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International Wing Chun Organization

## Is Wing Chun Kuen an Internal Martial Arts System (IMAS, Noi Gar Kuen) ?

### 1. Differences between External Martial Arts System (EMAS, Oi Gar Kuen) and Internal Martial Arts System (IMAS, Noi Gar Kuen)

- Originally, Chinese martial arts have no such classification of EMAS and IMAS. The first one who mentioned the concept of IMAS was Huang Zongxi in his Wang Zhengnan Epitaph circa the mid 17<sup>th</sup> century. It was said that *Shaolin Kung Fu is renowned for its bravery and aggressiveness but with its aggressiveness, it brings about more exposures of the player. There are styles grouped under the 'Internal Martial Art System (IMAS)', which is said to be using 'the lack of initiative' to control over 'all initiatives'. The person who deploys this technique will just wait for the 'initiator' to take action and only aim to take control over the opponent through spotting and making use of the mistake that the initiator commits. And thus differentiated the Shaolin Kung Fu as external martial arts system.* (“少林以拳勇名天下，然主於搏人，人亦得以乘之。有所謂內家者，以靜制動，犯者應手即仆，故別少林為外家。”)

- EMAS is characterized by always initiating in head start moves to take control over the opponent.

IMAS is characterized by not initiating any action towards the opponent in acting first, but will wait for the opponent to move first, then analyze, identify the weak positions of the initiator, then respond with the appropriate move to cancel or dissolve the initiative's move or force, and then counter attack

- Major differences between EMAS & IMAS

	EMAS	IMAS
External Characteristics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually prefer to deploy power &amp; force</li> <li>• Moves with direct action path of attack and withdrawal</li> <li>• Involves many</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Usually prefer to deploy softness</li> <li>• Cancellation thru leading the opponent to make empty strikes and taking the force of the opponent to use it onto the opponent himself</li> </ul>



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	<p>jumping and airborne movements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stressing on power and movement to intimidate the opponent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a lot of 'circular' or 'smooth' movements thus appearing soft rather than forceful in its moves</li> <li>• Emphasize on mixing extreme softness with extreme power, with the power comes in an explosive burst within a very short time to address at the opponent</li> </ul>
Qi Gong Practice Method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hard Qigong in the practice of strengthening the bone, muscle and skin</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasizes on relaxation, softness, quietness, and void</li> <li>• Practices intending to arrive at these attributes are used by the practitioner, to build and gather Qi within the body and thru leading the Qi into the vital channels within the human body, to instill health and power of the practitioner</li> </ul>
Principle of Attack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Takes initiative and be aggressive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not to take initiative and move first</li> <li>• To take control of all incoming action thru 'resting'; to give up</li> <li>• Wait till the opponent attacks first and then respond by making use of the force the attacker generated in the first place to use it back on the attacker</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To conquer with force</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To overcome force with softness. The very famous Lao Zi in China once said: Water seems the softest among all things, but it is also the most powerful among all things</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To take the action first before the opponent acts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Only respond after the opponent strikes, but to achieve or take control thru skill, even though we start later than the opponent</li> <li>To take the time gap between the opponent strikes and before I respond to identify the strength and weakness of the particular move of the opponent, and the situation of the opponent in executing that particular move. Shy away from the force and address the weak link of the opponent</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generating, exerting and cancelling of each other's force in the combat</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Directing softness to flexibly cancel the opponent's force, stresses to redirect force than counteracting them</li> </ul>
Ideology Basis	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Buddhism</li> <li>Unity of Zen &amp; martial arts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taoism</li> <li>Use Taoism as principles and martial arts as application. Through martial arts for enlightening the Tao. Unity of Tao and martial arts</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In fact, regardless EMAS or IMAS, Chinese martial arts are all embodied with the essence of Chinese traditional culture of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. Using Buddhism and Taoism to classify EMAS and IMAS is a generalized classification only.</li> </ul>	

## 2. Other characteristics of IMAS :

- Preferring softness than hard force 欲柔不欲強
- Preferring 'to smoothly redirect' than 'antagonizing' 欲順不欲逆
- Preferring to be 'stable and organized' than 'dis-organized' in action 欲定不欲亂
- Preferring to be 'consolidated' than 'non-focused' 欲聚不欲散



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### 3. Conclusion :

Since the founders of Wing Chun Kuen, the Nun Ng Mui and Yim Wing Chun were women, deploying softness in the system is the characteristic of Wing Chun Kuen. The first empty hand form, Siu Nim Tau emphasizes relaxation, softness and quietness. The whole form is performing on a stationery position with high mental concentration and consolidation of internal Qi in order to take control of incoming actions thru 'resting". The second and third form, Chum Kiu and Biu Jee focuses on the following principles that are actually the above-mentioned essences of IMAS.

- Detaining what it comes and follow what it goes
- Using structure to neutralize and footwork to dissolve
- Leading the attacking force to emptiness
- Not use counteracting force
- Deploying circular or smooth movements
- Redirecting the opponent's force and giving up our own force
- Making use of the attacker's force generated in the first place to use it back on the attacker
- Responding after the opponent strikes, but to take control thru skill, even though we start later than the opponent
- Simultaneous defense and strike
- Using softness to dissolve but giving out explosive burst within a very short time to address at the opponent

Because of this, our Wing Chun ancestors always stressed Wing Chun Kuen is an internal martial arts system that is different from those aggressive external martial arts system.

Nevertheless, in my opinion, a martial artist should not distinguish EMAS and IMAS since the nature of anything is void and emptiness. Some old Chinese martial arts books already mentioned the basic principle of mixing the hardness and softness, the Yin and Yang. This is the long history for the basic theory of Chinese martial arts consists of both internal and external characteristics. It is hard to find a martial arts style that is purely external or internal. Therefore, there is no point to stress on internal or external.

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