnamese rice combined to cause the intensification of piracy. Although the Qing Dynasty was unpopular, the pirates were not politically motivated: instead they were motivated through making money, capitalising on the unrest. The pirates therefore preyed on, and profited, from the state, especially due to the incompetence of the Qing response and the shortage of vessels or men to quell the piracy. When the Qing Dynasty presented the pirates with better offers from the money that could be obtained through piracy, did the pirates cease their activities (Murray, 1987).

In relation to the offer made to the pirates, the official in charge of the Qing response, Na-yen-ch'eng, issued a province-wide proclamation of 'people protecting themselves' being superior to soldiers protecting the people: this led to the development of local militias. Ultimately though, the Qing dynasty operated a policy of pardon and pacification that allowed both sides the luxury of a victory, yet the only victors were the pirates, many of whom stepped into new lives ashore with their proceeds from piracy intact (Murray, 1987).

The pirates had a close association with the secret societies on land for business purposes (e.g. procuring goods or fencing stolen goods), additionally secret societies supported pirates in establishing on- and off-shore protection rackets which were more profitable than the proceeds gained through piracy. In order for pirates within the confederation to ensure that a vessel had purchased protection, and that subsequent

raids by other pirates would not put the vessel out of business, a document was issued to allow the vessel to 'pass-port' (interestingly where the term 'passport' derives) (Murray, 1987). Although Murray does not make reference to Wing Chun in her work, her research is important in again providing a justification for the development of Wing Chun as discussed below.

In her work, Murray (1987) discussed the *modus operandi* of the pirates: in turn, this provides a justification for the development of Wing Chun. As such, pirate vessels would avoid a direct confrontation, generally attacking by surprise by closing in silently to overpower their target. While firearms and canons were available to the pirates, given the poor quality of the gunpowder, their owners' ignorance about the operation of such weapons, and no doubt the damp and humid conditions of the Canton Delta, pirates resorted to hand-to-hand combat. Initially they would use a long bamboo spike of between fourteen and eighteen feet in length: after boarding a vessel, utilising a variety of knives, specifically the 'yao-tao' or 'short, heavy sword' which was eighteen inches long resembling a woodcutter's billhook.

Consequently, there are three core factors inherent in Murray's (1987) work: hand-to-hand combat, a long bamboo spike, and the 'yao-tao' or short, heavy sword. In relation to the bamboo spike, the Wing Chun pole (Luk Dim Boon Kwun, or 'six-and-a-half point pole' given the six movements within the form, and the half movement of dropping the pole) initially appears at odds with the Wing Chun syllabus, given the stance and side-on approach to combat. However, the Luk Dim Boon Kwun may have been the first line of defence against the pirates' bamboo spikes. Although the Luk Dim Boon Kwun is shorter than the bamboo spikes (often around eight to nine feet in length), this would enable better control by the combatant as the pirate vessel closed in, where the lengthier bamboo spikes would have been inefficient as the vessels closed and before hand-to-hand combat initiated.

Once in hand-to-hand combat range which as previously discussed was favoured by the pirates, the need to have a developed system of self-defence for fighting in the small confinement of a narrow boat, while maintaining balance, and being able to utilise knives and empty-hands would have been required, hence a justification for the development of Wing Chun. Indeed, during this time of piracy, no doubt travelling Cantonese opera companies would have been an ideal target given that in essence, they were floating businesses, with elaborate costumes, equipment, and so forth. (Although Ward (1989) notes that the Red Junks only appeared in the mid-nineteenth century, she also noted that the opera companies were mobile on boats during the seventeenth century when piracy was at its height.)

Adhering to the pragmatism of Wing Chun, one final piece of evidence that contributes to the system may also be explained, the Muk Yan Jong (often referred to as the 'Wooden Dummy'). According to the Hong Kong Heritage Museum (2005: 124), 'most actors would continue to practice martial arts. A wooden stump, assimilating an opponent, was installed in the middle of the boat.' This 'wooden stump' is similarly discussed by the Foshan Museum (2006: online), whereby the 'wooden figure instrument' was a 'compulsory basic skill for every new Cantonese Opera actor'. The 'wooden stump' or 'wooden figure instrument' may at first have been the mast upon the Red Junk, which in turn may have been developed to represent the more familiar wooden dummy of today.

In summary, the increase in piracy and the way in which the pirates operated may well have provided a justification for the pragmatic, close-quarter empty-handed techniques. Furthermore, the use of the Luk Dim Boon Kwun (pole) and the Baat Cham Dao (knives), along with the development of the Muk Yan Jong (wooden dummy) have been justified as a requirement for defence against piracy.

An alternate possibility which is mere conjecture is that, opposed to Wing Chun being developed for defensive purposes against pirate incursion, Cantonese opera performers may have been involved with piracy given the parallels between the secret societies and Wing Chun, and in turn, the secret societies and piracy. Needless to say, further research would be required to establish the credibility of this assertion.

Conclusion

The two papers on Wing Chun's history have explored the historical development of Wing Chun. The widely reported Wing Chun 'myth' has been questioned in relation to the authenticity of the Southern Shaolin Monastery, based on the *modus tollens* argument exploring the Tiandihui's claim of such shared heritage. As such, no verifiable evidence has been reported to support the existence of the Southern Shaolin Monastery. An alternate historical account for the inception and development of Wing Chun has however been identified which explains the justification for all elements of the combat system, from the empty-handed techniques through to the pole, knives and dummy.

Chu et al (1998) originally suggested that Wing Chun developed within the Red Junk Opera Company. The evidence presented in the two papers complements their assertion through triangulating the evidence: (i) the similarities between the founder of Wing Chun and Cantonese Opera; and (ii) the use of pragmatic combat techniques for rebellious activities/defensive purposes against the increase in piracy.

Further archaeological and historical research is however required, specifically in accessing and interpreting Chinese sources to embellish the line of reasoning adopted within these papers. In conclusion, Wing Chun's authentic history is perhaps more

intriguing than the commonly accepted 'myth' relating to the Southern Shaolin Monastery.

References

- Arlington, L.C. (1930/1966). *The Chinese Drama: From the Earliest Times until Today*. New York: Benjamin Bloom.
- Booth, M. (1999). *The Dragon Syndicates: The Global Phenomenon of the Triads*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc.
- Brandon, J.R. (1993). *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Buckler, S. and Klijn, W. (2013). The Origins of Wing Chun: Time for a revision? *Wing Chun Illustrated*, 13, 40-42.
- Carstens, S.A. (1993). "Chinese Culture and Polity in Nineteenth-Century Malaya: The Case of Yap Ah Loy." In *Secret Societies Reconsidered – Perspectives on Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia*, edited by David Ownby and Mary S. Heidhues, 120-152. New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Chu, R., Ritchie, R. and Wu, Y. (1998). *Complete Wing Chun: The Definitive Guide to Wing Chun's History and Traditions*. North Clarendon: Tuttle Publishing.
- Foshan Museum. "Historical Relics for Cantonese Opera."
http://www.foshanmuseum.com/en_fsyj/fsyj_zpzx01_lsyw.htm (accessed July 31, 2006).
- Foshan Museum. "Li Wenmao."
http://www.foshanmuseum.com/en_fsyj/fsyj_ls01B.htm# (accessed July 31, 2006).
- Foshan Museum. "Wooden Dummy."
http://www.foshanmuseum.com/en_fsyj/fsyj_zpzx01_lsyw.htm. (accessed July 31, 2006).
- Heath, I. and Michael P. (1994). *The Taiping Rebellion of 1851-66*. London: Osprey Military.
- Heidhues, M.S. (1993). "Chinese Organizations in West Borneo and Bangka: Kongsis and Hui." In *Secret Societies Reconsidered – Perspectives on Social History of Modern South China and Southeast Asia*, edited by David Ownby and Mary S. Heidhues, 68-88. New York: M.E. Sharpe.
- Hong Kong Heritage Museum. *Cantonese Opera Heritage Hall – Various Plaques from the Author's personal visit* (2006).
- Hong Kong Heritage Museum (2005). *Cantonese Opera Costumes*. Hong Kong: Leisure and Cultural Services Department of Hong Kong.
- Hong Kong Legal Information Institute (2010). "Hong Kong Regulations: Weights and Measures Order – Schedule," <http://www.hklii.hk/hk/legis/en/reg/68A/sch.html> (accessed July 16, 2010).
- Mackerras, C. (1975). *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times: From 1840 to Modern Day*. London: Thames & Hudson, Ltd.

- Mackerras, C. (1983). *Chinese Theatre: From its Origins to the Present Day*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Mackerras, C. and Wichmann, E. (1983). "Introduction." In *Chinese Theatre: From its Origins to the Present Day*, edited by Colin Mackerras, 1-6. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Murray, D.H. (1987). *Pirates of the South China Coast, 1790-1810*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Raben, E.M. (1992). "Peking Opera: The Persistence of Tradition in the People's Republic of China." *Journal of Popular Culture* 25:4, 53-61.
- Ram, J. (1994). "A Hundred Million Miracles." *Opera News* 59:5,10-14, 29.
- Ritchie, R. (1997). *Yuen Kay-San Wing Chun Kuen: History and Foundation*. Burbank: Unique Publications.
- ter Haar, B.J. (1997). *Ritual & Mythology of the Chinese Triads: Creating an Identity*. Leiden: Brill.
- Ward, B.E. (1989). "The Red Boats of the Canton Delta: A Historical Chapter in the Sociology of Chinese Regional Drama." *Proceedings of International Conference on Sinology, Second Edition*, Taipei: Academia Sinica, 233-257.
- Wong, S-K. (2001). "Mobilizing a Social Movement in China: Propaganda of the 1905 Boycott Campaign." *Chinese Studies* 19:1, 375-408.
- Yip, C. and Connor, D. (1993). *Wing Chun Martial Arts: Principles & Techniques*. York Beach: Samuel Weiser, Inc.