

THE CHI SAO" OF WING CHUN

By Bruce Lee

The posture of Bruce Lee in the following photos is that of the WING CHUN style and not that of JEET KUNE DO.



PHOTOS BY JEFFRY ALSTON

CHI SAO, THE ART OF STICKING HAND, is a unique method of training from the Wing Chun style, a southern Chinese style, headed by Mr. Yip Man of Hong Kong. It was from Mr. Yip that I took up the style of Wing Chun.

Indeed, there are many approaches to the practice of Chi Sao: some practice it mainly for sharpening technical skill, some for instinctive, correct hand positioning as taught by the Wing Chun style; some regard Chi Sao as a strengthening exercise, while others study it for sharpening the sense of touch. Chi Sao is all of the above and more. The following

is my own interpretation of Chi Sao, the Wing Chun's method of sticking hand.

In my years of teaching Chi Sao, I have regarded it as a psycho-physical training, stressing what I term as constant energy flow. This term, the constant flow, was not mentioned in the teaching of Chi Sao in the Wing Chun style. I must emphasize here that my teaching of the constant flow is an aid toward better efficiency and application, but definitely not looked upon as some sort of mysterious, internal power as other instructors would like their students to believe.

To illustrate the flowing energy, let's imagine that "A"

has a white stream of water flowing outward from his arm while "B" has a black stream, also flowing outward to merge with A's white stream (see fig. a.) As long as there is a constant, even flow from both A and B, the two streams, the black and the white, will not penetrate each other. With the flowing energy all the apparent physical movements are permeated with such psychological qualities. Should someone press on the arm of one who has this flowing energy, he will immediately feel a floating energy bridging his. It is not so much a feeling of opposing, jerking force, but, rather, it is just like pressing on a strong spring. His arm is full and substantial, quietly alive, with a feeling of direction and a sense of evenness: in other words, "just right" for the task on hand.



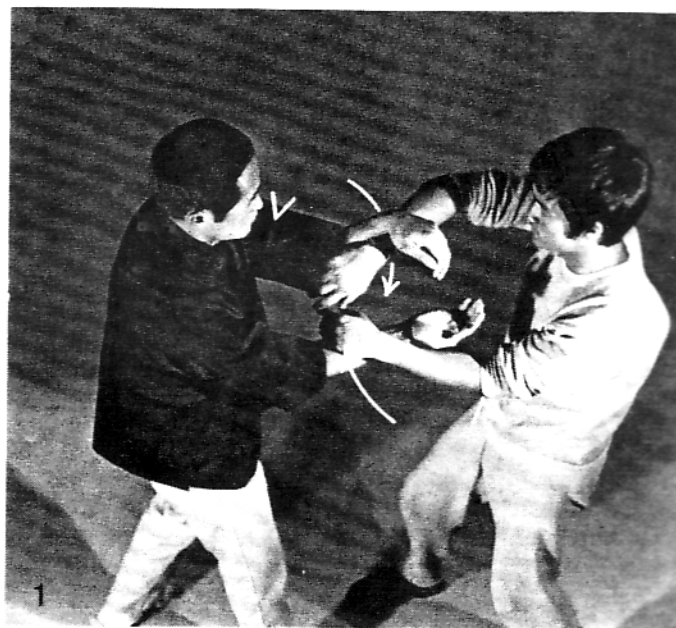
CHI SAO TECHNIQUE: These are the two essential positions in the Chi Sao (sticking hands) technique. Notice the relaxed position of both men.



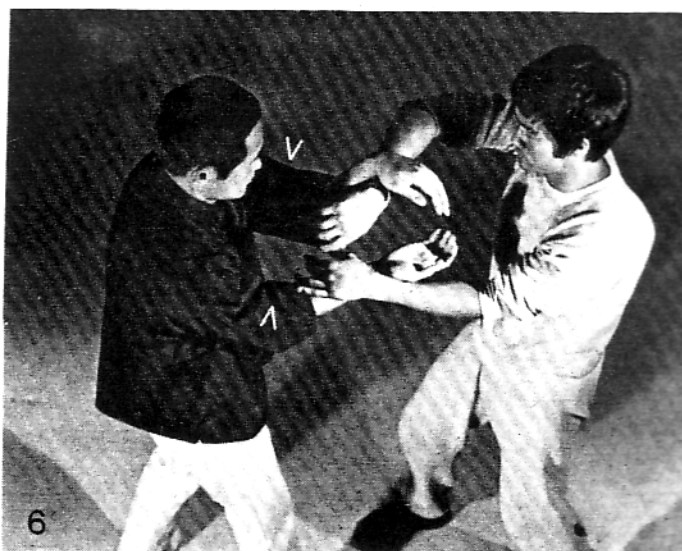
Looking at fig. a, if, say, the black stream should stop the flow for maybe a fraction of a second, the white stream would succeed in its penetration. This even flowing is likened to water making its way to a rock, filling every possible corner in the most efficient manner.

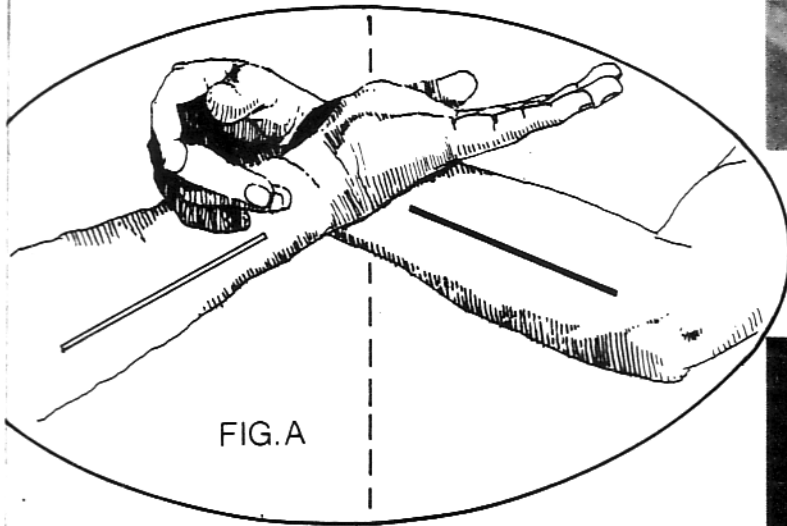
In the Wing Chun style, Chi Sao has both the one-handed and the two-handed practice. By rolling their hands in harmony, as well as in contrast, the practitioners cultivate the flowing energy. The practitioner should keep the flow constant and fill every possible gap in each rolling and turning. As training goes on, the more his energy is refined, and like water, the narrower the crack through which the flow can pass.

To learn Chi Sao properly requires an expert instructor

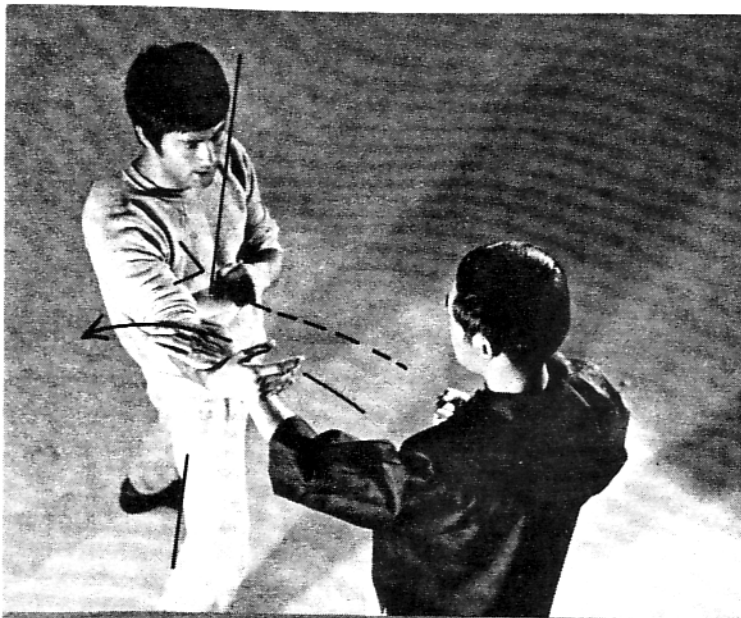


ROLLING SEQUENCE OF CHI SAO. The following photos show the continuous flowing and fullness of the energy in the arms. The arrows indicate the directions of the movements.





(Continued on Page 68)



Continued

who guides his student step-by-step and feeds him the right flow, much like a generator feeding electricity to a battery. In the hands of a novice, Chi Sao can turn into a jerky wrestling match, struggling up and down, left and right. Such strenuous practice will not only hinder understanding, but will lead to instant countering by a sharp opponent. Flowing energy properly through your hands is like water flowing through a hose. If the water is turned on and off, the hose will jerk. When we were in high school during the 50's in Hong Kong, we used to practice every day during recesses and after school. However, there was no steady flowing of energy in our arms and as a result our energy was spasmodic causing penetration by our partners, especially while we were turning and rolling.

From the positions in Chi Sao, each practitioner tries to score squarely on one another. With the flowing energy, the defender "floats" and "dissolves" the opponent's force, like a boat tossing safely among the turbulent waves, so as to "borrow" the attacker's force to "complete" his counter. In view of this, the two practitioners are actually two halves of one whole.

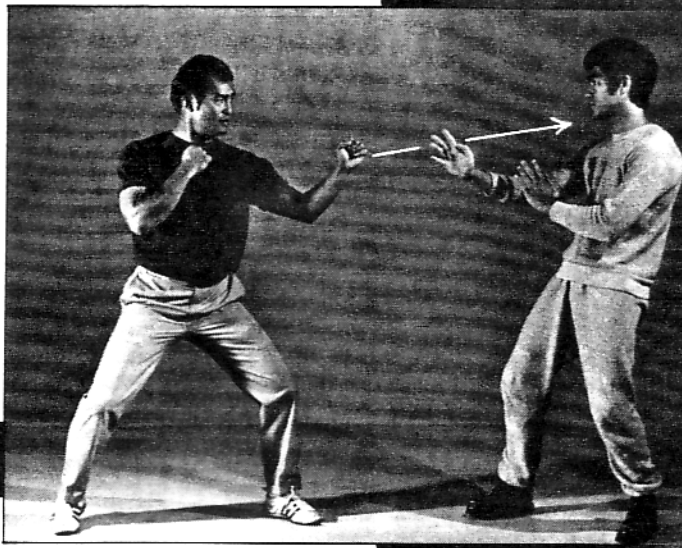
Except in the case of one-hand positions, all the others in Chi Sao are elbows-in. This elbow-in position is important in Wing Chun as it acts as a cushioning device or as a deflecting, auxiliary force should the wrist fail to detect the sudden increase of pressure from the opponent's attack. The elbows-

UTILIZING THE FLOWING ENERGY. Ted Wong (dark suit) tries to create an opening by pushing Bruce Lee's hand outward. Physically, there seems to be an opening, but actually Bruce's energy flows from his elbow and deflects the finger jab away. Ted could counter from Bruce's force also if he would roll his hand with flowing energy.

in position is the trademark of a Wing Chun stylist. The elbow is the immovable center — not in the sense of dead — which does not give, while the forearm and hand are pliable in their adaptations and changes. So, the hands in Chi Sao should be soft but not yielding, forceful and firm but not hard or rigid.

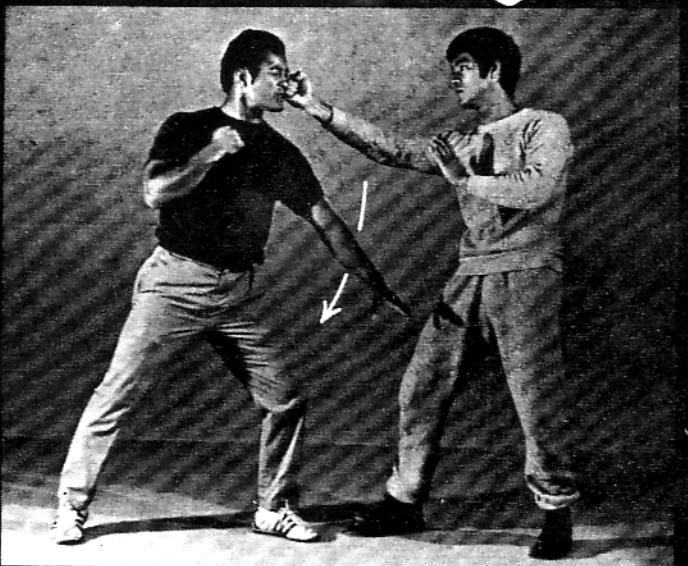
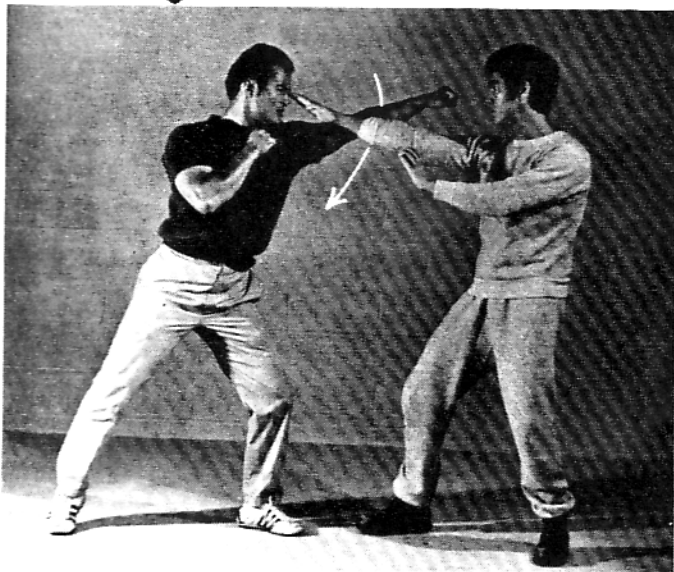
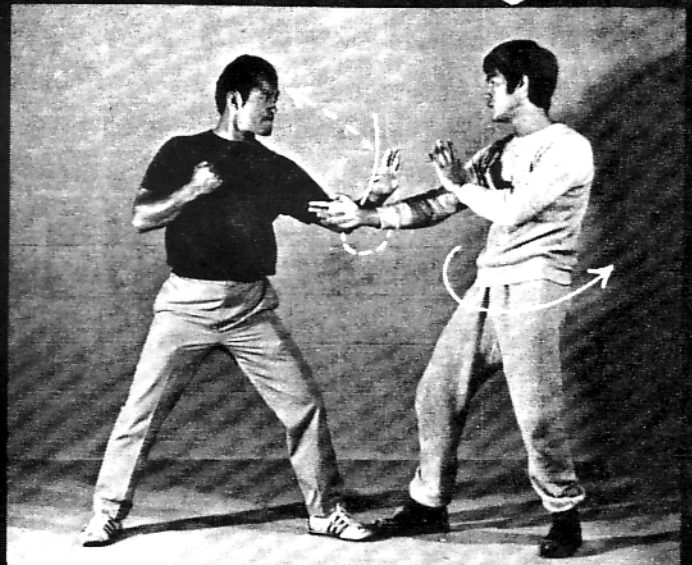
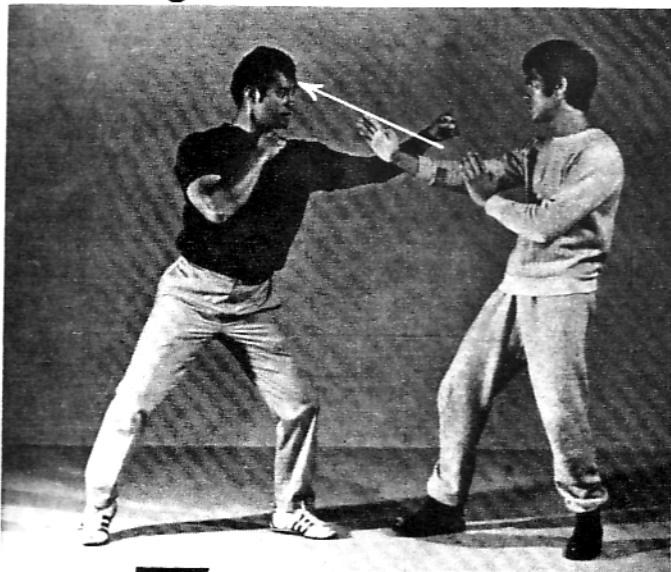
One can classify Wing Chun as a soft style, though I never believe such separation. Anyway, comparing it with other so-called soft styles, Wing Chun is more economical in structure. Also, the different hand positions that can be utilized in Chi Sao practice make it quite versatile. Offensively, Wing Chun's Chi Sao utilizes mainly straight, forward energy; defensively, it makes use of a deflecting arc as well as straight, penetrative lines. The practitioner of the Wing Chun style keeps to the nucleus, letting his opponent move around the circumference. He also learns to view his opponent's move more economically, that is, not over-reacting with extra movements, but moving straight from the center out, or "just enough" from the outside in, with his center line well guarded by his elbow.

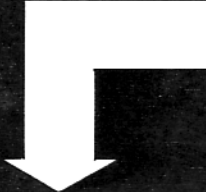
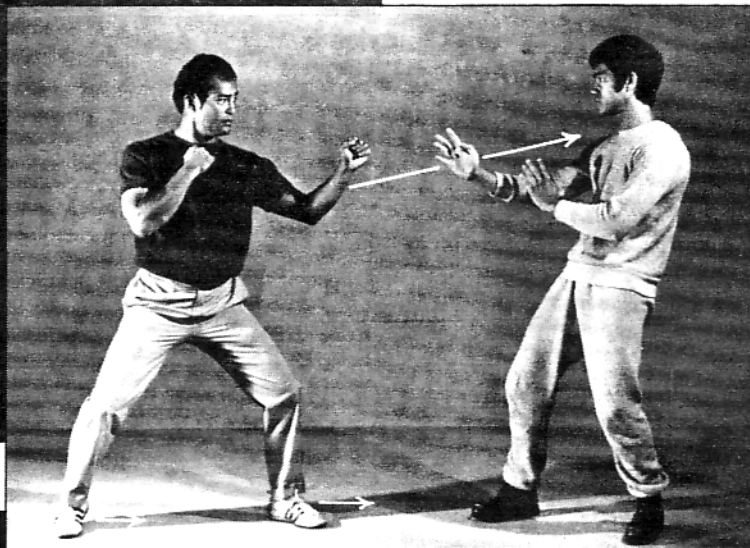
Wing Chun's Chi Sao, especially with flowing energy, does contribute to the total training of a martial artist. However, it must be looked upon not as a cure-all, but a means to an end. Some of the practitioners wrongly regard Chi Sao as a method of fighting, which it is not. Rather, it is a patternized training to serve as a guideline in the learning of a particular style; that is, for correct Wing Chun positioning, for studying of economical lines and angles, and above all, the cultivation of the feeling of constant, flowing energy.



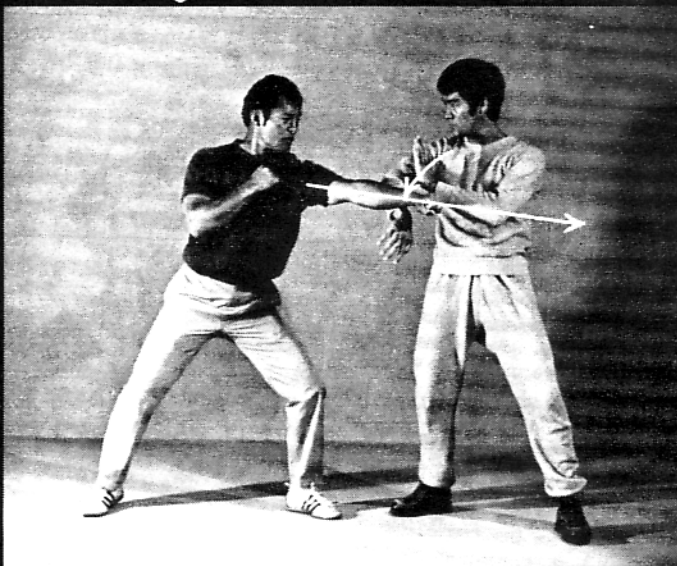
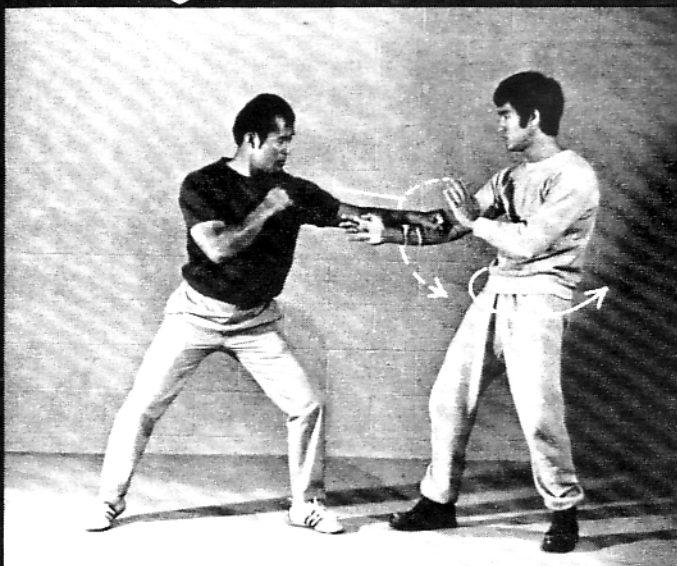
STRAIGHT TO PENETRATE

DISENGAGE WHEN PRESSED



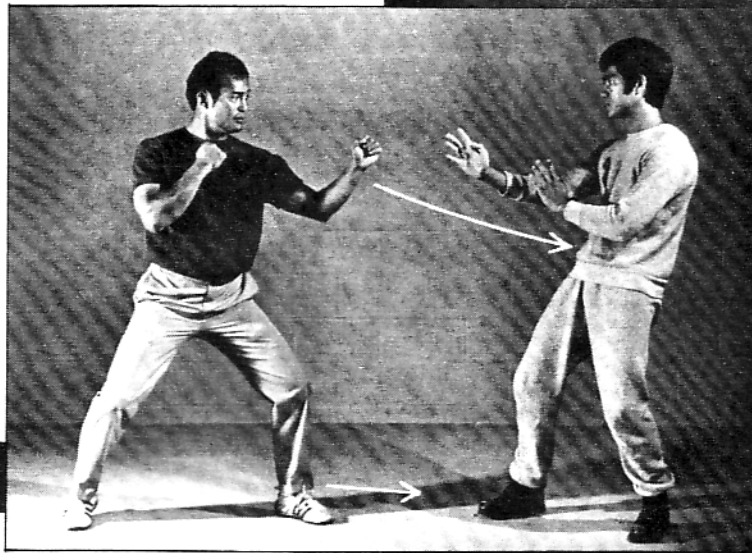


ROLL TO DEFLECT



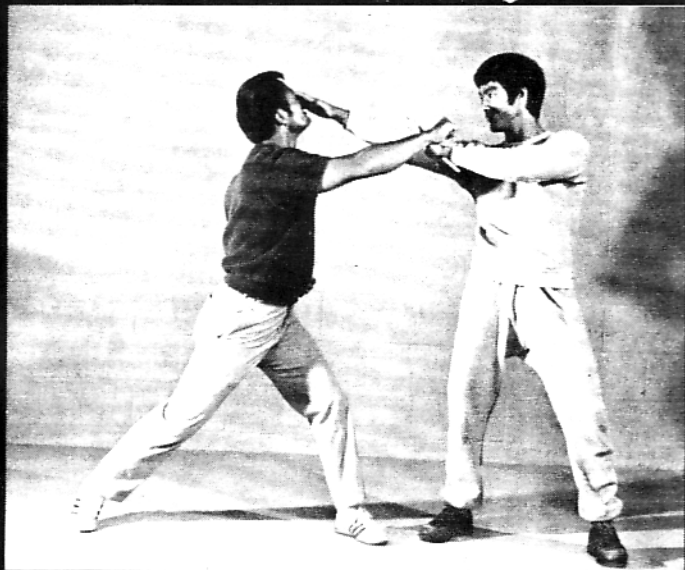
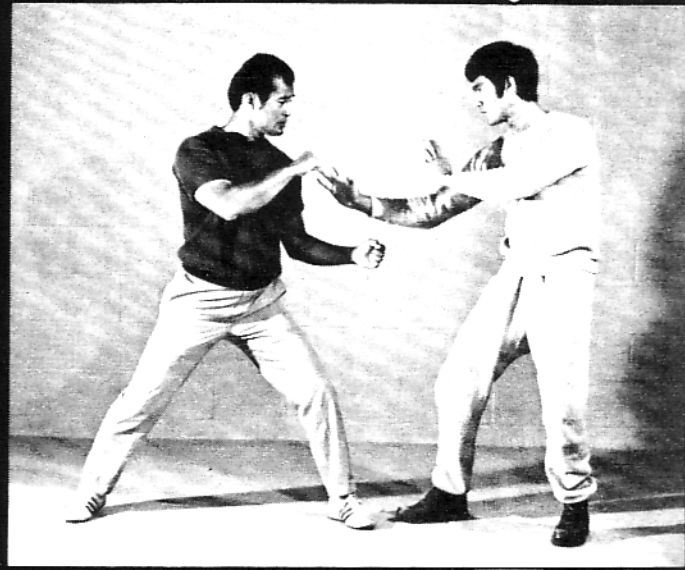
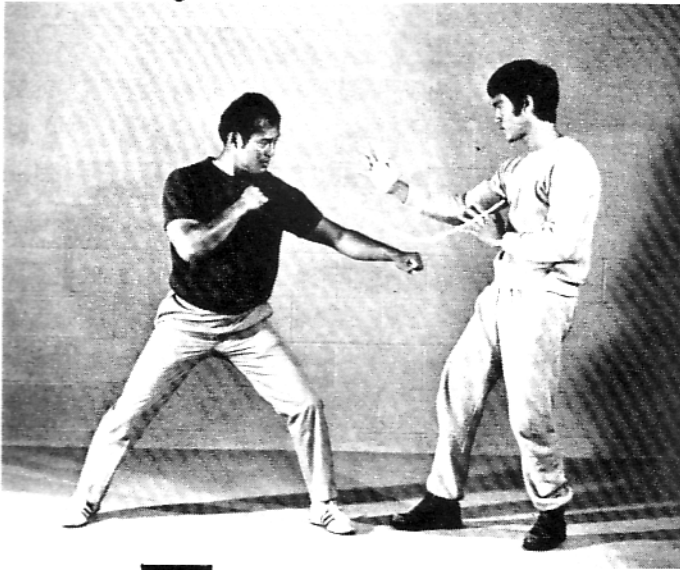
TRAP TO IMMOBILIZE





RECEIVES TO DETAIN

PURSUE WHEN WITHDRAWN



The Chi Sao as Taught by Bruce Lee

(From October, 1976)

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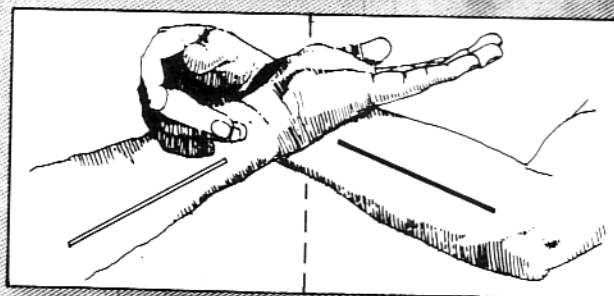


FIG. A

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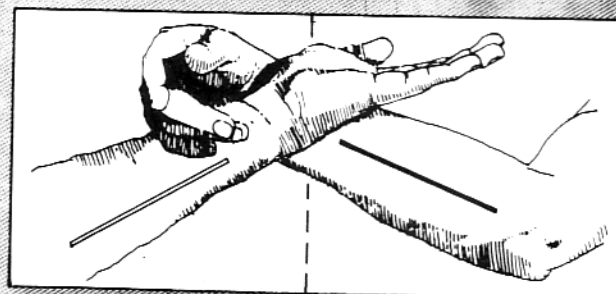


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