



BAC FU DO

COMBAT CONCEPTS

Article by Morgan Buchanan.

Bac Fu Do (White Tiger Way) Kung Fu is a powerful composite style martial art taught by veteran Australian Kung Fu master Sifu David Crook. Bac Fu Do reflects its founders diverse training background, incorporating Wing Chun, Choy Lee Fut, Western Boxing, Defendo, Ju-jitsu, Atemi-jitsu and the Chinese internal arts to form a highly effective and powerful method of self defence. In this instalment Sifu Crook talks about the value of fluidity and adaptability in the Bac Fu Do system.

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Bac Fu Do (White Tiger Way) Kung Fu is the first martial arts system to be featured in IMA's Combat Concepts column. In each issue we will look to cover core principles and concepts of self defence that make a particular martial art effective and unique.

I met David Crook about four years ago and was immediately struck by both the effectiveness of his system and the ability he had to communicate it's principles. I travelled recently to Canberra where I asked him to break down and discuss the essential principles of the Bac Fu Do system.

There was so much material that we will be running this article in instalments over the next three issues of IMA.

I asked Sifu Crook what was the single most important concept of Bac Fu Do. His response - "fluidity and continuity" are the focus of this introductory article.

"Traditionally most martial arts are very structured, in their movement and in their mentality."

Crook believes that structure is essential for a student when learning a martial art, the danger is that the student can become too comfortable within the structure of their art and not develop a fluid method that adapts to the changing, chaotic situation of combat.

"Being spontaneous and adaptable is essential to survival in a real life situation in which there are so many variables. In this situation it can literally be fatal for a student to be relying upon a 1-2-3 method of self defence. The same idea can be applied to nations that are using military principles and tactics that were successful in the last war they fought, but which are not appropriate to the current war they are fighting, a lack of adaptability in the face of a changing environment."



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“In a real situation you wouldn’t want to be stuck in a sequence from a form or kata, you would need to change and adapt to what’s actually happening in the encounter.”

Crook gives another analogy, explaining that martial arts development can be seen in terms of learning a language. “When you are born you can only make basic sounds, these sounds develop into words, you are taught to make sentences and then rules of grammar and eventually you can speak fluently in your language. You are relaxed and natural in your use of the language, and sometimes break the rules of grammar in different situations. Martial arts is the same, you learn the structure but once you have mastered the equivalent of the language you need to be natural and adaptable to “conversations” that you engage in with an opponent. “

Sifu Crook believes that forms or kata training show the student some possibilities for how they might combine techniques and tactics but in a real situation it is inadvisable to be stuck in a sequence from a form, you would need to change and adapt to what’s actually happening in the encounter.

Bac Fu Do classes do not involve static training, all training methods are structured around short combinations, as Crook feels that these are the most effective in a real combat situation.

Although he teaches a dozen sets, which contain tactical and power release methods, the application for the movements are taught with the forms and then practised in a free form environment.

“Bac Fu Do concentrates on scenario based application, with two people, one shoving the other, or going for a strike, or even one person surrounded by four or five people. The student learns how to apply the structure in a close to realistic environment, similar to what they might encounter outside of class.”

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Starting a scenario from kneeling, lying or standing position with the opponent attacking with kicks, punches or drawing a knife from behind his back - these are some of the varied scenarios that Crook teaches his students. A lot of Bac Fu Do bag work is also based around scenarios, a group with large impact shields will crowd in around a student who has to apply multiple techniques to the opponents while keeping balance against been jostled and shoved. All of the training methods are geared towards acquiring skills and then applying them in situations which resemble a realistic environment.

The influence of fluidity and adaptability are drawn from Sifu Crook’s experience in the Chinese martial arts and Western boxing. His father, a judo expert was also a bantam weight boxing champion in the British army.

“If you compare a Western Boxer to a Karate Practitioner you will find that the Karate practitioner will have very fast individual techniques, like a straight punch but if you had the karate man and the western boxer both do a combination of three or four punches, you would find that the Western boxer would finish one or two moves ahead. This is because of Karate’s emphasis on focus. With the Japanese styles I’ve always felt that the point of impact of a technique was longer than necessary. What you get is a fragmentation of combinations and there are gaps in between, which in a fight situation gives the opponent the opportunity to insert his counter techniques. “

Crook’s analysis of the Japanese arts come from his own experience as a black belt in karate, jujitsu and atemi-jitsu, studied in his early martial art career, as well as decades of training and technique sharing with karateka and other Japanese stylists.

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“Time is an advantage that the aggressor has, he has initiated the confrontation. You need to be able to stop him thinking about what he’s going to do to you and get him thinking about what you’re going to do to him.”

“Fluidity is important, it’s the ability to flow from one height, one direction, one angle, one opponent to another. Continuity is about the gaps that you do or don’t leave in between your techniques. If you leave the gaps, somebody else can capitalise on them.”

Crook discusses the problem of thinking too much as one of the key problems in discontinuity under stress.

“You can still be a highly ranked martial artist and if your system doesn’t have methods for you to realistically practice your skills under a stressful environment then you can be still thinking about what to do next in a violent situation. This means that you haven’t internalised the training. You don’t think about how to use a knife and fork when you’re eating because you’ve internalised the action, but if you think back to when you were a kid, about how hard it was for you to learn to use a knife and fork, martial arts is the same, you have to be trained so that when a situation starts you react spontaneously and appropriately and don’t create discontinuity in your own response. Lack of continuity will give you less chance of coming out on top. “

“Time is an advantage that the aggressor has, he has initiated the confrontation. You need to be able to stop him thinking about what he’s going to do to you and get him thinking about what you’re going to do to him. The quicker you can turn the tables the closer you are to ending the fight in your favour.”

Bac Fu Do’s blocking system is another example of its adherence to fluidity.

“We tend to go for simultaneous block and strike, all of our blocks are deflections we never tend to hit into an attacking limb at 90 degrees, our way is more like merging in a freeway, we’re trying to team with the attacker’s energy and we don’t want to lend him any of our energy.

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For example if you punch and I do a hard block into it, a Japanese soto uke or uchi uke, it can actually lend you some of my force, because a really adept kung fu practitioner will borrow the strength of the block and use it to counter attack. Our blocks are really energy neutral deflections, anything the opponent might be able to borrow from them is negligible.”

In terms of the footwork used with deflections, Bac Fu Do emphasises body shifting over static stances.

“Our combinations, our movements are simultaneous deflect and attack. In this way we are also gaining ground on the opponent, moving in past his defences. Fluidity, having no breaks allows you to gain this ground safely by giving the opponent no break to counter and no power to borrow as we advance.”

In the next instalment of Bac Fu Do training tips Sifu Crook talks about the value of structural efficiency in taking advantage of the gaps caused by lack of continuity as well as some of the movement, offensive and defensive principles of the Bac Fu Do system.

Stay tuned.

For more information on Bac Fu Do please contact David Crook on (02) 62545698.

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