



## Wing Chun Mui Fa Jong – Steps on the Logs

Mui Fa Jong or Meihuazhuang is an additional tool for training in Wing Chun. Originated during the late Ming Dynasty, it initially was a well-known form that was spread amongst the community until the rise of the Qing Dynasty, and was brought after that to the outside world.

**Mui Fa Jong**, also named Mui Fa Kuen, can be translated as “**Plum Flower Posts**” and represents a group of footwork patterns used as a basis to strengthen Wing Chun skills. The name comes from the configuration of the posts, because the outline of the posts, when viewed from above, resembles a plum flower (in fact it resembles the five chinese plum blossoms Meyhua, “Mui Fa” in Cantonese) and is considered one of the oldest tool for training and movement.

So far, it is practiced in many Wushu schools and many styles of Kung Fu also have their Mui Fa Jong; however their configuration and usage are completely different from the interpretation, movements and concepts seen within the Wing Chun System.

Traditionally these are posts planted into the ground raised to a height ranging from 50 to 150 cm and arranged in several configurations.

During time, the Plum Flower Posts were called in different ways: “Seven Stars posts”, “Ba Gua posts”, “Five Movements posts”, “Nine Moon Palace posts” and many others.

Wing Chun is only known for its “Seven Stars Plum Flower posts” and “Three stars posts” or “simplified posts”; even if it’s commonly used with a configuration of 5 pillars, in which you have to use your imagination to view and follow all the possible configurations.

As times change, a small number of people in Hong Kong, like Grandmaster Ip Man, enhanced the techniques, and as sticking posts into the ground became increasingly difficult, the form practice gradually changed, until it became common to simply use an outline on the ground, or of a simplified apparatus that could be easily handled.

When my teacher, **SiFu Donald Mak**, was learning the **Mui Fa Jong method from his Sifu, Gran Master Chow Tze Chuen**, he only drew the layout of the posts on a flat surface to transfer what he had learned from the late Grand Master Ip Man.

But in order to preserve its unique practice method on posts, SiFu Donald Mak designed the layout of the Plum Flower Posts on a tool with real wooden logs: this apparatus consists of 5 posts, approximately 40 cm high and 25 cm in diameter, arranged in the pattern of a 4 pointed star with one post in the center; the logs are fastened to a wooden plank or securely anchored by means of metal rods.

There is a saying in Wing Chun Clan: **“The Plum Flower method is based on pillars, whether it’s during practice or in a real fight situation”**; this is because the footwork of Wing Chun originates from the Chinese plum flowers geometry, as their shape can be decomposed in a collection of many triangles. In Wing Chun, as it was taught in our lineage (Ip Man > Chow Tze Chuen > Donald Mak > Simone Sebastiani) footwork is very important to gain the correct angle for attacking and counterattacking, so students to whom a Mui Fa Jong is available will quickly gain a more solid understanding of footwork, equilibrium, stance and balance.

It should be noted that a Mui Fa Jong cannot, in itself, teach anything to a Wing Chun Practitioner; the Logs are only intended to refine the student’s movements, which can clearly be achieved only by going through all the different aspects of training.

As many others training instruments, the Mui Fa Jong is just a tool, whose main use is to help the student polish and correct the techniques he has

already found and trained within the Wing Chun System, so to become more proficient in it and use it in a better way.

Our Wing Chun School's way of practice of the Wing Chun Plum Flower is through two different forms of training: one way is to train alone, while the other is to do it together with a partner. The training path starts by standing atop the posts and moving and stepping diagonally on the perimeter, to develop confidence; then the student will add punches, kicks, body and hand positions so to improve stability. The increasing complexity of the exercises gives the student a solid structure and a powerful posture. By stepping from post to post, alone or with another partner, the practitioner can practice his balance and footwork while striking. The layout of the posts keeps you moving actively, searching for the best positions, while walking in all directions on a given pattern. This is done in a fast but structured way, so to always be in control of the situation.

On getting to the second stage, **two practitioners will stand atop the logs and practice Chi Sao**, attempting to knock the other student off the posts. This training consists in standing on posts while practicing "sticky hands" in a limited space, without falling off the posts; therefore body, hands, footwork, stance etc. must be strictly and expertly applied to deal with "absorbing and applying" force, in order for the students to reach their full potential by filling all their gaps, while the training changes in a structured and balanced way. **There is another way of practice on Mui Fa Jong and it is related to the Zhan Zhuang Gong**, literally "standing like a post": This is a static qi gong exercise, often practiced by students of internal Kung Fu styles, commonly known as "Inner Cultivation".

Maintaining a static posture (for example a Wing Chun Kick position) will stimulate and strengthen the correct muscle memory, as well as help overcome the inertia of the internal organs, so that practitioners may, according to Chinese Medicine, form a good flow of Qi (inner energy). This kind of training is very important for becoming able to generate Elastic Power, so it can be viewed as an internal exercise to strengthen Qi and body, while also training the external tendons and strengthening bone and skin.

**As Master Moy Yat said, a student practicing with a Mui Fa Jong can be compared to a writer using a typewriter: If the writer does not know how to write or spell, then using a typewriter, however proficiently, will produce only nicely formatted characters!**