

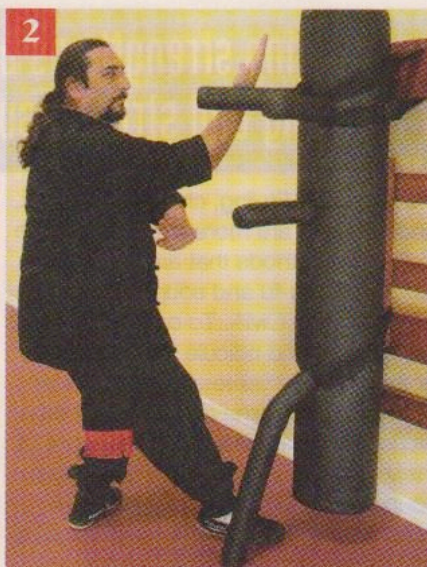
# KUNG-FU'S BURIED TREASURE

THERE IS A TREASURE CHEST OF KNOWLEDGE IN TRADITIONAL CHINESE KUNG-FU WAITING TO BE EXPLOITED BY MODERN MARTIAL ARTISTS

By Mario Figueroa







**Star Bridge Conditioning. Low inside forearm strike (1). Mirror hand (2). Low outside forearm strike (3). Elbow grab and shin kick (4). Elbow pull and reverse heel kick (5).**

**A**s a martial artist, you are on a never-ending quest. It is an ongoing effort to improve, to gain more knowledge, to find new insight and of course, to increase your skill. You endlessly practice the methods and techniques of your chosen style and depending on your make-up, age and level of advancement, make incremental gains in physical ability and combat effectiveness. Should you need to engage in combat, will your style, its approach and its training methods bring you victory?

To answer an unhesitating "yes" is an indication of the vanity and arrogance that plagues the martial arts as a whole. Read any online forum today and you will easily see how well entrenched is this mentality. The reality is that no one can really know, and that is the reason for our ongoing training—to continually improve... to better our chances. Confidence is good. The ego to believe you have all the answers is not. False security is fatal.

## CROSS-TRAINING

For centuries, different martial arts styles and systems have jealously guarded their methods and techniques, keeping them within their specific family, group or lineage. While this may have safeguarded proprietary knowledge, it also resulted in stagnation and stunted further development and growth.

Yet older still is the practice of learning, adopting and sharing knowledge as a way of expanding, diversifying a style's repertoire and improving its effectiveness. Many styles have been born out of

joining, adding and melding of different approaches, techniques and methods. In the early 1900s, forward-thinking masters formed the famous Ching Woo Athletic Association to strengthen and grow traditional Chinese martial arts. Even the very cradle of martial arts, the Shaolin Temple, may be the best and most ambitious example of martial arts cross-training—something like a combat think tank.

In the early 1990s, the UFC demonstrated the fallacy of closed-mindedness. Modern competitors learned that adopting methods and techniques from other styles is essential to their success. Groundfighting became compulsory and the "ground and pound" was born. Then learning ended; all went back to their closed camps and to business as usual. But why stop there? The Gracies took

traditional jiu-jitsu and evolved it to Brazilian jiu-jitsu and mixed martial arts adopted groundfighting, added that to their stand-up fighting and improved the competitive landscape. Is that all there is? Have we reached the apex of combat technology? Not by a long shot.

## KUNG-FU SKILLS TRAINING

What makes a good fighter? Technically speaking, it is a combination of stamina, endurance, speed, accuracy and strength. These are valued assets regardless of the style you have chosen and to facilitate their attainment, each style has developed its own training methods. Every skilled fighter, whether in the mat, the dojo or the Octagon will exhibit these traits in good measure.



## "Wooden dummy training strengthens and conditions important blocking and striking surfaces."

Still, everyone can point to someone who possesses higher, subtler, intangible abilities, beyond those just mentioned. An old master, perhaps your teacher, a champion boxer and some of the top competitors in the mixed martial arts will all have that certain something that keeps them ahead of the rest. These unique fighters may have obtained these traits naturally or they may have developed them through some training method.

So it is clear there are other attributes that can greatly benefit martial artists,

investigation. Fa jing, chin na, dim mak, and chi kung are more examples of the skills and methods that are valued in Chinese kung-fu and sought after by those training CMA. To cast these ideas off, or scoff and ridicule them because of their flowery names or their mysterious nature as some do, is to shut off a world of possibilities. Granted, some of these concepts seem elusive and can sound esoteric to the unfamiliar, but what is important are the tangible gains that are made by training in them.

For example, rooting includes staying

such as choy lay fut, ng ga kuen, hung gar, fut gar and others. This widespread use and retention over the centuries is a testament to its importance and effectiveness as a training device.

The wooden dummy trains many advanced Chinese martial arts skills. However, there are three primary advanced skills that are of utmost importance to fighters from all styles and disciplines—body conditioning, flow and distance.

The strength and ability to withstand strikes is often what makes the differ-



**Redirecting and Closing the Distance. Sidestep and redirect (1). Close in from the side (2). Shoot the waist and hook the leg (3).**

but what is not clear is how to go about acquiring them. This is where Chinese kung-fu excels and offers a wide variety of training methods. A majority of these methods were developed in secrecy and have been closed to those outside a specific style, system or subgroup. As more and more information is available on various arts and styles, and shared in books, magazines, DVDs, Internet forums, Web sites and video sites such as YouTube, skills such as rooting, centering, sticking, sensitivity, flow, relaxed power, jing/explosive power, short power, iron palm and iron body conditioning are now coming to light.

Semantics and martial arts movies have cast a fuzzy veil on Chinese martial arts, but it is easily lifted by a bit of

on your feet and generating power when encountering an opposing force and/or in a restricted space. Chi kung develops higher lung capacity, which enhances stamina, endurance and strength. Sensitivity and stickiness are the skills to anticipate the movements of the opponent and maintain proper distance.

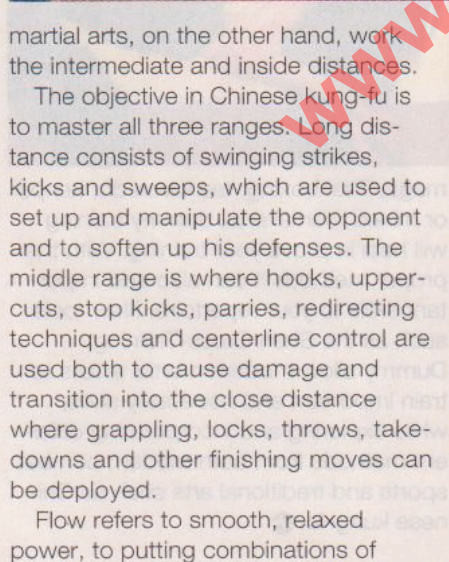
### THE WOODEN MAN

The mook jong or wooden man is typically associated with the wing chun style of kung-fu, and is the hallmark of this famous fighting system. However, wooden dummy training was developed in the Shaolin Temple and is part of the training of a number of styles derived from and influenced by shaolin kung-fu,

ence in a fight. Wooden dummy training strengthens and conditions the most important blocking and striking surfaces of the body, such as inner and outer forearm, elbows, shins, insteps, feet, fists, palms, backhands and fingers. Consistent use of the wooden dummy develops amazing resistance and strength in these areas.

While theories and terms vary, wooden dummy training helps develop what is termed "the three distances," also known as three gates in some styles. This refers to long distance, intermediate or transitional distance and inside or close distance. Stand-up fighters prefer the middle distance, for example, while groundfighting is obviously a close-in fighting style. Mixed





martial arts, on the other hand, work the intermediate and inside distances.

The objective in Chinese kung-fu is to master all three ranges. Long distance consists of swinging strikes, kicks and sweeps, which are used to set up and manipulate the opponent and to soften up his defenses. The middle range is where hooks, uppercuts, stop kicks, parries, redirecting techniques and centerline control are used both to cause damage and transition into the close distance where grappling, locks, throws, take-downs and other finishing moves can be deployed.

Flow refers to smooth, relaxed power, to putting combinations of techniques together, to follow up and follow through. Flow involves staying with your opponent, using multiple levels and angles to hit openings. A fighter who has mastered flow is efficient,

1. Outside clearing block (Moi Kiu). 2. Inside bridge (Jeet Jeung) to 3. Slicing bridge cut (Jit Kiu). 4. Palm check (Chune Jeung) right punch (Peng Kuen). 5. Two-hand slapping grab and pull (Look Kiu). 6. Right circular bridge (Poon Kiu), left reverse palm (Tue Jeung). 7. Left circular block (Poon Kiu), right hammer strike (Pek Choi). 8. Hook and pull head to a knee strike.



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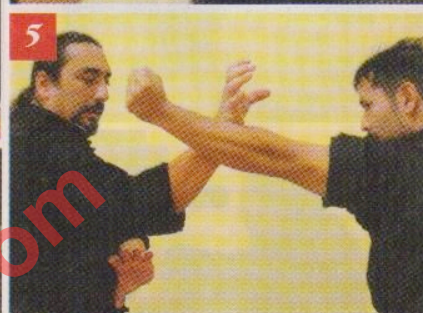
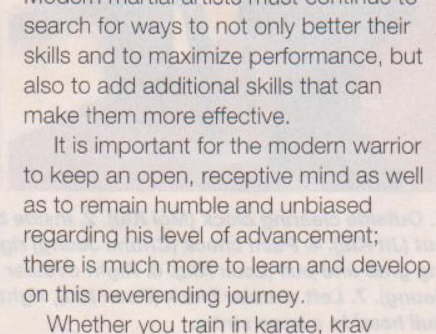
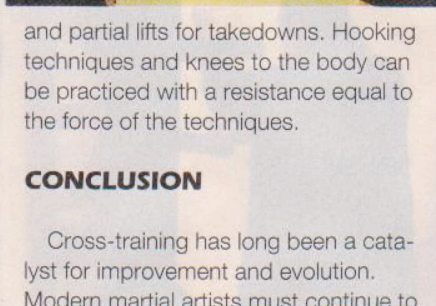


**1** Chin na. Double hooking (1) block (nap sau) into crane stance (dok lok ma). Grab and strike knee application (2). Hook block (3). Finger grab (4). Hook block application (5). Elbow grab (6). Pull and tiger strike (7).

does not tire as easily, creates openings and shows little wasted effort. Such a fighter is unrushed, poised, yet relentless.

### DUMMY TRAINING FOR ALL STYLES

The new Shen Cross-Training dummy pictured in this article is designed and manufactured by Focus Fitness and distributed exclusively by Shen Martial Arts ([www.shenmartialarts.com](http://www.shenmartialarts.com)). Based on the traditional mook jong, it incorporates key innovations that provide users with additional versatility. The body and limbs of the Shen Cross-Training dummy are made to simulate skin, muscle and bone. This allows for strikes, kicks, thrusts and bumps to be applied to all surfaces of the dummy. This means techniques ranging from head-level kicks and thigh kicks to chin na grabs and grappling techniques can be applied. The hard body and arm/leg core provide excellent body strengthening and conditioning equal to or better than its wooden predecessor. Combinations using all three distance ranges can be drilled at full speed and power, and can include shoots to the lower body



and partial lifts for takedowns. Hooking techniques and knees to the body can be practiced with a resistance equal to the force of the techniques.

### CONCLUSION

Cross-training has long been a catalyst for improvement and evolution. Modern martial artists must continue to search for ways to not only better their skills and to maximize performance, but also to add additional skills that can make them more effective.

It is important for the modern warrior to keep an open, receptive mind as well as to remain humble and unbiased regarding his level of advancement; there is much more to learn and develop on this neverending journey.

Whether you train in karate, krav

maga, Thai boxing, tae kwon do, kenpo or mixed martial arts, dummy training will help improve your training. With the proper methods it can also add important skills to your repertoire. New tools such as the Shen Cross-Training Dummy allow modern martial artists to train important and necessary skills, while exploring and incorporating different methods from both modern combat sports and traditional arts such as Chinese kung-fu.

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