

十二支橋

The 12 Bridges (Sahp Yih Ji Kiu) of Hung Gar

As Interpreted by Gam Bok Yin

金博賢

Version 5: October 2004

1. Introduction

The information in this document represents my own interpretation of the Bridge principle and its execution within the Hung Gar style. It is compiled from many sources, including some of the descriptions in the books on Lam Sai Wing's Tit Sin Kuen and Fu Hohk Seung Ying Kuen, and discussion with many others of my peers and seniors, together with more than forty years of my own learning, training and teaching of Hung Gar throughout my life.

I do not claim that the information here is necessarily comprehensive, precise or indeed agreed to by the majority of the Hung Gar worldwide community. I am always happy to receive comments and suggestions for update and improvement from anybody so that we can all have a clearer understanding of the subject. However I offer no guarantee that all comments will be incorporated into future updated versions.

2. Hung Gar – Style Versus System

Before introducing the principle of the Hung Gar Bridges, it is important first to understand the difference between style and system in relation to Hung Gar.

- The Hung Gar STYLE is generally known as a traditional southern Chinese external style of Kung Fu. It is a distinctive and identifiable style having certain major characteristics.
- The Hung Gar SYSTEM consists of a philosophy of practical strategies, principles, tactics and concepts. The SYSTEM is what gives our STYLE its depth, consistency and effectiveness.

Specifically the Hung Gar 12 Bridges are only one of the key components of the SYSTEM of Hung Gar. Some other SYSTEM components of Hung Gar include the animals, the elements, the four pillars, and breath control, as well as personal characteristics of honor, character, and earned trust within the family (Gar).

3. The Theory and Principle of the Bridge

The Bridge is a practice and strategy that (through application of principle, technique, skill and the establishment of positioning and opportunity) establishes advantage and enables the transference of power or energy (chi), and control:-

- a) across the 'inner bridge' (or connection) within the martial artist linking his/her own internal and external attributes, and
- b) across the 'external bridge' (or connection) that links the martial artist with his/her opponent.

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Between opponents, a Bridge may be initiated as either a defensive or offensive technique. It can be used as a preparatory stage in positioning or setting-up either oneself or one's opponent. In this instance the Bridge itself may be any part of the body or any other weapon.

Within oneself the inner Bridge referred to is the principle, technique and path that enables one's own internal energy (Chi) to be transformed into effective external power, strength and focus. In a separate document I describe the principle of Chi or Energy. Cultivating this inner-bridge requires considerable capability and understanding of all of the components and the 'holistic concept' of the Hung Gar system, as briefly introduced below.

4. Hung Gar's 12 Bridges

Hung Gar is known for its specific 12 Bridges (Sahp Yih Ji Kiu), or Kiu Sau. However the concept of Kiu Sau is also common to many styles of Chinese martial arts. While many may believe that the principle of the 12 Bridges mainly represents close fighting with an opponent who may be grappling, holding, restraining or in close proximity, the Bridges also refer to longer range fighting and the use of weapons as well as the limbs and body.

Progressing from the basic knowledge of a movement in any particular form that you may know as consisting of where and how to place the limbs, body or weapon, the 12 Bridges focus exclusively on teaching you 'the holistic concept of the WAY a movement is executed, rather than simply where and how to place the limbs, body or weapon'. For example, it is possible to select a particular movement from within Hung Gar and execute it in a Bik¹ or Jai³ or Wan³ WAY (see table below for explanation of these Bridge techniques and way of execution).

As introduced earlier, the establishment of the practitioners inner Bridge and external Bridge are vital to understanding and execution of the 12 Bridges. The inner Bridge and external Bridge are intrinsically linked. To be able to execute the 12 Bridges in an effective manner it is essential to have understanding and capability of the following, which comprise the basis of the holistic concept mentioned above:

- a) Internal and external fundamentals that are embodied in the combination of the stances,
- b) Center of gravity positioning,
- c) The sounds,
- d) The emotions,
- e) Breath control,
- f) Dan Tien focus,
- g) Muscular control,
- h) Balance and body position,

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- i) Directions of attack and defense,
- j) Correct use of the limbs and weapons (blocking, attacking, controlling, breaking, grabbing),
- k) The spirit and focus, and
- l) Clarity of intent

It takes many years of dedicated training in Hung Gar to master these holistic fundamentals, as well as appropriate physical development to provide the strength and stamina to execute them and the 12 Bridges effectively.

The 12 Bridges also represent important keywords and principles of Hung Gar that form the basis and meaning of the art, and that also serve to guide the student along the path of discovery towards the unlocking of what some may interpret as the mysteries of the art.

To make the 12 Bridges easier to memorize they were traditionally learnt as a verse of two lines of seven words each, which was quite a common practice in literature (something like rhyming couplets in English; or the Haiku 17 syllable verse in Japanese). That requires a total of fourteen words, but there are only twelve Bridges here. Therefore for completeness of the verse two extra words are added, which of themselves usually have no particular meaning to add to the significance of the words for the 12 Bridges. Some typical pairs of very elegant extra words to add may be Saan¹/Hoh⁴ OR Kin⁴/Kwan¹ OR Yam¹/Yeung⁴.

So an example of the complete two-line verse of 7 syllables (words) each for memorizing the 12 Bridges is as follows:

1st line: Gong¹ yauh⁴ bik¹ jik⁶ fan¹ dihng⁶ chuen³
2nd line: Taih⁴ lau⁴ wan⁶ jai³ dehng⁶ (saan¹ hoh⁴)

Following is my understanding and interpretation of the meaning and application of the 12 Bridges of Hung Gar.

It is far from a simple task to create words to adequately describe these techniques, and I strongly recommend that all Hung Gar practitioners consult their own Sifu to obtain his/her interpretation, demonstration, explanation and guidance.

I have chosen only to represent here a description of arm techniques, rather than mention possible variations that may apply to the use of other techniques for the legs, the body and any other weapons. In principal what I have stated also applies to these other techniques with some obvious differences.

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Bridge Technique	My Interpretation of the Meaning and Application
1. Gong ¹ - hard 剛	<p>This is one of the very foundations of Hung Gar, as primarily a hard style, and the practitioner must know how to create and deliver this force that is taught in every form and represents the merging of all of the internal and external fundamentals mentioned above.</p> <p>In executing many of the bridge techniques through the arms, the force moves from soft and relaxed to the hardness that results from the dynamic tension applied to the forearms that unites the wrist forearm and upper arm into a powerful unit.</p> <p>Also the change of stance from Sei Ping Bat Fahn to Ji Ng Ma, and the generation of power by twisting the waist provides another example of generating the 'hard' power referred to.</p> <p>It teaches and enables the practitioner how to generate and focus the internal strength from the Dan Tien to the outside as a hard and powerfully focused explosive force. This is fundamental to many of the Hung Gar techniques.</p>
2. Yauh ⁴ - soft 柔	<p>The gathering of the internal power through the soft circular and relaxed movements replenishes the internal strength at the Dan Tien. The arms are relaxed at the shoulders, and move in a circular fashion using the formation of the 'Dihng⁶' bridge technique explained below. In addition to replenishment, this soft technique is useful in redirecting an opponent's own force such that you may gain advantage and in preparation for attack, immobilization or destruction of balance. Under appropriate circumstances the Yauh⁴ bridge can be very effective in creating an opening within the opponents defense or attack thereby providing opportunity for attack.</p> <p>Examples: tit sin 26, 29, 51, 52. fu hohk 20, 21</p>
3. Bik ¹ - forcing, crowding 逼	<p>Direct the internal force of Dan Tien and the body from a strong stance upon application of the technique, which is a short powerful deflecting block. Usually the range of movement of this technique is very small and it can be delivered with single or double arm movements.</p> <p>Examples: tit sin 5</p>
4. Jik ⁶ - straight 直	<p>The technique of delivering direct and straight focused force from the waist through the arm. There are many examples of this throughout the Hung Gar forms and it is one of the fundamental foundations.</p>

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Bridge Technique	My Interpretation of the Meaning and Application
5. Fan ¹ - dividing 分	Direct the internal force from Dan Tien outwards and laterally, usually with the arms both pushing out together, often using back-fists and from a strong stance with lowered center of gravity sinking even further down upon application of the technique. Delivered using a circular outwards movement. Examples: tit sin 20, 35, 44, 58, 68. fu hohk 55, 60, 96
6. Dihng ⁶ - steady 定	Using the arm as a solid iron-like bridge for transference and maintenance of force and steadiness. Executed with either single or both arms straight, palms facing forward at 90 ⁰ or 180 ⁰ to forearm and fingers together and extended. This flexes the forearm muscles in a locked and powerful manner for optimum steadiness. Examples: tit sin 16, 32, 40. fu hohk 7
7. Chuen ³ - inch 寸	Using the straight force from the 'Jik ⁶ ' bridge technique deliver that force through a single or double straight arm technique with the entire arm from shoulder through to finger tips at 180 ⁰ , sinking the center of gravity low down upon application of the technique. At close quarters this delivers a powerful force from the Dan Tien to the fingertips, very effective at striking the opponents head, neck, solar plexus and ribs. Examples: tit sin 18, 33, 42, 56, 66
8. Taih ⁴ - lift 提	This directs the force from Dan Tien outwards and upwards, with both or single arms lifting upwards and from a strong stance with lowered center of gravity sinking even further down upon application of the technique. Delivered at close quarters using a circular movement to generate a rising power focused usually at the opponents jaw or lifting to break an opponents constraining hold. Examples: tit sin 12, 15, 48, 64. fu hohk 14
9. Lau ⁴ - flow 流 留	There appears to be two interpretations of this amongst various schools. The first is that the word Lau ⁴ is the character 留 which means 'reserve', and the second is the character 流 which means 'flow'. Both characters have exactly the same pronunciation in Cantonese. Therefore over time there may have been some confusion about which of the two is actually correct. Despite the confusion, both of the interpretations are useful. I will explain both of these meanings here. Firstly 'flow'. The broad meaning of the word is to flow, spread, or circulate. By using flowing movements particularly for blocking in a controlling manner the opponents offensive technique can be overcome or diverted. Usually the range of this movement, typically applied with the forearm (kiu sau), is small and at close quarters. Execution of this movement can take advantage of the opponent's own power and use it against him. This technique is often used directly following a Bik ¹ technique, and usually it is a controlling technique based on the Jai ³

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	<p>principle. The combination of the bridge techniques Bik¹, Jai³ and Lau⁴ is quite a common defensive approach.</p> <p>Secondly 'reserve'. Often an opponent can be overcome without excessive physical force. By keeping your force in reserve and carefully evaluating or sensing your opponent's ability, weaknesses and spirit you will know how best to react to the situation. The sensing ability applies both while in physical contact with the opponent or at a distance. A slight pausing between techniques, in which case it will usually be following a Jai³ technique, can also represent it.</p>
10. Wan ⁶ – sending 運	<p>Using the force from the opponent and directing it elsewhere such that you may focus it together with your own force to overcome the opponent either through breaking techniques or destruction of balance to your own advantage. The opponents force is gathered and redirected using a circular motion of the arms.</p> <p>Examples: fu hohk 20, 21</p>
11. Jai ³ - control 制	<p>Firstly direct the internal force from Dan Tien to a single or both arms using the principles of the 'Yauh⁴' bridge technique. Then slowly using your hands or tiger claw, and transferring your force from soft to hard, control the opponent's force, or ability to respond, using a movement towards your centerline with powerful forearms. Executed from a strong stance with lowered center of gravity sinking even further down upon application of the technique, and delivered using the proper breath and sound with a purposeful movement of the arm it can overcome the opponent's hold and balance.</p> <p>Examples: tit sin 19, 34, 43, 57</p>
12. Dehng ⁶ – arrange, settle 訂	<p>Direct the internal force from Dan Tien through one or both arms and at the same time downwards from a strong stance with lowered center of gravity sinking even further down upon application of the technique. The downward delivery actually assisting your sinking stance and directing even more power through the arms and elbows.</p>

By drawing on the principals of all of the Bridge techniques, combined with your flow and control of internal/external energy, and your strategy and mastery of all of the other elements of the art of Hung Gar, you will instinctively know what combinations to use from what you have learned, in order to finalize, subdue or avoid your opponent.

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5. Ability to Make and Hold the Bridge

The 12 Bridges taught within the Hung Gar system provide considerable choice to meet the demands and strategy of most (if not all) situations of conflict. The bridging theory must be clearly understood and mastered in order to make and also hold the Bridge.

It is quite normal that your opponent may instinctively attempt to break or destroy your Bridge. Therefore apart from initially making your Bridge, you must be skilled in holding it. This is often where the value and application of your own internal bridging principles are appreciated and your capability and knowledge of all of the components of the Hung Gar system.

6. Bridge and Enter

This refers to the concept of first bridging with an opponent (or an opponents weapons) and then, should you choose, entering or attacking by means of that particular Bridge, so that you can strike at vulnerable areas or immobilize an opponents offensive techniques or weapons.

In a fighting situation it is therefore critical to create an effective Bridge that enables you to carry out your particular intent.

7. Short Bridge / Long Bridge

This is usually in reference to close (short) or distant (long) bridging techniques. Hung Gar teaches both close range and long range fighting strategy and capability.

The application of Bridges in both these situations obviously has some differences to suit the strategy. The main differences apply not in the Bridge itself, but in your own knowledge and application of your bridging principles when faced with varying distance in terms of:-

- a) Internal and external fundamentals that are embodied in the combination of the stances,
- b) Center of gravity positioning,
- c) Breath control,
- d) Dan Tien focus,
- e) Balance and body position, and
- f) Directions of attack and defense.

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8. Bridges as Stages of Development

Some people may refer to a student's study of martial arts as a path consisting of particular Bridges to cross. This usually means stages of the student's own development, and can be similar in concept to the broad stages of life.

In the Hung Gar style we do not generally use this as a reference. Other styles may do and may refer to the Bridges by such things as:-

- a) Floating, unskilled, undeveloped
- b) Awareness, partial understanding, developing
- c) Enlightened, everlasting, focused.

9. Bridging of Intent and Outcome

Intent is a critical factor involved in all situations of conflict. Both your intent and the intent of your opponent are important considerations. A misjudgment of intent, or an application based on inappropriate intent, can have dire consequences for either party.

The correct balance between your understanding of the usage and application of the Bridges and your assessment, understanding and application of intent enables you to marshal the appropriate techniques and energy for the presenting situation.

In any conflict, the right understanding of what is really happening and what the real intent is will enable you to concentrate on the right outcome by focusing on the right effort and the right actions. Intent provides the Bridge for this to occur.

Intent therefore becomes an important Bridge itself across which energy, focus and technique can flow to achieve the desired outcome.

10. Some Functional Phrases That May Help to Describe the Bridge Concept

- a) A method and strategy for control of the opponent
- b) A connection between opponents (arm, leg, body, weapon)
- c) A strategy to bridge the gap between opponents
- d) Use your bridge to defeat or infiltrate an opponents bridge
- e) Bridging allows access to the opponents vital and vulnerable areas
- f) Destroying the bridge of an opponent provides an opportunity to gain advantage

Notes:

1. The superscript numbers to the right of the romanized Chinese words are there to assist with Cantonese pronunciation.
2. The examples referred to are specific movements from the books on Lam Sai Wing's Tit Sin Kuen and Fu Hohk Seung Ying Kuen. Although there are also many other examples throughout other Hung Kuen forms. However please bear in mind that the 12 bridges refer to the **WAY** the technique is executed rather than the components of the movement.

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