

**MUSIC OF THE MARTIAL ARTS:
RHYTHM, MOVEMENT, AND MEANING
IN A CHINESE CANADIAN KUNG FU CLUB**

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF PHILSOPHY

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN MUSIC
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

December 2014

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Abstract

This dissertation is an investigation of the percussion used to accompany Chinese martial arts and lion dancing at Toronto, Canada's Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. It is based on six years of participant-observation and performance ethnography there, as well as a nine-month period of comparative fieldwork in Hong Kong. The diasporic environment presented questions of identity, and the research also engaged with the emerging field of martial arts studies. The discussion's primary lines of inquiry are the use of percussion-accompanied lion dance and kung fu in the construction of identity for performers and audiences in a multicultural context; embodied knowledge in the movement and music that undergirds a Chinese, martial way of being-in-the-world; and the experience of learning, performing, and observing these practices. This study draws on phenomenology, semiotics, practice theory, and cognitive semantics, which have been tempered by discipleship at Hong Luck. The primary argument of this dissertation is that, despite the challenges of diaspora, Hong Luck's transmission process uses intense physical training to engrain a distinctly Chinese, martial habitus onto practitioners; this set of dispositions is the prerequisite for becoming a drummer and is sonically—and physically—manifested in percussion-accompanied kung fu and lion dancing with important implications for the identity of performers and patrons. The main thesis is augmented by an argument for experiencing combat skills through music. With over fifty years of history, the ideals of self-strengthening, resistance to domination, and respect for Chinese culture that are embodied in Hong Luck's practices have had a lasting impact on not only the local Chinatown community, but also the Greater Toronto Area and beyond.

Dedication

I dedicate this project to Masters Paul and Jin Chan, the co-founding leaders of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. It is my sincere hope that this work will contribute to their goal of preserving and promoting traditional Chinese martial arts. While no amount of writing could ever capture the depth of mastery embodied by these two men, I proffer my efforts with all due respect for them and their lineage.



Figure 1: Masters Jin and Paul Chan (seated on chairs, left and right) with student-performers at the forty-ninth anniversary banquet

Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I thank my supervisor Louise Wrazen for her stolid support, thoughtful advice, and meticulous editing, not to mention a mountain of reference letters. I also thank the other members of my dissertation committee, Mary Fogarty and Sundar Viswanathan, for their helpful comments along the way. The oral defence draft received a very thorough and insightful set of revisions from my external examiner, Jonathan Stock, to whom I am most grateful. Like every graduate student from my cohort, I am indebted to our program administrator Tere Tilban-Rios; she somehow does the work of three people and still keeps her flock on track. I would also like to thank the York Centre for Asian Research, with special gratitude to the ever-helpful and organized coordinator Alicia Filipowich.

I am very fortunate to have been supported by great people outside of York as well. I credit my father Barry McGuire for having sparked the idea to do research on music and martial arts. Thanks to my mother Janie Toth and my fiancée Bee Sun for believing in me no matter what. My classmates, teachers, seniors, and elders at the Hong Luck Kung Fu club accepted me into their fold and spared no effort in whipping me into shape, for which I am eternally grateful. After so many hours spent together not only training and performing, but also sharing meals and chatting, they are like another family to me. I would also like to express my appreciation for Hong Kong's Chung Chi Martial Arts Association and the New Asia Kung Fu Society. Although I was only in Hong Kong for nine months, they packed what felt like years worth of experience into that time.

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PREFACE

A Note on Language

There are several important considerations when weaving Chinese words into an English language text such as this. These include: what dialect(s) to use, when to transliterate versus when to translate, which romanization system to use when transliterating (e.g., Wade-Gilles, Hanyu Pinyin, Yale, Jyutping, colloquial), and whether or not to include Chinese characters. Although Mandarin is more widely spoken, and is known as the *national language* (國語) or *common speech* (普通話) of China, the two dialects in regular use during my fieldwork were Cantonese (廣東話) and Taishanese (台山話). This pair has some mutual intelligibility because they are both part of the *Yue language* (粵語) family, whereas Mandarin belongs to the *northern dialects* (北方話), but all of the above use the same written language.¹ In general, I will conform to the dialect(s) used by my consultants and also their preference for writing Chinese with *traditional characters* (正體字), rather than *simplified characters* (簡體字). For Chinese words that have no effective English translation and are not yet found in an English dictionary, I will romanize using either Yale for Cantonese or Hanyu Pinyin for Mandarin, as appropriate. These will be in italics (including diacritical marks), followed by Chinese characters in brackets on first occurrence.² After the initial appearance of a word thus transliterated, I will use the romanized word in italics (without diacritics or

¹ The word *Chinese* (中文) refers specifically to the unified writing system or generally to any of the various spoken Sinitic languages.

² Yale romanization has widespread currency among people who speak Cantonese as a second language, despite being relatively unknown to native speakers. It was used during my studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Yale-China Chinese Language Centre and the School of Continuing Studies at the University of Toronto.

characters). For names of kung fu styles and practitioners, I will instead use the colloquial romanization recognized by my consultants and other kung fu practitioners. For the names of people, the typical order in English is given name(s) followed by family name, whereas in Chinese it is the reverse. I will default to the English order except in the cases of some famous individuals where the Chinese order is already well known (e.g., Dr. Sun Yat-sen). The Chinese idiographs for personal names (where known) will follow the Chinese order of putting the surname first.

Some Chinese words have already been naturalized into English and can be found in a good dictionary. In such cases I will conform to standard usage—regardless of dialect or romanization system—but may italicize if the word is uncommon.

Occasionally, these words occur under more than one spelling (e.g., Qing dynasty vs. Ching dynasty). In such cases, I will use the version that I feel to be the most common and/or easily read by English speakers. For words that have not yet made their way into English dictionaries, but can be effectively translated, my preference is to give English translations in italics, followed by the Chinese characters in brackets as necessary. This allows people who are literate in written Chinese—regardless of what dialect they speak—to read the characters because the writing system is nearly the same across the vastly different variants of spoken Sinitic languages. It also reduces the linguistic strain on non-Sinophones. For place names, I will use their officially recognized romanization—regardless of dialect or system—because these are what would be found on a modern map.

CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Background and Research Topic

Rhythm is an essential aspect of both music and martial arts. While there are marked differences between the ways patterns manifest in these two areas, there is also an ancient connection between them. China's most famous treatise on military strategy and warfare, Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (孫子兵法), states that gongs and drums should be used to unite and focus armies (trans. Cleary 2003:124–127). This pertains both to giving musical signals to direct troop movements, as well as to bolstering the morale and energy of the soldiers. Significantly, the Chinese character for *drum* can also mean *to rouse* (鼓). In *The Republic of Plato*, Socrates postulated that only two types of music were fit for an ideal state (trans. Cornford 1972:85–88). One of these two types encouraged bravery in times of war or danger and used words, musical modes, and rhythms designed specifically to develop a warrior's spirit. In contemporary times, many combat sports and martial arts still feature musical accompaniment, including: Brazillian capoeira, Iranian *zoor khane*, Thai kickboxing, Senegalese *laamb* wrestling, Trinidadian *kalinda* stick-fighting, Sikh *gatka*, and Indo-Malay *silat/silek*, among others. Scholars, however, have only recently begun to address this area. The focus of this dissertation is on the *gong and drum* music (鑼鼓) associated with Chinese *kung fu* (功夫), which is used by some

groups to accompany *lion dancing* (舞獅) and/or demonstrations of choreographed sequences of fighting moves known as *forms* (套路).¹

I had tried my hand at half a dozen types of martial arts before I began studying the *Wing Chun* style of kung fu (詠春拳) with Master Henry Lo (盧建雄師傅) in 1999.² As *Wing Chun* is not usually associated with any kind of music, my introduction to kung fu percussion came in a very roundabout way. Master Lo has also studied other systems and knows how to play the large, single-sided, barrel drum connected with kung fu. During Chinese New Year, he usually helps out his friend and colleague Master Lee Chi Wai (李志偉師傅) of the Chung Wah Kung Fu Club (中華武學系統工程) by playing the drum for their lion dance performances at various Chinese shopping areas around the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). One year Master Lo invited me to participate and lent me a videotape of some lion dancing so that I could learn the basic accompaniment patterns that I would be playing on a pair of hand-held cymbals.

It was a new experience for me because I had only ever seen lion dance in film and television or in passing at various Chinese festivities. I remember feeling an initial sense of wonder at a ritual that seemed very mysterious and colourful to me, but that sentiment was quickly overtaken by the strain of exertion from playing an instrument I was not used to performing on. After a couple hours, my arms were exhausted, numb, and shaking, though I also felt a sense of elation from the extremely loud, repetitive

¹ *Lion dance* and *kung fu* are general terms. They are thus not capitalized, which is reserved for specific styles of these practices.

² *Wing Chun* refers to a group of related systems of close range martial arts from Southern China. Master Lo teaches the Sum Nung style (岑能詠春拳, named after the recently deceased Grand Master) that comes from the city of Guangzhou.

rhythms and the satisfaction of getting into a groove with a new group of musicians. It was not until several years later that I fully grasped the impact and significance of this event.

When I began considering doctoral studies, it was after having earned an MA in electroacoustic composition and also having received transmission of the full Wing Chun system from Master Lo. I became curious about exploring a connection between music and martial arts, which seemed like an area I was uniquely well positioned to research. I knew that some martial arts feature a musical element and that combat has many rhythmic qualities, but a preliminary exploration of the subject turned up very little in either academic or popular sources. This is not to say that nothing has been written about martial arts that have music associated with them, but rather that most of what is out there comes from disciplines other than music and deals with the musical sounds as a mere periphery addendum to the physical, cultural, or social aspects of these practices (e.g., Mukhopadhyay 2002; Pauka 1998; Schissel 2008; Wilson 2002). Capoeira appears to be the main exception, perhaps because of its international popularity and the omnipresence of music during both training and performance. The work of scholars like J. Lowell Lewis (1992) and Greg Downey (1998, 2002) on this Brazilian dance-fight-game stand as rare examples of how martial arts music can be given more priority in scholarly research. The art of kung fu, however, has not yet been given such a treatment.

This lacuna—and the compelling nature of the area—motivated me to embark on this intensive study and has continued to inform my research questions. I chose Toronto's Hong Luck Kung Fu Club (literally: Healthy Happy Martial Hall, 康樂武館) as the site

of my fieldwork, in large part because Master Lo advised me that they had the best—and most traditional—drumming in the Greater Toronto Area. Having outlined a bit of my background and the genesis of what many people have suggested to me is an unusual topic, I will now proceed to explain my research questions and problems.

In this dissertation, I will present an ethnography of Toronto's Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. It is based on fieldwork done there from 2008 to 2014, and complementary research undertaken during a nine-month academic exchange to Hong Kong in 2011/2012. This study will engage with the following lines of inquiry: the confluence of combat, ritual, and performance in the social construction of identity for practitioners and audiences in a diasporic, multicultural context; kung fu percussion as the musical embodiment of desirable martial attributes and the martial expression of musical qualities by kung fu practitioners, which both relate to the performative embodiment of Chinese identity; and the experience of learning, performing, and hearing percussion in a martial framework. This project is an investigation of the intersection of music, martial arts, lion dance, and ritual at Hong Luck that draws on phenomenology, Peircian semiotics, and practice theory. As such, it participates in the broader discussions of embodiment, diasporic identity, and interdisciplinary approaches to music. I also engage with the nascent field of martial arts studies where music and martial arts is an under-unexplored area and provides fertile ground for this project. In this dissertation, I argue that Hong Luck's transmission process builds discourses of Chinese identity and resistance to oppression into the physical training; these discourses are manifested as emergent embodied knowledge in performances of percussion-accompanied kung fu and lion

dance. In a diasporic context, Hong Luck is not only a producer of bodily acculturation for Canadian-born Chinese and non-Chinese Canadians, but as the club enters its sixth decade, it is also a product of the processes that transmit a Chinese martial habitus. Additionally, I argue that combat skills can be experienced as music and I present a method for analyzing them as such.

The rest of this chapter will flesh out the subject matter and introduce the project's fieldwork protocols, methodology, and theoretical base. This introduction will also survey the main literature, although I will be weaving some theories, methods, and literature into later sections, as they become relevant. The last section of this introduction will give the overall structure of the dissertation by summarizing the individual chapters. Before proceeding, I must clarify what kung fu is as a phenomenon, in order to establish the fundamental context for studying the sound, concept, and behaviour of Chinese martial arts percussion music in a Canadian milieu.

Ethnographic Context: Martial Arts and Kung Fu as a Blurred Genre

... Hopology: the history of arms and armour, their connection and their transitions, plays the most important part in the annals of the world. (Burton 1884:1)

According to historian Douglas Harper, the etymology of the modern adjective-noun combination *martial art* shows a fairly direct English translation from Japanese around 1909 (*Online Etymology Dictionary*).³ The root Japanese term is *bujutsu*, which is written with Chinese characters (武術) and means methods or techniques of combat.

³ http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=martial+arts&allowed_in_frame=0 accessed October 25th, 2014.

Since the Second World War, however, there has been an evolution of that meaning. In Japanese, *bujutsu* tends to be reserved for ancient, battlefield fighting systems, while *budô* (martial way, 武道) now refers to the modern, reformed, Japanese combat arts that emphasize personal development, spirituality, and/or sport instead of warfare. In Chinese, martial art is written with the same characters as *bujutsu* and has entered English with the Mandarin pronunciation *wushu*. It can still refer to Chinese fighting systems, broadly defined, or more specifically to the combative and martial demonstration sport developed in the People's Republic of China (PRC). When used to refer to this activity, *wushu* typically means the highly acrobatic, demonstration side of the PRC's sport that is focused on *forms* (套路), while *sanda* (散打) or *sanshou* (散手) are used for a type of kickboxing that includes throws and takedowns. *Kung fu* is the word more commonly used for the traditional martial arts of China and has come into English from colloquial Cantonese. It literally means skill achieved through effort, which could also be used as a general term to describe expertise in other arts, such as making tea or painting.

Several scholars have taken on the task of clarifying what the martial arts are and there is some consensus about the main points. Nonetheless, there remains enough disagreement about the scope and details to warrant further discussion here before writing about kung fu as a martial art, let alone one that incorporates music. In *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia*, anthropologist Thomas Green wrote that martial arts are, “systems that blend the physical components of combat with strategy, philosophy, tradition, or other features that distinguish them from pure physical reaction” (2001:xvi). The editors of the book *Martial Arts in the Modern World* (Thomas Green and historian

Joseph Svinth) have noted that the words *martial art* should include just about any systematized form of combat—Eastern or Western—and yet still tend to intimate some of the philosophical preoccupations of the relatively new Japanese *budô*. They recommend that authors use more narrowly defined terminology, unless they actually mean martial art in the broadest of contexts (2003:276). For example, martial art can be used casually to refer to as wide a range of different phenomena as: hand-to-hand fighting systems in the armed forces, like the Marine Corp Martial Arts Program (MCMAP); no-holds-barred fighting competitions, otherwise known as mixed martial arts (MMA); and also choreographed, acrobatic, fighting sequences as found in movies, television, and on stage.

In order to be clearer when discussing human combative behaviour, scholars have come up with names for sub-varieties of martial art. Danielle Bolelli (2003) has divided the martial arts into five categories, based on the primary focus of their practitioners: performance art, internal art, weapon art, self-defence art, and combat sport.⁴ Within this system he recognizes that any given style may contain elements of some or all of the other areas, but Bolelli argues that styles tend to prioritize only one of these aspects. Using my earlier examples of phenomena that could be labelled martial art according to Green's wide definition, I would agree that it is more accurate to call them specific names, such as combat sport for MMA and martial-acrobatic performance for kung fu action movies. Bolelli's system is not without problems, however, as reality-based

⁴ Most of Bolelli's categories are fairly self-explanatory except for *internal art*, which refers to martial arts whose main goals are personal development, health promotion, and or spiritual growth through the control of esoteric energies, meditation, and soft or flowing movements.

combat styles often use offence as defence, so perhaps *combatives* would be a better term for something like MCMAP (rather than Bolelli's nearest category: self-defence art), and could be further specified as a form of military combatives. Furthermore, there are martial arts that actually do focus on more than one of Bolelli's areas, such as the styles of kung fu that are the subject of this dissertation.

David Jones, an anthropologist and black belt holder in several Japanese *budô*, has suggested an even more inclusive definition than Green, writing that, "martial arts are stylized behaviours that relate to war" (2002:xi-xii). He goes on to list a series of nine elements that he considers to be the most salient in identifying a martial art: hand-to-hand and/or hand-held weapons, choreographed forms, ritual, technique drills, sparring, performances for the entertainment of others, seeking internal power, ranks or hierarchies, and a connection to social elites. Jones qualifies this list by recognizing that not all of these elements need to be present, but that a majority of them is a strong indicator. This method for identifying a martial art works because it allows for many shades of grey and does not try to force heterodox practices into orthodox definitions, whereas Bolelli's does not adequately account for complex systems with multiple goals. Unfortunately, Jones includes significant exceptions within many of the descriptions of these factors—especially regarding social elites—and exhibits a bias towards seemingly Japanese categories, which immediately weakens this schema. His more widely applicable idea is that martial art is stylized behaviour, related to war, and covers the three areas of combat, ritual, and performance. A practice that contains only two out of three would be slipping into grey area and one that shows only a single element might

better be glossed as something other than martial art.

By any of these definitions, the members of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club practise martial arts. Master Paul Chan (陳樹郁師傅) and his associates established the group in 1961, originally meeting in improvised locations such as the basements and backrooms of the Chinese restaurants where the founders worked. The club eventually purchased a three-story house located at 548 Dundas Street West in Toronto, Ontario, Canada's Spadina/Dundas Chinatown, where it has been since 1968. The two main systems currently practised there are *Choi Lee Fut* (蔡李佛) and *Do Pi* (道派). These have been the primary styles since well before I joined the club, although other types of kung fu have been taught and practised at Hong Luck over time, especially *Hung Kuen* (literally: Hero Boxing, 洪拳) in the early days. Choi Lee Fut and Do Pi's priority is evidenced by the portraits of their founders hanging on the wall, framed by *paired lines of Chinese verse* (對聯), to which the class bows before and after formal classes.

Both of Hong Luck's main styles can be described as *long-arm wide-stance* (長橋大馬) types of Southern Chinese kung fu and share many similarities. Nonetheless, they remain separate from each other in terms of their overall character, specific history, and social position, which I shall address in Chapter 2. While Choi Lee Fut and Do Pi are distinct styles, they are practised concurrently at Hong Luck, so I will only differentiate them if there is something that requires highlighting. In many cases, there is actually a considerable blending and syncretism between them. This martial arts synthesis has been incubated during Hong Luck's more than fifty years of history, which has led to a distinctive approach that is very nearly its own style. Several of the senior members have

alluded to this when they have remarked to me that they feel their lineage, taken as a whole, is more than the sum of its parts. Nonetheless, there is a lot of value placed on tradition and the club's identity is indelibly implicated in its kung fu styles.

The fundamental curriculum consists of stances, strikes, and blocks, as well as several basic forms. This program does not constitute a rigid syllabus, so it has varied over time and depends on who is teaching any given class. Less frequently, there are also physical conditioning exercises, partner training drills, joint locks, or brief meditations. After students have demonstrated an adequate grasp of the fundamentals, a command of the basic forms, and sufficient physical fitness, they can be invited to attend additional classes in order to learn more advanced skills and/or to train fighting applications. For example, lion dance class, which includes the percussion, is not available to beginners.

Many students continue to train in much the same way at the intermediate level as they did at the beginner level, but with more complex techniques and forms, as well as the introduction of archaic, hand-held weapons. Formal classes begin with the teacher lighting incense on a large altar at the back of the training hall. The whole group then does a pair of stylized bows, specific to Choi Lee Fut and Do Pi respectively, facing the altar, followed by further bows towards the portraits of kung fu ancestors on the wall. These bows are also repeated at the end of the class. The early days at Hong Luck were reputedly full of very rough training, but more recently, there has been little actual combat in the classes—beginner, intermediate, or advanced. It is rare to see sparring drills that incorporate a fully resisting opponent or spontaneous attack and defence. Instead, the focus tends to be primarily on the performance of forms or drilling basic

techniques. If this type of training was the whole picture, Bolelli's performance art category could supersede a more inclusive martial art designation because the ritual element is perfunctory and combat is infrequent.

The ideal kung fu practitioner at Hong Luck does much more than just perform prearranged sequences of stylized fighting movements; s/he should also be able to fight, lion dance, play the instruments, and perform feats of strength. To this end there are additional classes beyond the core curriculum. In the application/sparring class, students work with resisting partners, strike punching bags or pads, and also do some free-fighting in order to hone their skills in attack and defence. Some people prefer to compete in combat sports and Hong Luck has produced successful fighters in generic kickboxing, as well as Chinese *sanda/sanshou* kickboxing. Lion dance class is where people learn to play the roles of both the head and the tail of the lion as well as play the percussion. The costume consists of a large mask that covers the front performer's whole upper torso with a cape that extends from the back of the mask and covers the body of the person in the rear. The percussion ensemble consists of one membranophone and two types of metalophones, which at Hong Luck are usually referred to by their English names, although I will include the Chinese words used by the elders for reference: a large, single head, barrel *drum* (*gú*, 鼓) beaten with two short, stubby sticks; a flat, shallow, bronze *gong* (*lòh*, 鑼) that is struck with a short knobbed stick; and one or more bronze *cymbals* (spoken onomatopoeically as *chā*, 鑼, but rendered in formal speech and writing as *baht*, 鈸), played by holding a central knob and striking them together concussively (see Figure 2 below). Finally, there are a special group of *chi kung* (literally: vital energy skills,

氣功) exercises that are taught to advanced students and comprise breathing, movement, and meditation. The soft version is meant to improve health and mental focus by circulating and accumulating *chi* energy, using slow breathing and gentle movement. The second type of practice is glossed as hard and is thought to help the practitioner be able to endure extreme punishment or display feats of strength. Hong Luck members perform hard chi kung, using dynamic muscular tension and pressurized breathing, before doing things like lying on a bed of nails while a concrete block is laid on their chest and then smashed with a sledgehammer. To be considered a true master of kung fu, a person must demonstrate abilities in all aspects of martial art, i.e., they must embody the meaning of kung fu as skill achieved through hard work over time. In practice, individual people have their own interests and talents, so it is not uncommon for Hong Luck members to focus on only one or two areas out of the available range of forms, fighting, lion dance, percussion, and chi kung.



Figure 2: Hong Luck lion dance team with instruments

Consistent with other interest in martial arts that have music genres associated with them, Hong Luck's tradition would better be treated as a *blurred genre* that combines not only Jones' combat, ritual, and performance, but also sport, music, and dance into a complex whole (Lewis 1992 and Downey 2002, further to Geertz 1983). Several of my consultants have claimed that their different arts are intrinsically related and that, as a result, their lion dance and drumming are fundamentally different from troupes that do not have a kung fu base. Students who have attempted to join lion dance

class or play the instruments, but lacked the necessary sense of rhythm, are sent back for remedial training in kung fu as the antidote to their deficiencies in dance skills and musicianship. Rhythm is accorded an essential place in both fighting applications and forms practice, but is somewhat cloaked in mystery as a largely unexplainable phenomenon that is best understood through diligent training. In light of these beliefs—and the way the other scholars have dealt with martial arts music— this ethnography will treat all aspects of Hong Luck’s practice as being integral to the musical sound and vice versa.

Research Protocol and Methodologies

When I arrived at Hong Luck in the fall of 2008 and expressed my desire to perform ethnographic fieldwork on kung fu drumming and lion dance, I was told to join the beginner class—just like everyone else. I had already achieved an advanced level of proficiency in Wing Chun, so I fully understood that kung fu means hard work and I was prepared for some tough training. What surprised me was the nonchalant way that the instructors and senior students seemed to accept my presence as a researcher, while essentially ignoring me. My initial attempts at discussing anything to do with lion dance or drumming were met with stock answers that could easily have been found in five minutes of Internet research or flipping through a popular martial arts magazine. Hong Luck maintains a storefront training facility on a busy street in Chinatown and there is a lot of walk-in traffic. There is also a fairly high dropout rate and many new students do

not seem to last for long, so it was not until I proved some dedication that people started to open up to me.

After three months of sweating my way through the basics, I was allowed to join the combined lion dance and percussion class. In the past, lion dancing was reserved as an honour for more advanced members and there was a competitive waiting list to even start learning. In recent years, however, the overall enrolment at Hong Luck has been down. There are enough experienced lion dancers and percussion players at the club to form an ad hoc group for gigs, but not as many new apprentices. This was lucky for me because it meant that I got started with training faster than I otherwise might have, though the lack of fresh students does not bode well for the club.

Starting lion dance class meant that my musical research could begin in earnest. I gave my first teacher, Noah, a more detailed explanation of what allowing me to be a participant-observer would mean in terms of my goal to write a dissertation, publish articles, and other related activities.⁵ He then laid down some ground rules that would come to shape my research and ensure a participant-centred approach. Three main issues emerged out of this, which surrounded pedagogy, privacy, and hierarchy. The first issue had to do with Hong Luck's drumming being an oral/aural tradition. Noah forbade me from writing down or analysing any of the rhythms, at least until I could play them from memory in an acceptable fashion. It was not that students are prevented from documenting the rhythms entirely (audio and video recording are allowed); rather my teacher was concerned that I should understand the music as given. He told me that if I

⁵ Noah is a pseudonym because this person preferred not to be identified by name.

just used Western notation to transcribe the rhythms he was playing that I would miss what was actually important about them. This was my first indication that what was musically significant about this type of drumming had less to do with the bare rhythms and more to do with something else. Hong Luck was living up to its reputation as a very traditional kung fu club, but the issue of musical notation would come up again later in an even stricter injunction.

My second lion dance and drumming teacher, David Lieu (柳嘉偉), eventually became one of my primary consultants and also my friend. He told me in no uncertain terms that the rhythms should never be written down because that would allow people—Hong Luck members or otherwise—to learn them the wrong way. The correct method of transmission was aural, oral, and person-to-person. In the lead up to the club's fiftieth anniversary in 2011, there was much effort put into archiving and documenting various aspects of Hong Luck's history and practices: photos, videos, and print media. Several of the senior members thought it would be good for me to transcribe the complete, traditional, lion dance drumming in order to preserve it for the club's archive, though they did not necessarily want that to go into my dissertation. David, however, felt that the substitution of visual, two-dimensional notation was both insufficient to represent the phenomenon, but paradoxically, could also potentially leak secrets that people had not earned. He also said I could do whatever I wanted, but I felt it best to respect his position. The other Hong Luck members concerned with this issue ended up agreeing that not transcribing the drum rhythms was the appropriate choice because of David's opinion on the matter, despite their own desires to have the drumming notated for the club's archive.

Ethics are an important consideration in ethnomusicology—and ethnography more generally—and they are a recurring theme in Barz and Cooley's (2008 [1997]) edited volume on fieldwork. The issue of privacy is especially relevant to scholars working on ritual traditions because of the depth of meaning embodied in these practices with regards to insider information and identity (cf. Cupchik 2009).

During the fall and winter terms of 2011/2012, I went on an academic exchange to the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK, 中文大學) to study Cantonese, as well as get more familiar with lion dance and kung fu in China. While I was there, I found Chinese language texts containing transcriptions of skeletal or normative versions of the lion dance rhythms, which I copied and brought home (Li and Liu 1985; Liang 2008). David was interested to see these and softened his position somewhat by allowing me to do some transcription in order to facilitate my discussion. He remained firm, however, in his opposition to providing longer transcriptions or exhaustive documentation of motivic variations. This is not to say that he does not support my research, but rather that he is more comfortable with me analysing, explaining, and interpreting phenomena that would help my readers understand these practices, without giving away certain types of detail. From the start and throughout my fieldwork, I was being directed towards using methods other than music analysis and giving priority to embodied experience.

The second issue that shaped my fieldwork has to do with privacy and secrecy. Every member of Hong Luck that I have had the pleasure of dealing with has been happy to include me in their activities and share their knowledge, but not everyone is comfortable taking credit for their contributions to my research. Master Paul Chan was a

well-known public figure and no stranger to the media, so using his name is a question of respect and recognition. My main drumming teacher's name, David Lieu, is included because he indicated that he wished to be recognized. A third person whose identity will be disclosed is the sparring and application's coach, Adrian Balcă. A number of other members of Hong Luck consented to participate in my research and made important additions, but they wished to remain anonymous, so I will either refer to them by a pseudonym or discuss them in more general terms. Some of them are being modest, which is a valued trait in Chinese culture. Others are being careful. They do not want people to know they do kung fu because they are afraid of being challenged or losing the advantage of a secret weapon if they were ever attacked. Kung fu has a long history of secrecy for similar reasons; it is safer to avoid fights, but if one must fight, it is advantageous to be underestimated by opponents. In fact, one senior member told me she used to refer to Hong Luck as "KFC" (short for kung fu club) because outsiders would think she was referring to the famous fast-food restaurant Kentucky Fried Chicken.

A related issue concerns disclosing information about Hong Luck's activities as a *tong* (堂) or Chinese secret society. Many styles of kung fu, including Choi Lee Fut, have long been associated with such groups. Hong Luck is no exception to this, and Master Paul Chan belonged to so many clan, regional, benevolent, and martial associations that his business card reputedly had four sides to accommodate all his titles. As with the individuals who wished to remain anonymous and the ban on music notation, I have been prohibited from discussing the details of certain aspects of Hong Luck that pertain to the *tong* system.

The third limitation on my fieldwork came in the form of various avenues of verbal communication being closed to me, which reinforced the traditional, physical way of learning Hong Luck's traditions. As a result of my ongoing efforts to learn to speak Cantonese and read Chinese characters, as well as the translation skills of other Hong Luck members, this was not a problem of language barriers between the Sinophone elders and Anglophone juniors.⁶ These verbal limitations occurred in three separate but parallel ways: maintenance of hierarchies, accretive pedagogy, and embodied knowledge superseding explicit speech. From the beginning, Noah told me that the founding members of Hong Luck were off limits for interviews or lessons. Some of these elders were still active around the club, but chose to be involved only with the more advanced students. He told me that I needed to respect those hierarchies and that being a researcher did not give me special privileges in that regard. I eventually got to have conversations or lessons with most of these elders, but this occurred through accepted martial or social paths, rather than as researcher-directed contact. As my skills improved, for example, Master Paul Chan offered me some coaching on lion dance and kung fu. I also had the good fortune of sitting next to several elders at large banquets, allowing me to engage them in informal chat.

Learning inside Hong Luck accrues gradually, so eager students—and researchers—must develop their patience. My initial attempts at formal, recorded interviews with my teachers proved unproductive, whereas long-term participation in martial arts and lion dance classes has provided far more data (for a discussion of this

⁶ Hong Luck's two founding masters were Taishanese speakers, though they could also speak some Cantonese and English.

phenomenon in ethnomusicological fieldwork, see Stock 2004). This is typical of the way kung fu is taught in general, where details are added gradually, with much recursive pedagogy returning to the same things, from new angles. It has also influenced the way this dissertation is written because I have often found myself needing to repeat things in order to add another layer of detail, meaning, or interpretation that would not have made sense if I had tried to lay it all out the first time I mentioned it. During my fieldwork, asking big, direct, probing, or abstract questions about martial arts, lion dance, or drumming might have gotten me an answer, but it was rarely a complete one. Casual conversations ended up being valuable sources of information, so it is fortunate that there were many opportunities for indirect and informal ethnographic interviews. After lion dance gigs, the group usually had dinner together and there are also occasionally huge banquets involving Hong Luck's entire, extended membership. Before and after training sessions, there were plenty of chances to chat too, so I often turned the conversation towards topics pertinent to my research.

After being at Hong Luck for several years, people have come to know of my interest in percussion and lion dance, so now they try adding bits and pieces of information to help me along, if and when they think of them. The timing of most my verbal interactions with Hong Luck members regarding issues pertaining to their music have been impromptu and the locations have often been noisily chaotic (i.e., banquets, dinners, and parades), both factors that have resulted in very few audio recordings of their words. As a result of this accretive, informal, and long-term method of data collection, combined with the previously described issues surrounding anonymity, this text bears

few direct quotations and relatively more paraphrases of people's words or summaries of conversations. Occasionally, my consultants have had concise-but-deep things to say that stuck in my memory or they have repeated certain things often enough to drill them into me. I will cite such examples word-for-word, but more often than not, they have shown me what they wanted me to know.

The primacy of embodied knowledge over propositional or declarative speech is the last issue I faced in pursuing verbal communication with my research consultants at Hong Luck. Both in formal classes and informal conversations, I have often had people say, "I don't know how to explain it," even though they are quite capable of demonstrating a given movement, rhythm, or concept. In some ways, aspects of practice that can be identified, but cannot be elucidated upon, indicate particularly important or powerful aspects of kung fu, drumming, and lion dance; some things elicit such deep feelings that people have difficulty expressing them orally. When I ask questions and people's grammar breaks down or they resort to onomatopoeia, non-language verbalizations, and gestures, I have usually found something significant to the overall experience or practice at Hong Luck. There is also a heavy importance placed on doing, rather than just talking, so teachers demonstrate and then students copy, repeat, refine, and eventually embody the knowledge. This process has allowed me to learn and then demonstrate things about lion dancing, drumming, and kung fu, which my seniors at Hong Luck have then critiqued and eventually confirmed as being acceptable. This is not to say that there is no verbal explanation, rather that there is an inversely proportional relationship between the abstractness and complexity of a teaching point, and the amount

elucidation. Rhythm, whether martial or musical, appears particularly fraught with difficulty in this regard, which has sometimes led to my teachers asking me to help them explain certain things that they can do, but are unable to put into words.

I joined Hong Luck with the intention of using participant-observation as my primary fieldwork method and have been guided by my consultants towards a culturally appropriate way of applying that methodology. In Chinese, this could be called *propriety* (分寸), which means to use proper speech and action, thereby according one's behaviour to remain within norms. I have heeded my teacher's admonitions to downplay Western notation or music theory in favour of embodied musical experience and have respected their concerns about secrecy, anonymity, and privacy. Performing research at Hong Luck has meant working hard to develop my kung fu in the broadest sense of the word, but also to become part of the group, in order to be privy to all aspects of their musical tradition. This has forced me to learn—and to earn—a place within their hierarchy. The result of this process of acculturation and participant-directed fieldwork could be classified as what Jeff Todd Titon has called a *friendship model* (2008 [1997]:37–40), but also includes aspects of discipleship.

Prioritization of the gradual acquisition and embodiment of knowledge through training in kung fu has meant not only sweat and a seemingly perpetually sore body, but also broken ribs, sprained joints, pulled muscles, scrapes, cuts, blisters, bruises, and one particularly bloody nose. It has not been easy, but, despite the rigours of the transmission process, it was a lot of fun. I consider myself fortunate to have been accepted into the fold at Hong Luck and that there was such a well-established path for learning about this

percussion music. The diasporic context of having a local kung fu club has allowed me the luxury of time to devote to this research, without which it would not have been possible to engage with the material on as deep a level. Now I will turn to the theoretical basis on which I will turn my analysis of the data thus collected, as well as survey the relevant literature.

Theory: Phenomenology, Practice, Semiotics, and Embodiment

In 1985, Joseph Kerman's book *Contemplating Music* announced the beginnings of the New Musicology. He remarked on recent trends in the discipline and advocated for a move towards critical theory, musical experience, and historical context, and away from positivism or pure musical analysis. He also called for a type of music criticism that would be informed by ethnomusicology and its humanities-oriented approach, though he felt like ethnomusicology at that time had still not gone far enough. Kerman self-consciously pointed out that the study of music tends to lag behind other academic disciplines in terms of its acceptance of general intellectual trends and that "semiotics, hermeneutics, and phenomenology are being drawn upon only by some of the boldest of musical studies today" (1985:17). Since then, his remarks appear to have been actualized by a growing number of scholars.

Harris Berger, Timothy Rice, and Jeff Todd Titon all contributed articles arguing for the value of phenomenology in musical ethnography to the seminal edited volume on ethnomusicological fieldwork, *Shadows in the Field* (Barz and Cooley 2008 [1997]). The origins of this continental European philosophical tradition lie in the work of the German

philosopher, Edmund Husserl (1859–1938) and his slogan “to the ‘things themselves’” (1970 [1900]:252). Husserl’s key insight is that consciousness is always consciousness of something, which lays out the structures of experience as the essential ground for research into phenomena (1962 [1913]:223). His view of consciousness is that it is intentional of, or about, a phenomenon, and he thereby links together subject and object while also requiring intersubjective verification to rule out solipsism, insanity, hallucinations, or dreams.⁷ The fundamental ground of a phenomenological approach is integral to the present study because much of the work hinges on my own experiences at Hong Luck, which have been shaped and validated by the club’s teachers, seniors, and elders.

Titon has characterized the emergent paradigm of ethnomusicology as the study of people making and experiencing music (2008 [1997]:29), which presents a considerable affinity with the basis of phenomenological thought. The philosophical tradition stemming from the work of Husserl provides an alternative to the extremes of positivist or structuralist positions that seek a type of knowledge so objective and scientific as to be disembodied and blind to its own bias or influence. It also avoids some of the pitfalls of postmodern thinking that frames all knowledge as so subjective and polyvocal as to endlessly defer meaning in favour of continuous deconstruction. Titon suggests that the epistemology of ethnomusicology is fundamentally phenomenological insofar as it is rooted in fieldwork, music, and relationships; what we can know is

⁷ Husserl’s basic structure of consciousness can be written as *ego cogito cogitatum* (the self knows consciousness), which is meant to follow the pattern of Descartes’ famous *ego cogito ergo sum* (I think therefore I am). In contrast with Cartesian dualism, phenomenology recognizes the contingent nature of experience and eschews an imagined separation between subject and object.

understood in and as experience, rather than just explained as abstract sound, and we know it by sharing musical being-in-the-world with our consultants. This type of knowledge is emergent, self-reflexive, and contestable, but also grounded by the connections between the people who make and experience any given music.

Phenomenology has developed in several different, but related, directions. Beyond Husserl's transcendental phenomenology, there is Martin Heidegger's (1962 [1927]) existential phenomenology, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's (2002 [1942]) embodied phenomenology, and Paul Ricoeur's (1984) hermeneutic phenomenology. Don Ihde has suggested that the best way to understand phenomenology is to do it; once one has acquired the requisite phenomenological attitude, one is able to apply it without being bogged down by methodological or linguistic apparatuses (2007:19). I follow those ethnomusicologists who exemplify this approach by their use of a phenomenological attitude towards ethnography, rather than extensive use of jargon or dwelling on philosophical issues (Rice 1994; Stone 1982; Tilton 1988). That is to say that I focus on the experience of the things themselves as a method, rather than joining the meta-discussion about terms and theory. Other approaches to phenomenological ethnomusicology are demonstrated by Steven Friedson (1996), who has used a higher volume of philosophical terminology in his writing, and Harris Berger (1999), whose work is theoretically engaged.

Husserl and Merleau-Ponty have written about music specifically, while Heidegger has written about the arts in general, and all three have contributed something to the phenomenological attitude most pertinent to ethnomusicology. Music is one of

Husserl's main examples in *Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness* (1964 [1928]), and his ideas will play an important role in my discussion of the experience of lion dance drumming in Chapter 5. He points out that our perception of now is not an instant, but rather a now-moment, which allows one to hear a melody as presently occurring. That is to say, one does not hear a string of single notes (individual instances of now) that must be actively reconstituted in memory; rather, one intuitively and immediately grasps a tune as it unfolds in time. To Husserl, melody is immanent as a phenomenal object in the now-moment of time consciousness, which, I might add, is contingent upon the pre-reflexive cultural conditioning required to perceive a given span of humanly organized sound as music.

Heidegger was less concerned with the specifics of temporal musical perception and focused instead on the ontology of artwork, artist, and art (1977 [1950]). In his view, the artist creates the artwork and the artwork creates the artist. That may sound like tautology, but Heidegger often used recursive thought in order to clear a path of questioning, going ever deeper into a subject and avoiding the delimitation of a conclusion. In his ontology, art exists to truthfully un-conceal a world and its work is to guide us into authentic being-in-the-world that is thus revealed. Artist, artwork, and audience all participate together in this *worlding*, which stands in strife with the brute, physical, objectivity of raw earth and its concealment of Being. For Heidegger, the Being of beings is always *there-being* (*Da-sein*). That is to say, there is no subject without object and one's experiences are constituted by the possibilities of being-in-the-world. This idea undergirds much of my discussion surrounding a kung fu way of there-being

and its embodiment in performance. Heidegger's use of the word "art" is laden with ethnocentric European cultural baggage, but substituting Tilton's ethnomusicological paradigm of people making and experiencing music preserves the value of the idea, while dispersing some of its problems.

Merleau-Ponty also takes an ontological approach to the questioning of musical phenomena, but he comes to it as part of his larger discussion of embodied being. In his "The Intertwining—the Chiasm" (part of the posthumously published volume *The Visible and the Invisible*, 1968 [1964]), he suggests that the notes of a sonata adhere to each other like the parts of a body. For Merleau-Ponty, all being can be thought of as *flesh* such that we are part of the world and it is part of us; subject and object are mere artificial distinctions made out of one flesh. Like the illusion of difference between one's left hand touching the right versus one's right hand being touched by the left, the gap between one's own voice spoken and heard is an example of a zero that causes them to adhere to one another. This negative not-nothing he calls a *chiasm* and it is here—betwixt sound and hearing—that he locates our experience of music.⁸ Merleau-Ponty tells us that music is not the notes or rhythms, and especially not the transcription of them, rather it is found "behind the sounds or between them" (1968 [1964]:151).

More recently, two scholars have provided full-length phenomenologies of music. Bruce Ellis Benson (2003) suggests that the ontology of *musical works* would be better conceived of as *pieces of music*. This idea is predicated on the proposition that all composers and performers are improvising to varying degrees, while they are also in

⁸ In biology, a chiasm is a point of overlap between two nerves such as those from left and right eye.

musical dialogue with their audiences; the being of a piece of music is therefore to be approached as emergent and dialogic. Harris Berger (2009), on the other hand, has written a comprehensive and integrated framework for applying phenomenology to the study of expressive culture. His monograph brackets the ontological status of a piece of music, which presents a complementary approach to Benson, and deals primarily with theories geared towards description. *Stance* is the title of the book and also the main concept therein, which is defined as “the affective, stylistic, or valual quality with which a person engages with an element of her experience” (2009:xiv). Berger’s thesis is that the constitution of lived meaning can be studied by attending to the culturally specific ways in which people engage with experience, and that those structures are a type of social practice, in the sense of practice intended by Pierre Bourdieu (1977 [1972], 1990 [1980]). At Hong Luck—as in many styles of kung fu—a deep squat with wide-set feet is the fundamental posture for martial arts, lion dance, and drumming, which provides a fundamental physical position for an embodied *stance on* sense and significance.

Like Berger, other ethnomusicologists have also drawn on Bourdieu’s practice theory as a lens to help focus their ethnographic work (e.g., Monson 1999; Rice 1994; Sugarman 1989; Turino 2000), as have scholars in dance (Cowan 1990; Ness 1992), and in martial arts (Downey 1998; Farrer 2009; Lewis 1992; Schissel 2008; Wilson 2002). Bourdieu’s influential model is built around what he called *habitus*, which is a set of embodied dispositions that unconsciously structure people’s actions. These structuring structures are socially conditioned over time and can be generalized between different aspects of life, such that the practical logic thus embodied is both durable and

economical. To avoid reifying the habitus or getting caught in an objectifying structuralism, it should be noted that practice still involves agency through a "generative principle of regulated improvisations" (Bourdieu 1977:78). Ingrid Monson has suggested that this is a musical metaphor (1999:48) and it can also be related to Benson's (2003) ontology of music as improvisation. Many aspects of a person's habitus are formed early in life, perhaps definitively so in a mono-cultural or very traditional society, but other elements may be acquired later. Sarah Delamont and Neil Stephens (2008), for example, have used practice theory to investigate the issue of adults building the habits and dispositions necessary for embodying capoeira in a diasporic context, which has many parallels with practising Chinese kung fu in multicultural Toronto.

The embodied character of practical logic can also provide a fertile locus for the analysis of meaning. Thomas Clifton's definition of music is useful here because of its clear linkage between the body and signification:⁹

Music is an ordered arrangement of sounds and silences whose meaning is presentative rather than denotative... To be more precise, then, I should say that music is the actualization of the possibility of any sound whatever to present to some human being a meaning which he experiences with his body—that is to say, with his mind, his feelings, his senses, his will, and his metabolism. (ellipsis added, 1985:1)

Clifton's phenomenological orientation towards musical meaning dovetails nicely with semiotics, or the study of signs and signification. The initial forays into musicological semiotics were led by Jean-Jacques Nattiez (1975) and were concerned with purely formalist and/or syntactic analysis. Semantic concerns came later, as David Lidov (1987)

⁹ It is unfortunate that Clifton's posthumously published monograph contains only musical analysis rooted in the score and does not engage with the issues surrounding performer, context, or audience.

brought the body into the discourse of musical meaning and Eero Tarasti (1994) balanced structuralism with hermeneutics. More recently, Raymond Monelle's (2002) work in semiotics has embraced post-modern concerns with subjectivity, temporality, and cultural conditioning. Notwithstanding Lidov's location of musical meaning in the body, this stream of semiotic-driven work has often focused on the scores of Western art music, and prioritized the concerns of music theory or analysis over those of people making and experiencing music. They are, however, useful resources for this dissertation because of the depth of semiotic thinking found in them and their specific focus on music; the practices found at Hong Luck are replete with signs, which need to be unpacked in order to understand the drumming.

A semiology derived from Ferdinand de Saussure's structural linguistics drove Nattiez's efforts and has continued to inform the work of his successors. That approach, however, can be criticized for its totalizing, abstracting method. A sign is simply something that means something to someone, so language is just one type of semiosis. Rather than apply methods derived from linguistics to music, another option has been to draw from the more general semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce, as outlined by Steven Feld and Aaron Fox (1994:33–35). Thomas Turino (1999) has neatly summarized the most musically relevant cross-section of Peirce's expansive and complicated philosophy. A key concept here—and one I rely on throughout this dissertation—is the fundamental trichotomy of signs: *icons* use signification by resemblance; *indices* use signification by association; and *symbols* use signification by convention. Equally noteworthy is the idea that a signifier is linked to its signified or objects by an interpretant, which opens the door

to polysemy and emergent meaning through semiotic chaining. Paralleling the aforementioned phenomenological attitude, Peircian semiotics in ethnomusicology and in dance has tended towards an awareness of, and attention to, semiosis (Feld 1988; Ness 1992; Rice 2001; Turino 2008; Wolf 2001), rather than the more extended type of analysis found in musicology.

Ingrid Monson has criticized Turino's suggestion that icons and indices are more relevant to interpreting musical meaning, not because she disagrees, but rather because of his assumption that bodily or emotional meaning is less mediated than cognition (2008:50). She draws on cognitive neuroscience to show the complexity inherent in any type of perception and also comes back to Bourdieu's practical logic as a means of connecting meaning to perceptual agency. Similar to this is Mark Johnson's (1987) argument that meaning is predicated on embodied knowledge of the world around us. This idea has been picked up by Robert Walser (1991), who sees pre-linguistic schemata as the root of music's power and uses Johnson's theory to bridge the ineffability between sound and meaning sketched by Roland Barthes in "The Grain of the Voice" (1977). The embodiment of meaning will play a central role in how I interpret Hong Luck performances in Chapter 5.

The streams of theory I have outlined thus far contain several intersections. Of particular importance is the way that a return to the things themselves, as experienced, heals a Cartesian split between mind and body by locating some of the essential qualities of meaning within embodied knowledge. The privilege of language as a means to explain, however, requires one more methodological consideration of how to approach

interpretation. Rice (1994, 2008 [1997]) and Titon (1988, 2008 [1997]) have both drawn on Paul Ricoeur's hermeneutic phenomenology to address this issue.

Ricoeur (1984) has argued for interpreting all meaningful action as text. Hermeneutics originally meant exegesis of the Bible, but has been adapted to include interpretation of things more generally and, in phenomenology, this idea stems from Heidegger. It is Ricoeur, however, who gives us the *hermeneutic arc* (or circle) as a methodology, which entails the moves from explanation to understanding and from understanding to explanation.¹⁰ This approach integrates structural concerns, signification, and experience, in order to present a more complete interpretation. To write an interpretation of a text, broadly defined, Ricoeur says one must first analyze its structure to see how it reveals a world and then personally appropriate that explanation as understanding. The other direction of a hermeneutic arc is also significant, especially in the case of Hong Luck, where meaningful action is often understood first, either before, or entirely without structural analysis or interpretation (Rice 1994). In this case, a text in the form of embodied meaning or practice is already understood before it is explained, and then interpretation can lead to a new, more enriched understanding.

The hermeneutic arc is circular in its movement from explanation to understanding and understanding to explanation. It is not vicious, however, because it adds layers of interpretation with each turn and it also allows for reinterpretation such that the knowledge it generates is dynamic and contingent, rather than fixed. A

¹⁰ Heidegger was opposed to using the word *methodology* in phenomenology because of its scientific, limiting tone and preferred to simply call his approach *thinking*, which he felt was better suited to the task of uncovering Being (1971 [1959]:79).

hermeneutic phenomenology brings literary methods to the analysis of things experienced in the world, which could be critiqued as thinly veiled structuralism. Titon has proposed “that we stand Ricoeur on his head, that meaningful actions be experienced as music, not read as text” (2008 [1997]:28–29). In the case of Hong Luck, combat skills and applications can fruitfully be experienced as music, which is perhaps one of the most broadly relevant arguments of this dissertation. In general, however, standard hermeneutic phenomenology remains useful, especially considering that the bulk of academic work on music is still based on the written word as its primary means of communication (cf. Seeger 1958). Heidegger referred to language as “the house of Being” (1982[1959]:135), so I shall endeavour to encompass the semiotics, practices, embodied meanings, and phenomenology of kung fu percussion in a hermeneutic circle that moves from the being of language to the language of Being in its interpretation. Now that I have outlined the theoretical underpinnings of my discourse, the next section will provide a brief survey of literature related to the main topic areas of this dissertation.

Literature Review: Lion Dance, Ritual, Martial Arts, and Music

There is a growing body of work on lion dancing in both English and Chinese that has cleared a path for my own work by establishing a foundation of knowledge on the subject. Thus far, scholars have focused primarily on historical, social, and/or cultural considerations that explain lion dance as a symbol of Chinese identity with deep roots and complex ritual functions (Feltham 2009; Hu 1995; Kim 1975; Liu 1981; Wu 1991; Young 2006). Thanks to strong emigration from southern China starting in the mid-

nineteenth century, the most internationally well known lion dance style is the type practised at Hong Luck: the Southern Chinese (a.k.a., Cantonese) lion. While it can be loosely viewed as part of an ancient cultural tradition, its direct origins lie in the nineteenth century with kung fu practitioners and anti-Qing revolutionaries in Guangdong province (Hu 1995; Liu 1981). A major factor in the lion dance's endurance as a symbol of identity is its link to martial arts and strength; it has acted as a public expression of fighting spirit in the face of oppression. This form of symbolic resistance has extended from the secret societies fighting against the Manchu-controlled Qing dynasty (Lorge 2012), through to the discrimination and segregation faced by overseas Chinese (Li 1998; Raulin 1991).¹¹

Traditional Southern Chinese lion dances are most often commissioned by people to perform a para-liturgical function that Heleanor Feltham has summed up as the protection of liminal spaces, times, and transitions (2009:111), such as lunar New Year, store openings, and weddings. The loud percussion is iconic of the lion's roar. Combined with the fearsome aspect of the costume, it is used to dispel what Hong Luck elders call *nefarious chi energy* (邪氣). Often, the climax of the performance is when the lion finds, "eats," and vigorously spits out a leafy green vegetable. This sequence, called *plucking-the-greens* (採青), as well as other aspects of the performance and the physical form of the lion itself, has typically been analyzed as a web of symbols that make up a ritual meaning. Edward Schiefflin (1985), however, has criticized such a conventionalized

¹¹ The *Manchus* (滿族) of the Qing dynasty were considered to be foreign oppressors because they came from the north and were not part of the *Han* (漢族) ethnic majority.

approach to ritual in general because it belies the significance of performance, participation, and individual stance on the generation of meaning. Similarly, Victor Turner (1977) has suggested that ethnographers should focus on the dynamic process of ritual, rather than reifying the product.

Some scholars have gone beyond historicist, normative, or functionalist explanations of lion dancing. Most notably, Madeline Slovenz-Low (née Slovenz) has written ethnographic accounts of a kung fu club in New York City that look at everything from training and pre-performance preparation to the actual lion dance and post-performance activities (Slovenz 1987, Slovenz-Low 1994). Her work focuses more on description than interpretation, perhaps because Slovenz's research involved more observation than participation. She was allowed to play the role of the *big head Buddha* (大頭佛), a masked character that sometimes accompanies lion dance, though she did not get under the lion head or play the instruments, which hints at gender roles within the performance. She trained in kung fu under a master named Chan Taisan (陳泰山師傅), but did not learn lion dance from either him or the club where she was an observer.¹²

Educational perspectives on lion dance have often focused on identity and culture, though approaches have varied. Henry Johnson (2005) has looked at the way New Zealand secondary school students not only perform their Chinese identity, but also form it through participation in lion dance. Mei Hsiu Chan (2001), on the other hand, tailored a crash course in lion dance in order to teach aspects of Chinese culture to foreign-born Chinese children. Finally, Patricia Shehan Campbell and Kuo-Huang Han (1996) wrote a

¹² Chan Taisan was at one point an associate teacher at Hong Luck in Toronto and maintained his ties with the club even while in New York.

small workbook for Chinese percussion ensembles that uses western music notation to teach simple rhythm pieces, including the lion dance. Unfortunately, this is only contextualized with text and pictures, so the dance itself is conspicuous by its absence. There are also some problems with the way Western notation implies rhythmic concepts that are foreign to the practice, but the book is intended as a pedagogical tool, not a scholarly treatise.

By and large, English language texts have presented useful information about lion dancing, but very little about the accompanying percussion music. Some Chinese language books provide transcriptions of both movement and drum patterns (Li and Liu 1985; Liang 2008), though the dance is notated separately from the music and both are in basic form. These texts also tend towards prescription and a somewhat laudatory tone. A recent article by Chang-lin Liu (2011) gives a more in-depth transcription of modern (as opposed to traditional) lion dance drumming and at least adds the names of the steps on top of the notation. As with the previous efforts, however, the music is given in Chinese cipher notation, which is likely to cause difficulties for a Western reader. A partial solution may lie with Boyu Zhang (1997:25-29), who has proposed a hybrid notation for the study of *ten variations gong and drum* (十番鑼鼓) music from Jiangsu province that could be adapted to the gong and drum music performed by kung fu schools.¹³ The salient features are the incorporation of vocables and the lack of time signatures, both of which are designed to respect the organization of this type of percussion music into phrases, rather than forcing it into Western meter. It does, however, use the note value

¹³ In Cantonese *ten variations gong and drum* (十番鑼鼓) is pronounced *sahpfān lòhgú*, but the Mandarin *shífān luógǔ* might be better known in English.

symbols derived from European music, which makes it easier to read by anyone trained in that system.

In order to generate descriptive transcriptions of Hong Luck's lion dance and percussion accompaniment, I will be using my own hybrid notation that combines movement, vocables, and music into a single system that both respects the particularities of the style and will be legible to Western-trained eyes. This type of transcription draws on the work of other scholars who include more than just sound in their transcriptions, such as Regula Qureshi's (1986) charts detailing performer-audience interaction in the performance of qawwali music. This of course must occur within the limits set by my consultants, namely that it not cover the whole structure of the traditional routine or give away the personal variations of individual drummers. I can, however, transcribe an example of the condensed performance that occurs in public for parades (e.g., Chinese New Year), which contains most of the significant features. Not all the transcriptions will include movement, vocables, and rhythms; the richest notation will be reserved for the fifth chapter. For now, I will provide an introductory framework for the rest of the discussion in the form of a normative lion dance sequence. This basic pattern could be as short as one minute for an individual performance during a parade to more than twenty minutes at a banquet.

1. Approaching (walking)
2. Greeting bows (multiples of three)
3. Looking for food (various patterns)
4. Plucking-the-greens (testing, eating, and spitting)
5. Celebrating (various patterns)
6. Farewell bows (multiples of three)
7. Leaving (walking)

My final consideration here is the percussion music used to accompany demonstrations of kung fu forms. It appears that no one has written about these rhythms, despite the pervasive belief that lion dance is intrinsically related to martial arts and that the same percussion ensemble accompanies both. The closest may be Haisheng Yao's (2001, 1990) work on Peking opera, which analyzes how percussion supports and complements martial acrobatics.¹⁴ Her transcriptions of the rhythms are matched to both the movement on stage and also the type of energy that they convey. Hong Luck demos are somewhat different because the majority of the action is asynchronous to the beat, but the idea of dealing with music and martial arts simultaneously is a potent one. The thinness of interpretive or ethnographic work on lion dance and the conspicuous absence of research on kung fu percussion, combined with the rising global prominence of China, provide an opportune moment for this study.

Chapter Summaries

This dissertation proceeds with another five chapters. The second chapter will provide historical and cultural context for my fieldwork. I will examine some of the ancient roots of China's martial arts, military percussion, and lion dance, as well as the more recent developments during the last imperial dynasty (1644-1911 C.E.) and the nationalist period (1912-1949 C.E.). Historiographies of kung fu do not always line up with the practitioners' oral histories and Hong Luck's tradition is no exception, so I will balance both, as proposed by subaltern historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000). Then I will give

¹⁴ Yao's given name is romanized differently in the two sources (Haisheng and Hai-Hsing).

some historical context regarding the Chinese in Canada in general, followed by Hong Luck in particular and how the club fits into the Chinatown system. At that point I will also provide more background information regarding the styles of kung fu and lion dance practised at Hong Luck, which is a major determinant of their drumming practice.

The third chapter will look at Hong Luck's musical activities outside the training hall, such as lion dance parades and performances. These will be described semiotically from ritual, cultural, and entertainment perspectives while acknowledging that those lines are often blurred in practice. I have chosen to focus on the annual Chinese New Year parade as an ethnographic example because of the significance for both the club and the surrounding Chinatown community. These events afford an opportunity for a mass gathering of current, as well as less active, members of Hong Luck. People who do not perform lion dance or play percussion have other duties, so these are important occasions for the whole association to come together. These parades are also a significant cultural event and marker of space for the local Chinatown, where in the last several years lamp poles have featured banners with a Southern Chinese lion and the words "Welcome To Chinatown" written on them. I will argue that the sound of the percussion plays a definitive role in establishing the mood of the event by creating a metaphoric space while claiming the physical place (cf. Wrazen 2007). Given that these parades can last more than four hours, I will not be able to describe every moment, but rather will provide an overview and then look at moments of transgression for the way they highlight the importance of certain aspects of the ritual action. I will also give a detailed description, including some musical transcription, of the short lion dance routine that is repeated for

each individual patron and connected musically between performances to constitute the total event.

The initial injunction against me using notation was positioned as a way to keep me from missing the music by focusing too much on transcription, but eventually came to be a means of preventing me from transmitting secrets outside of the lineage. While there are issues of authenticity and privacy at work here, the bigger concern is the way that Hong Luck's identity is manifested in drumming. The sound of the drum rhythms not only structures physical movement in public demonstrations of lion dance, but also establishes frames of interpretation. When Hong Luck's identity is being expressed (or perhaps constructed) through musical performance, there are tacit limitations to the amount of acceptable variation. On the other hand, the mark of a good drummer is his/her individual style within those limits, which imparts a personal stamp through discrepancy (Keil 1987; Witzleben 1987).

The fourth chapter will focus on the day-to-day happenings inside the club. Hong Luck is primarily devoted to the practice and dissemination of martial arts, which forms the basic context for all other activities. Learning to drum at Hong Luck is a fairly organic process because it is intimately tied to a host of non-musical concerns and is predicated on first having learned kung fu, lion dance, and the other percussion instruments—in that order. In fact, a strong base in the fundamentals of kung fu is believed to actually prepare students for everything else. Apart from physical exercise, there is also cultural education, which in the case of both Canadian-born Chinese and non-Chinese alike is often a case of acculturation, rather than enculturation. The official

ethos at Hong Luck is dedicated to preserving traditional Chinese culture, but members also show their awareness of the complexity and hybridity of a multicultural and multigenerational group of people engaging in these practices in a diasporic context.

The embodiment of kung fu as Chinese culture is an explicit organizational and pedagogical goal, although the exact form that this takes is continually being negotiated and contested. Drumming is one of the most advanced stages of the process because in order to perform in both a technically correct and culturally appropriate way, the drummer must have a firm grasp of both lion dance and kung fu. Hong Luck's most senior and respected drummer, Frank Ng (吳宏), told me at a banquet in 2011 that drumming cannot be taught, but rather that "you just play your life." The common thread running through this chapter is the process of developing a Chinese martial arts habitus, which is the pathway to being able to learn to drum. An important aspect of this route is the network of social relations that constitute the club and give a prospective drummer access to the collective resources of the membership.

The fifth chapter will provide an interpretation of experiencing Hong Luck's percussion music. This will proceed from my own encounter with the percussion and build up to longer ethnographic vignettes of demonstrating kung fu, lion dancing, and drumming. Many members have expressed their conviction that a true understanding of the percussion rhythms stems from either intense physical training or lifelong exposure. In other words, only those who have an embodied understanding are thought to appreciate the gong and drum music as more than just a *hot and noisy* (熱鬧) background to lion dance or kung fu. An important goal of this dissertation, then, is to further the

ability of people outside the tradition to interpret kung fu and lion dance drumming by explaining how practitioners and aficionados are experiencing what they hear (Feld 1984; Reybrouck 2001). This follows Greg Downey's (2002) approach to capoeira music, in that it recognizes the inherent difficulties of discovering exactly what other people experience and seeks instead the somewhat more accessible things that they experience with or through. I also use Mark Johnson's (1987) cognitive semantics to suggest a schema for meaning in Hong Luck's music. This draws on fundamental corporeal knowledge—available to practitioners and non-practitioners alike—to discuss metaphors of synchronization between music and drumming.

Kung fu percussion rhythms are somewhat more rare than lion dance music and may appear more obviously martial because of the co-presentation with demonstrations of fighting skills. Nonetheless, all the drumming at Hong Luck is considered martial, so the accompaniment for martial arts demonstrations provides a lens for understanding the overall musical practice. Further to this proposition, I provide an analysis of the rhythm of combat: the implicit and explicit use of rhythm in sparring and in choreographed kung fu forms. This builds on some of my previous work (McGuire 2010), but takes the discussion further and connects it to a broader performance context. I unpack the experience by interpreting the shifting relationship of music and movement as it goes from encouragement to antagonism, and from dramatic accentuation to martial asynchronicity.

The last chapter will tie together the different strands of rhythm, movement, and meaning at Hong Luck. Two events of note will be discussed in terms of the legacy of

this group: the fiftieth anniversary celebration in 2011 and the death of Master Paul Chan in 2012. These two occasions have resulted in much consideration of past, present, and future by Hong Luck members, as well as by the diasporic Chinese community and even various government bodies in Canada and abroad. One of the key issues is the preservation of tradition versus the need to reflect a changing world, the negotiation of which is ongoing. The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club continues to be an important part of Toronto's Chinese Canadian community and to act as a bridge with people of other ethnicities. Nonetheless, today's membership finds itself in a different social milieu than the founders and hardcore self-defence skills are less of an everyday necessity than they used to be. After more than fifty years of activity, the rigours of kung fu and lion dance training have left an indelible mark on the physical culture of the Toronto area, so regardless of the club's future, the impact it has had on people's identity is significant. Hong Luck's ideals combine strength, resilience, and respect for tradition, which will continue to resonate with all who have been touched by their embodiment in kung fu, lion dance, and percussion music.

CHAPTER 2

Histories and Stories

Introduction

Often obscured by incense smoke and shadows, a three-foot tall statue of a man dressed in ancient, battlefield armour sits at the back of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club's training hall. He is seated on a throne that rests on a large altar with a green, tiled roof above his head. His stern, ruddy face and full, black beard are barely illuminated by a small red light bulb above him, two electric candles at his feet, and two red lanterns hanging from the ceiling to either side of the altar, all of which remain lit even when the rest of the club's lighting is turned off for the night (see Figure 3 below). Painted on the wall behind him is a coiling dragon, at his feet are ancestral tablets with the names of kung fu masters from days gone by, and on the table in front of him are offerings such as incense braziers, coins, fruit, cups, chopsticks, and candles.



Figure 3: Guan Yu's altar by night

This statue represents Guan Yu (關羽), who is an important figure in Chinese culture.¹ He is sometimes known by the exalted title of Emperor Guan (關帝) but at Hong Kong, he is referred to as General Kwan in English or *Gwāan Gūng* in Cantonese (grandfather Guan, 關公). Throughout the Sinophone world there are Buddhist, Taoist, Confucian, and folk temples devoted to him, while personal altars to him can be found in homes and businesses alike. He is worshipped by diverse segments of the population, from elites and common people, to the police and gangsters. Guan Yu has appeared not only in religion, but also folk tales, literature, drama, film, television, advertising, and video games.

The historical Guan Yu (162–220 C.E.) was a Chinese army general during the era of violent turmoil that led to the Three Kingdoms period (220–265 C.E.) and his gradual apotheosis has imbued his image with a range of different meanings. The qualities that undergird his cult are his bravery in battle, moral righteousness, and especially his famous oath of loyalty sworn in a peach garden with his brothers-at-arms, Chang Fei (張飛) and Liu Bei (劉備). He is a god of war, protection, honour, wealth, steadfastness, and allegiance—though not necessarily all at the same time. As history, myth, and interpretation have constructed Guan Yu differently, discontinuous alternate meanings remain attached to the continuous core in a process that Chinese historian Prasenjit Duara calls the *superscription* of symbols (1988). According to Duara’s

¹ Guan Yu is known by several different titles, which are unsystematically romanized. I have used one of the more common spellings, which is derived from the Mandarin pinyin (*Guān Yǔ*), but pronounced similarly in Cantonese. Alternate, nearly-homophonous spellings of his family name, for example, include: Kwan, Gwan, and Kuan.

concept, Guan Yu as a sign is a palimpsest, such that the inscription of new symbolic value still indexes the power of older myths. An example of this semantic chaining is business people worshipping him as a god of wealth, which builds the idea of richness on a foundation of protection from loss or harm that in turn is related to Guan Yu as a powerful warrior.

The importance of Guan Yu to Chinese culture in general and Hong Luck in particular makes him a useful metaphor for Chinese martial arts. The idea of symbolic superscription embodied by the General will act as a framework for my discussion of the historical context of kung fu, lion dance, and percussion music. The ancient battlefield pedigree of combat skills in China has—over the course of millennia—become intertwined with music, dance, drama, ritual, religion, and folklore to create practices that are multivalent in their meanings. Successive layers of signification shape tradition, which in turn reinforces the meaning of the superscribed signs. As Guan Yu can take many aspects, each empowered by his alternate identities, so can kung fu.

In this chapter, I will start by giving an overview of the history of the Chinese in Canada, before getting into Hong Luck's early years in the 1960s. Then I will describe the historical and legendary development of the kung fu styles practised by my research consultants. I will also discuss some relevant martial arts history and its intersection with lion dance leading up to the mid-nineteenth century, which is when Hong Luck's particular lineage begins. In keeping with my view that Hong Luck's kung fu should be treated as a blurred genre, I will be discussing the historical process of its amalgamation

of combat, ritual, and performance. My point of entry into this field of research is music, but in the following discussion it is just one component of the overall practice.

In order to chronicle the lineage of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club, I will borrow a tool from subaltern historian, Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000). He suggests a type of historiography that can satisfy both a scientific need to rely on sources, documentation, and facts, as well recognize the power that myth, stories, and belief have in shaping people's life-worlds. Chakrabarty argues that these two things are not actually antithetical to each other if one treats legends as a legitimate source of influence on people's lives. Myths, religion, spirituality, and superstition are all real when the characters and forces that inhabit them are encountered and treated as agents capable of having an effect in the world. Phenomenologically speaking, some people experience gods, ghosts, demons, angels, and ethereal energies as actually existing, whether or not modern science is capable of measuring or quantifying them. In a move that brings together an anthropological concern for people's beliefs with a scientific demand for facts, Chakrabarty insists that the being of myths be presented as alternative realities alongside a modern view of chronological history. This idea is built on a postcolonial, Marxist critique of the intellectual violence perpetrated by imposing a secular and Western historicism onto other peoples. Theoretically, then, paradoxes between history and legend need not necessarily be resolved, but instead can be held together in a dynamic interpretation.

The Chinese in Canada

The history of the Chinese in Canada extends back to the late eighteenth century, though immigration did not begin in earnest until the mid-nineteenth century. For many years, the Chinese were seen by British-North American colonists as a source of cheap labour—not as potential citizens—forming a pattern that lasted until the middle of the twentieth century (Li 1998:30). Migrants from China have probably had more Canadian legislation passed limiting their immigration, rights, and freedoms than another other group in the country's history. The resulting institutional racism, and social discrimination, has had a lasting influence on Chinatowns across the country. Hong Luck was founded in 1961, but its organizational structure and relationship to the surrounding community are based on an old model. In order to understand the context of the practices that form the focus of this dissertation, it is necessary to cover some of the general history of the Chinese in Canada.

The first Chinese arrived in Canada in 1788 (Lai 2011). They were brought to Vancouver Island by Captain John Meares to assist in building a fortress and a forty-tonne schooner. After a battle with the Spanish in 1789, most of these Chinese carpenters and smiths were killed or captured. According to David Lai (2011) some of them apparently escaped, but the next written record of the Chinese in Canada is not until the gold rush along British Columbia's (B.C.) Fraser River in 1858. As with earlier gold rushes in California, recruiters brought men over from China to work as *coolies* (literally: bitter work, 苦力) doing hard labour in the mining industry, though some came as independent miners. As gold quickly began to run out in the mid 1860s, resentment from

white prospectors grew and spurred the growth of discriminatory legislation against the Chinese.

By the early 1870s, physical segregation laws were passed in the B.C. cities of Victoria, Nanaimo and Kamloops (Lai 2011), resulting in the formation of Canada's first Chinese-only neighbourhoods, also known as Chinatowns. Canada was confederated as a country in 1867 and B.C. joined in 1871 on the condition that a railway be built to connect the vast resources of the West with the more populated centres of the East. Even as Chinese workers were being recruited to meet the demand for labour to build the tracks, more laws were being passed against them, starting with their disenfranchisement by the province of B.C. in 1875 (Li 1998:32). Furthermore, by preventing the labourers from bringing their wives or children with them, it was hoped by Canadian authorities that the Chinese would return home when the work was done.

Some resentment towards the Chinese was a result of competition for jobs; white labourers commanded higher salaries and felt that the Chinese were undercutting them by working for less. Even during labour shortages, however, anti-Chinese sentiment in B.C. was strong. It drew on the legacies of colonialism to construct the Chinese as not only inassimilable, but also culturally and racially inferior (Li 1998:31). When the railway was finished in 1885 and there was no longer an urgent need for cheap labour, the situation became more dire. Many of the Chinese already in Canada began moving east looking for work, while administrative wheels turned to oppress them and stop their population from increasing.

In order to prevent more Chinese from coming to Canada, the federal government passed laws restricting their immigration, notably in the form of a head tax that was not applicable to other ethnic groups. This started with a levy of \$50 for each immigrant from China, but this was apparently ineffective because the Chinese population nearly doubled in the decade between 1891 and 1901, going from 9129 to 17312 (Li 1998:89). The head tax was raised to \$100 in 1900 and \$500 in 1903, at the same time as various other provincial and federal anti-Chinese bills were instituted that limited what occupations the Chinese could hold. They were also barred from post-secondary education. This process culminated in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1923 that slowed immigration to a trickle until its repeal in 1947.

The result of these pressures was that the vast majority of Chinese Canadians became concentrated in Chinatowns and exhibited a very particular social structure. They were mostly male, spoke little English, and worked in an ethnic economy consisting of the few industries still available to them: restaurants, laundries, groceries, and garment manufacturing. With limited access to banking, police, education, politics, or government services, they relied on a network of benevolent fraternal associations to fill the gap. These mutual aid groups are sometimes known as *tongs* (from the word for meeting hall, 堂) and, despite being founded after the exclusion era, the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club is one of these associations. It remains intimately involved with the still-functioning tong system in not only Canada, but also the U.S.A., although these groups are no longer as pervasive and powerful as they once were.

For many years, these fraternal societies formed the centre of social, economic, and political life in Chinatown. They were based on a kinship model, so people with the same family name would belong to a common clan association e.g., Chan (陳) or Lee (李). There were also district associations for people from the same county back in China, such as Taishan . Finally, there were associations like Hong Luck that functioned as a catch-all for people of different backgrounds, although their hierarchies still followed a vertical kinship structure rooted in Confucian values of filial piety, respect for elders, and group loyalty. Throughout the Chinese diaspora, tong associations embraced a multitude of functions. The roles of these societies has been succinctly summarized by anthropologist Richard H. Thompson (1989:75):

(1) ritual – the organization and celebration of traditional Chinese festivals such as New Year, the Ching Ming festival, the Mid-Autumn festival; (2) social – ownership of a house or hall which served as a center for conversation, gambling, games, and for a few individuals, a rooming house; (3) social-welfare – this included caring for the sick, arranging for the burial of deceased members; (4) economic – providing job placement and operating rotating credit associations known as *hui*; (5) political – settling disputes between members, sanctioning their behaviour, and representing them in their infrequent contacts with Canadian authorities.

In the case of Hong Luck, the kung fu club and the association are related, but not exactly the same. The Hong Luck Association has a stewardship role and shares the same building as the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. Martial arts practice occurs on the main floor (with change rooms in the basement), while the association's activities happen on the second and third floors. Martial artists are not automatically part of the association, however, and there are many association members who do not practice martial arts. The Hong Luck Association provides administrative support and financial backing for the

kung fu club, which is run as a registered not-for-profit organization. The senior members of the kung fu branch (i.e., my primary fieldwork consultants) have requested that I limit the amount of detail—past or present—that I provide about Hong Luck’s “upstairs” activities. In defence of this position I would argue that the sometimes-shadowy world of the tongs was a result of social and institutional marginalization faced by Chinese Canadians. Bearing this in mind, it is quite reasonable for members to wish to maintain a degree of privacy as a secret society.

A key factor in the success of the tong network was the relative cultural and linguistic homogeneity of the Chinese in Canada before 1970. Most of them were from what are colloquially known in Cantonese as the *Sei Yāp* (four counties, 四邑) and *Sāam Yāp* (three counties, 三邑) regions of Guangdong province. In Toronto, a large majority of the Chinese population hailed from villages in the Taishan district of the *Sei Yāp* (Thompson 1989:45–49). The founders of Hong Luck are no exception to this pattern.

Taishan lies along the mountainous coast to the southwest of the capital city of Guangzhou (formerly Canton). The terrain limits arable land, and population growth outstripped sustainable agriculture. As a result, many men sought work as intermediaries between arriving ships and the cities of the Pearl River Delta. During the nineteenth century, unequal treaties with European powers and rebellions in other parts of China led the men of Taishan to seek their fortunes in the New World. The laws of China’s Qing dynasty forbade emigration, but the position of Taishan on the Coast and the connections of its people to the sea trade allowed them to leave in droves when residents of other areas could not (Li 1998:17–20). These immigrants came to B.C. for the gold rush and

the building of the railroad; by 1878 the first of them had made his way to Toronto (Lai and Leong 2012).

Not later than 1920, a Chinatown was established around the current location of Toronto's Nathan Philips Square. Only a few remnants of that neighbourhood remain; when new city hall was built during the 1960s, it claimed much of the land in that area. This forced the community to move west to its current location around the intersection of Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West. Starting in 1961, the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club began meeting in several ad hoc locations around old Chinatown until the Hong Luck Association was able to purchase a building in new Chinatown. Since 1968 the group's permanent location has been a three-story house located at 548 Dundas Street West.

Hong Luck History

Hong Luck's founding masters were Paul Chan, whose imposing physical structure and outgoing personality made him the de facto leader of the group, and Jin Chan (陳振師傅), who was more reserved and preferred to stay behind the scenes. They met while working in a restaurant in old Chinatown. Together they formed a group with eleven other Chinese men in order to deal with the all-too-regular racial violence that was inflicted on their community. Many of the original members already knew some martial arts and Hong Luck gave them a way to improve their skills in order to better provide protection for the neighbourhood.

1967 marked the Canadian government's establishment of a universal point system for immigration and a major turning point for the old Chinatown system. This

policy removed the final barriers to Chinese immigration and marked the beginning of the first large-scale movement of people from China to Canada since the early twentieth century. Master Paul Chan, however, came to Canada in 1950, just three years after the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act. His grandfather, who was already living in Canada and died soon after his grandson arrived, sponsored him to come over. The twenty-year period between the end of Chinese exclusion in 1947 and the universal point system in 1967 was a time of transition for the Chinese community in Canada.

The Chinatown society that Master Paul Chan arrived to find in 1950 was gradually transitioning from being primarily adult men to also including wives and children. In 1956 he married Pui Ying Wong (黃佩英), whom he met on one of his regular trips to Hong Kong, and brought her back to Canada with him. Despite the change of demographics in gender and age, the Toronto Chinese community was still primarily Taishanese speaking because of the established people who were able to sponsor new immigrants. Under the new point system established in 1967, however, many Cantonese-speaking people from Hong Kong began arriving in Canada. This was partly due to the fact that, as citizens of a British protectorate, they were more likely to speak some English, which earned them extra credit under the new immigration laws. With migration driven by fears surrounding the return of Hong Kong to Chinese rule in 1997, Cantonese people formed the majority of Chinese Canadians by the 1980s.

Cantonese and Taishanese share a common root language and both come from the Pearl River Delta region of Guangdong province, but in Canada there arose class differences between the new and old immigrants based on education and language ability

that changed the social fabric of the Chinatown community (Thompson 1989:23). The newcomers from Hong Kong, as well as the Canadian-born children of the original Chinese community, took advantage of relaxed laws that no longer limited their entry into post-secondary institutions or what industries they could work in. They also took advantage of access to government-funded social services and the Canadian banking system. Class distinctions, combined with increased opportunity resulting from the lessening of institutional discrimination, contributed to a gradual erosion of the importance of the traditional tong system.

Today, the established network of benevolent associations still exists in Toronto's Spadina/Dundas Chinatown, but it functions at reduced capacity. Their membership is aging, while Canadian-born Chinese appear to have less interest in—or need for—the tongs. That being said, new mutual aid groups have arisen that support recent arrivals to Canada and connect them to more established Chinese Canadians. The Taishan Friendship Association of Ontario (加拿大安省台山同鄉聯合總會), for example, celebrated its fourth anniversary in 2014 and has a vibrant membership. Their mandate is different than the older tongs, however, and is focused on developing social, political, and business interests. This group does not have their own building, but rather meets at Hong Luck, and many of their leaders are members of the Hong Luck Association. The growth of the Taishan Friendship Association has been a boon for the kung fu club because their patronage of lion dance has injected some much-needed income into the flagging coffers.

As a result of the changing role of tong associations, the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club's role has been superscribed in several ways. In the earliest days, teaching self-defence to interested members of the Chinatown community had urgency because of the risk of racially motivated violence. Hong Luck also acted as a de facto security force for some of the tongs by protecting those who could not protect themselves, implementing the associations' justice, and safeguarding their business interests. I witnessed the legacy of this protection role when an elderly, Cantonese-speaking woman came into the club one night asking for Master Paul Chan's assistance in dealing with some local bullies. His reputation in this regard was so well established that she did not seem to take into account that he was in his late seventies at that point and had long-since relinquished that sort of responsibility. The imperative to train tong enforcers and protectors has diminished over the years and that aspect of the club now has reduced importance for the Chinatown community at large.

Some of Hong Luck's fighting spirit has been redirected towards combat sports such as kickboxing. There are currently several varieties of kickboxing competitions found in the local area that range from light to full contact and from amateur to professional, all of which represent the formalization and regulation of older fighting traditions. The Thai style (*Muay Thai*) is probably the oldest form, with Chinese, French, Japanese, and North American styles emerging in the twentieth century. Professional competitors generally wear ten-ounce boxing mitts and minimal protective gear (such as a mouth guard and groin cup), though amateur competitors typically wear more padding. Rules vary in terms of allowable techniques, but all styles involve a combination of

punching and kicking between two opponents with a winner determined by points, referee stoppage, or knockout.

Master Paul Chan had some reservations about sport kickboxing because he preferred a more traditional approach to self-defence, but he still gave his support to students who wished to compete. Hong Luck has produced several successful competitors starting in the early 1970s including the McNamara twins, who went on to open their own gym in Toronto called Twin Dragon Kung Fu and Kickboxing. In the 1980s Nick Alachiotis had a successful professional career marked by a high knockout rate and Dexter Delves launched his career by defeating a Hong Kong champion in a supposedly friendly sparring match that ended up becoming quite serious.² Many of the early competitions that Hong Luck's fighters entered were a North American variant of full-contact karate that blended Western boxing with Japanese karate. These were open to participants of all styles who agreed to fight under their rules. More recently, in 2005 Adrian Balcă became a Canadian national Chinese *sanshou/sanda* kickboxing gold medallist. This style of combat sport is distinctive because of the addition of stand-up grappling, throws, and takedowns combined with the standard punches and kicks of all types of kickboxing.

During my time at Hong Luck, the club has been more focused on preserving heritage and promoting general fitness than on actual fighting. The legacy of the group is such that an emphasis is still given to the combat function of all the techniques within the curriculum, though for many students today this remains more theory than practice.

² Dexter Delves' fight occurred during Hong Luck's demonstration trip to Hong Kong and Guangdong province in 1985.

Nonetheless, members sometimes report having had to use their martial arts skills in altercations and some teachers give higher priority to practising self-defence skills than others. More time and energy is now spent on preserving the choreographed sequences of fighting movements known as *forms*. These number in the hundreds and function as both training and performance routines. In the rough and tumble early days, forms were still practised at the club and demonstrated at public events, but were secondary to sparring practice and conditioning for fighting. Lately, forms seem to have superseded combat in terms of the importance given to them in the curriculum. Students in the beginner and intermediate classes occasionally engage in non-contact partner training of attack and defence, while a much smaller cadre of people continues to practise light contact sparring and/or full power striking on pads and hanging sandbags. A senior member told me that people need to know how to use the techniques in the forms and that the martial intention must remain paramount, or else kung fu runs the risk of becoming a dance instead of a martial art.

There is more to Hong Luck than just martial arts. The club provides important ritual services to the community in the form of the annual lion dance parade to celebrate Chinese New Year, as well as performances at other occasions such as association banquets, store openings, and weddings. The New Year's parade involves a contingent of lion dancers and musicians, preceded by non-performing members holding flags, going around to every store, restaurant, office, and association in the neighbourhood to offer a brief lion dance routine, which will be described with greater detail in the next chapter.

As with other aspects of Hong Luck's practices, this too has changed over the years, without the new entirely wiping out the old.

As the older Taishanese and Cantonese communities have dispersed around the Greater Toronto Area, there has been a concurrent dilution of the linguistic and cultural homogeneity in the neighbourhood surrounding the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. Over time, Canada has received waves of immigrants from a number of locations in the broader Chinese diaspora, such as: Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, and Taiwan. Since emigration regulations in the People's Republic of China (PRC) relaxed in the mid 1980s, there has been a marked increase of immigrants from provinces in Mainland China other than Guangdong, each with their own native dialect. When Hong Luck was founded, the lingua franca of Chinatown was Taishanese; by the 1980s it had become Cantonese, and now there is a rise in Mandarin. The PRC has long promoted Mandarin as its *common language* (普通話), so it is not surprising that increasing diversity in Chinatown has led to an increase in its usage. Immigration from a wider range of regions in China has led to a shift towards not only linguistic heterogeneity, but also changed what it means to be Chinese in Canada, which has had a direct impact on Hong Luck's practices.

During Chinese New Year parades, the changing demographics of Chinatown are evidenced by a decrease in the number of stores requesting lion dances. Hong Luck's lion is Guangdong province style, so people from other parts of China are less familiar with the tradition. I have noticed, however, that some relatively new businesses run by Mandarin speakers have gradually begun to participate, whereas they did not when they first opened. Interestingly, the lamp poles in Chinatown all bear a flag with the image of a

Southern Chinese lion and the words “Welcome to Chinatown” (see Figure 4 below).

These decorations are sponsored by the Chinatown Business Improvement Area (CBIA, 多倫多華埠商業促進區) group, which appears to be dominated by business people from Hong Kong, but also includes Taishanese and Mandarin speakers. The diversity of Chinatown is subsumed in the image of a lion used as a metonym that includes various cultural and language groups, yet still points to the history of the Chinese in Toronto.



Figure 4: welcome to Chinatown banner

The ritual requirements for the lion dance have changed over time. Many business owners now treat the performance as a festivity—rather than an exorcism or blessing—and only ask for the simplest of routines outside their front doors. Nonetheless, some

shops still want longer rituals where the lion comes inside and does nine kneeling bows at one or more altars. Even the more demanding lion dances for Chinese New Year (or other performances) generally no longer feature the tradition of solving elaborate puzzles involving symbolic arrays of items that must be re-arranged by the performers. This is not only occurring in Toronto, but also Hong Kong, and the trend is attributed by lion dancers in both cities to the general modernization of society. Since 2008, I have observed only one such puzzle performance live, which was by Hong Luck's lion team. I have, however, been able to watch several recordings of these increasingly rare dances by groups in the U.S.A., Macau, and Malaysia, thanks to the video website YouTube.³

Even while the roles of martial arts and lion dance have continued to evolve at Hong Luck, the club has consistently promoted and preserved Chinese culture—broadly defined. In addition to the various aspects of kung fu, they have also offered Chinese language training and *calligraphy* (書法) classes, while the second floor of Hong Luck has tables for the tile game *mah-jong* (麻雀). The multifarious activities at Hong Luck provide a familiar social space to the elders. Their children and grandchildren, as well as those of other Chinese Canadian families, are sent to the club to learn about the culture of their ancestors. The club is also open to the public and has had non-Chinese members since its early days. Part of Hong Luck's mandate, therefore, has been to teach both Canadian-born Chinese and non-Chinese how to be functional members of the greater Chinatown community.

³ <http://youtu.be/7DG2TsJwHQw> accessed 03/09/2013
<http://youtu.be/3yVx5faE8ss> accessed 03/09/2013
<http://youtu.be/lrhjc7HrbfI> accessed 12/10/2013

In the early twenty-first century, Hong Luck's most regular public activity has been lion dancing. Given the dispersion of the Chinese population into a number of areas in the Greater Toronto Area, Chinatown is no longer the geographically confined space it once was.⁴ A sociological boundary seems more germane at this point, as provided by Thompson (1989:26):

Chinatown may be viewed as a social system, separate from but linked to the larger Canadian system, consisting of a set of social positions and their corresponding roles. These statuses and roles are minimally defined by Chinese language and culture. That is, in order to participate in the Chinese community one would have to possess the ability to fill an ethnic status (e.g., Chinese food cook) and perform the associated role (cook Chinese food in a manner acceptable to the Chinese owner and patrons). Since most Canadians do not have the linguistic or cultural ability to fill such positions, they are not members of the Chinese community.

The idea of membership in the Chinatown community being based on both language and culture can be modified in the case of Hong Luck. Some members of the club whose Chinese language skills may include only a few words or phrases, but who regularly lion dance in the area, are eventually recognized as members of the community. Nevertheless, the ability to speak Chinese is significant and even my basic Cantonese abilities have opened up relationships with Hong Luck elders that would not have been otherwise possible. In fact, one of the original members once happily remarked that I am now "half-Chinese" because of my participation in lion dance and kung fu, as well as my knowledge of Chinese language and culture. He then noted that I am not the first Westerner to have followed this path: Gordon Glasheen has been with Hong Luck since

⁴ There are now Chinatowns in the adjacent suburbs of Scarborough, Markham, Richmond Hill, and Mississauga, in addition to two functioning ones in Toronto proper and the remnants of old Chinatown around City Hall.

the 1970s, speaks and reads Chinese, and is now one of the senior kung fu instructors.

These examples speak to the importance of transmitting Chinese culture at Hong Luck, even to people of non-Chinese descent.

A senior student explained the situation to me differently by using the terms “eggs” and “bananas.” He said “I’m only Chinese when I’m at Hong Luck,” but that the rest of the time he felt and acted very “Canadian” or “white.” This he referred to as being a “banana,” which is yellow on the outside and white on the inside. He told me that I, on the other hand, am an “egg” (white on the outside and yellow on the inside) because of my European heritage combined with my interest in Chinese kung fu, language, and culture. These metaphors refer to outer skin colour being juxtaposed against inner being or identity. I will return to the issue of Chineseness being more than skin deep in Chapter 4.

The demonstration team that went to Hong Kong and the PRC in 1985 exemplified the height of Hong Luck’s cultural agenda. China was essentially closed to the outside world from 1949 until the late 1970s. That period began with the founding of the PRC and was marked by deep social, cultural, political, and economic transformations brought on by the Communist Party of China. When Master Paul Chan was invited by the Chinese government to bring a group of kung fu practitioners to China in 1985, it was only a few years after the borders had been re-opened to foreigners and still four years before the infamous Tiananmen Square Incident in 1989. The group was multiethnic and included Canadians of Italian, Portuguese, Maltese, Jamaican, Grenadian, and, of course, Chinese descent. Due to their affiliation with Hong Luck and their kung fu

skills, they reputedly all entered China on special visas typically reserved for former Chinese residents—regardless of their non-Chinese heritage and/or Canadian nationality. This apparently facilitated the entry requirements for the team, but it also shows the value placed on Hong Luck's program by the Chinese authorities. Intense training in kung fu has a transformative power that can reshape not only people's identities, but also the way they are perceived and received by others, including government authorities. Part of this effect is linked to the deep cultural roots of these practices, which leads me now to a discussion of the historical origins of kung fu and lion dance in China.

Martial Arts in China

At Hong Luck, formal classes begin with the lighting of incense and the performance of stylized, kung fu bows towards the altar at the north wall of the training hall where General Kwan sits. My beginners' class was told by one of the teachers that bowing to the altar is not a religious act, but rather that students are simply showing their respect. This small ritual is therefore not indicative of a literal lineage relationship with the apotheosized martial hero (as it is when bowing to the portraits of Choi Lee Fut and Do Pi masters on the east wall), but rather indexes the values of bravery, righteousness, and martial brotherhood. The bows show respect for those qualities. Hong Luck's official colours are red and black, which are also those associated with General Kwan and further enhance this tie with an iconic connection. A major source of Guan Yu's fame, as well as people's knowledge of him, comes from a fourteenth-century novel called *Romance of*

the Three Kingdoms (三國演義) that boasts a heady blend of fact and fiction.⁵ A major part of the book's enduring success is the way it emphasizes the Confucian value of loyalty among the three sworn brothers. The book draws on historical events, but is decidedly literary in style; the author embellished freely and did not let facts get in the way of a good story. Similarly, kung fu's history has had layer upon layer of signification added through not only literature and storytelling, but also film and television, which are all sources of folk history and meaning attribution (Girton 1986). In the following historical discussion I will balance documented facts with accepted myths because this reflects the discourses I encountered during my fieldwork.

The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club has a unique tradition because of the individuals who have built and sustained it, as well as its place in the Chinese Canadian community. Nonetheless, it is also part of a long history of martial arts from China. Not long ago, Stanley Henning called scholarly studies of Chinese martial arts “conspicuous by their relative absence” and disparaged most of what was available as “fleeting” and “scattered” (1999:319). He held up pioneering martial arts historian Tang Hao (唐豪, 1897–1959) as an example, although that author's work remains un-translated and therefore relatively unknown outside of the Sinophone world. More recently, Peter Lorge (2012) has taken steps to fill the lacuna with a comprehensive tome called *Chinese Martial Arts: From Antiquity to the 21st Century*.

Asian martial arts are often constructed in popular media and by practitioners alike as being self-cultivation practices that improve health, promote spiritual growth,

⁵ ROTK is available in a public domain translation from <http://www.threekingdoms.com/>

and develop self-defence skills through training in abstracted, aesthetically pleasing combat techniques. In some cases this may be true, but this understanding arises from a heterodox combination of modernization, myth, literature, movies, and storytelling, which Lorge believes to undermine the majority of Chinese martial arts history (2012:239). He proposes instead a view that is more consistent with earlier practice and many ongoing traditions—such as Hong Luck’s kung fu—which is to regard Chinese martial arts as systems of combat skills that are sometimes performed for entertainment or ritual purposes (Lorge 2012:3). This perspective suggests that kung fu is essentially about violence and represents the evolution of ancient modes of combat. Ritual, spiritual, or theatrical expressions in the Chinese martial arts also have old and important pedigrees, but do not form the core of either practice or intention when it comes to kung fu. From this perspective, the gong and drum music at Hong Luck is the legacy of the instruments used to signal troop movements in ancient warfare.

By recognizing the important role of folk history in the martial arts, Thomas A. Green (2003) takes a different approach. He does not concern himself with the accuracy of these tales, but rather looks at how they are used to establish credibility, present parables, encourage a mind-set of resistance, and/or build group pride. In this sense, traditional combat systems have gradually changed focus to become elevated arts of martial self-cultivation and, in so doing, have drawn heavily on myths and stories that have imbued their fighting skills with legendary power. These folk histories are similar to what Eric Hobsbawm has called *invented traditions* because they “mean a set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or

symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past” (1983:1). Going one step further Charles Holcombe writes:

In China the martial arts are an aspect of religion, with all of the attendant mystery and miracles. At the same time, the public face of the martial arts has often been that of the entertainer, and the self-image of the martial artist has been thoroughly imbued with motifs drawn from fiction and the theatre. (2002:166)

Holcombe’s assertion is based on linking modern kung fu to the heterodox religious sects and secret societies that arose in eighteenth and nineteenth-century China. These groups were involved in various rebellions and they developed wide popularity among the illiterate and semi-literate masses by cloaking their ideologies in the characters, stories, and heroic atmosphere of popular theatre and storytelling. Holcombe argues that the modern Chinese martial arts owe more to this religious and dramatic base than to a tradition of real fighting skills. From this perspective, the gong and drum music found at Hong Luck is an extension of religious or ritual percussion and the music of Chinese opera.

It is not within the purview of this dissertation to try to resolve the debate on the origins of “authentic” Chinese martial arts. In fact, I suspect that any such effort is doomed because of the complexities of the subject matter. China is a huge country with a recorded martial history of over 3000 years. There are reputedly over 100 distinct styles of Chinese martial arts being practised in the twenty-first century. Even practitioners of the same type of kung fu often have very different approaches based on their own personal character and reasons for studying martial arts. As a result of all these factors, I

will provide a history for Hong Luck's kung fu that respects its complex, diverse, and contested origins, while also giving a useable context to the specific practices I have encountered during my fieldwork.

The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club's curriculum is based primarily on two styles of Chinese martial arts: Choi Lee Fut and Do Pi. Towards the end of his life, Master Paul Chan was pushing the former because of its presence in the emerging standardized competitions for traditional kung fu in the PRC. As a man who had relied on the tong system for most of his life, he was focused on participation in networks and associations. Despite his efforts to align with the Chinese government-sponsored movement towards standardizing traditional kung fu, the practices at Hong Luck remain syncretic, contested, and dominated by idiosyncratic interpretation within a framework of constantly negotiated traditions.

The club was originally founded as a sort of martial arts collective, with Masters Paul Chan and Jin Chan at the core. The various other masters who have taught at Hong Luck each brought with them either a different style or a unique interpretation of the common systems. Some of these men came up at Hong Luck and went on to form their own clubs in Toronto, while others were visiting from China or passing through on their way to other places in North America. Furthermore, Master Paul Chan continued to study martial arts throughout his life, which contributed to a continually evolving curriculum that has included not only Chinese kung fu, but also Japanese judo. This legacy has created an embarrassment of riches because it would be very difficult for any single person to learn the sum total of the martial arts embodied by the collective membership

of Hong Luck. It also means that different generations of students have learned different things from within a broader pool of related practices. I will focus here on the history of the parts of the curriculum that have been emphasized during my training.

Choi Lee Fut is the older of Hong Luck's two main styles and traces its origin back to the Xinhui (新會) district of the *Sei Yap* in Guangdong province in the 1830s. The founder of the system was Chan Heung (陳享) and he named it in honour of the three lines in his martial arts ancestry: Choi family boxing or *Choi Gar* (蔡家拳), Lee family boxing or *Lee Gar* (李家拳), and Buddhist style or *Fut Gar* (佛家掌).⁶ Oral tradition has it that Choi Lee Fut was one of the styles practised by the secret societies of Southern China in the nineteenth century and it has grown to be one of the more internationally well known styles of kung fu. It is extremely rich in the diversity of its techniques and armaments, with well over one hundred forms including empty hand; short, long, flexible, and special weapons; as well as multi-person sets.

The signature punch of Choi Lee Fut uses a *ginger fist* (薑子拳), which flattens the clenched hand in order to deliver strikes with finger knuckles, though a more common fist using hand knuckles is also seen. There are also a number of other hand shapes used in attack and defence that are based on embodying the characteristics of animals such as eagle, crane, dragon, tiger, and monkey, in addition to open hand techniques sometimes poetically called Buddha palms. Choi Lee Fut has more kicking

⁶ A Chinese word used in the name of many styles of kung fu (Cantonese: *kyùhn*, 拳) literally means fist or boxing, but is a metonym for martial arts styles that also include other techniques e.g., kicking, grappling, and/or weapons. The same character is often used in naming choreographed forms e.g., Small Plum Flower Boxing (小梅花拳).

than is typical of southern systems in general, but strong stances are as important as any other kung fu from that part of China. The footwork is flexible and allows for a 360-degree range of engagement that is advantageous for fighting multiple opponents simultaneously. The system has both short and long-range strikes, linking them together with a characteristic barrage that combines attack and defence using straight and curved forces from a variety of angles. There are some joint locks and throws, but basically no ground fighting. Over time, the style has fragmented into a number of different lineages and Hong Luck belongs to one of the *Hung Sing* groups (雄勝), which are differentiated by homophonic Chinese characters for *huhng* (mighty and heroic 雄 or vast and grand 鴻) qualifying the character *sing* (victory 勝).⁷ The club also maintains a village style of *short-bridge* (短橋) Choi Lee Fut from Taishan, although this is not as prevalent as the more common Hung Sing variety.⁸

In contrast to the popularity of Choi Lee Fut, the Style of the Way (Do Pi) is more obscure. The founder, Chan Dau (陳斗), established his first training hall in the city of Guangzhou approximately 100 years after Chan Heung established his in the rural district of Xinhui. Like Choi Lee Fut, Do Pi is a hybrid of a number of different types of kung fu. It actually includes Choi Lee Fut's Choi Gar within it as well as Hung Family boxing or *Hung Gar* (洪家拳), Chow family boxing or *Jow Gar* (周家拳), and knight style or *Hop Gar* (俠家拳). Chan Dau was also interested in non-Chinese styles and incorporated

⁷ The reason I was given for the use of homophonous characters for *hung* in the names of different Choi Lee Fut lineages is that they are meant to both refer to and disguise the style's relationship to the *Hungmen* (洪門) secret society.

⁸ In Chinese kung fu, the arms are often referred to as bridges because they join opponents when contact is made.

techniques first from Western boxing and later on, after he moved to Hong Kong, from Thai kickboxing as well. Although the two styles are related, the character of Do Pi differs from Choi Lee Fut in that it has a more streamlined, direct, and aggressive approach to combative behaviour. Do Pi does contain some elaborate and fancy forms such as Drunken Eight Immortals Boxing (醉八仙拳), but in application it focuses on simple, fast, and powerful skills as being the most effective. This efficiency and aggression is particularly characteristic of Master Paul Chan's personal interpretation of the system.

Although this lineage may seem complicated, there is a common thread running through it. Choi Lee Fut, Do Pi, and the styles they evolved from all trace their roots to the Shaolin temple (少林寺). In fact, a great many of China's kung fu systems claim the same pedigree. No history of Chinese martial arts is therefore complete without a discussion of the Shaolin origin-myth phenomenon, though it is thoroughly fraught and superscribed. Many practitioners claim that the birthplace of kung fu is a Buddhist sanctuary on Henan province's Mount Song. Ironically, the credit for inventing the quintessentially Chinese martial arts goes to Bodhidharma (菩提達摩), an Indian monk who is believed to have brought Buddhism to China, founded the original Shaolin temple during the Northern and Southern dynasties (420–589 C.E.), and become the first patriarch of the Chan sect (禪, Japanese: Zen). As the essential version of the story goes, he felt the Chinese monks were too weak for the intense meditation practice he demanded and were also vulnerable to attack. Bodhidharma taught them a set of boxing movements and meditative calisthenics, which became the foundation of kung fu.

Scholars have disparaged this tale of Shaolin kung fu as a gross distortion, if not outright fabrication (Henning 1999; Lorge 2012). Historical sources show that boxing, wrestling, weapons combat, choreographed sets of fighting movements, martial dances, self cultivation exercises/meditation, and even Buddhism pre-date Shaolin, some of them by nearly a millennium. The connection between empty hand fighting skills and Taoist energy cultivation exercises (chi kung), appears to have been made towards the end of the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 C.E.), which coincides with the first written suggestion that Bodhidharma was the originator of kung fu (Shahar 2008:165–172). In recent times, internationally famous movies like 1982's *The Shaolin Temple*, starring Jet Li (李連傑), have uncritically reinforced the legend of the monastery's martial arts. The Shaolin origin story is well entrenched in folk history and popular media, but has only been mentioned to me in vague and passing terms at Hong Luck. While there is plenty of Buddhist symbolism built into the club's kung fu, especially in the names of forms and techniques, most of the practice is secular. Hong Luck's ritual practices appear to be undergirded by a form of the popular, syncretic, Chinese folk-religion sometimes called the *Three Teachings* (三教), which blends Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, rather than any kind of orthodox faith.

The root of the club's attachment to Shaolin is found in a different tale. During the Ming dynasty, martial culture was in decline among the elite and the hereditary warrior class (Shahar 2008:4). Shaolin, being a large and wealthy temple, had its own private army who provided military assistance to the Emperor when called upon to defend the realm. Their warrior monks and lay-disciples were versed in a variety of

weapons, but had specialized in staff techniques for several hundred years. They were, in fact, renowned for their skill with that weapon. In the tolerant and relatively open atmosphere of the late Ming, however, the Buddhist clerics of Shaolin began developing martial arts with less directly military applications. They did so based on the broader martial trends of that era that looked to synthesize a number of related traditions that were previously separate.

Kung fu's distinctive combination of combat skills, self-cultivation, and performance draws on a variety of sources. For thousands of years, Chinese military writers classed fighting without weapons as a useful form of basic training, but one that was of little use on the battlefield (Holcombe 2002:156). There was likely to have been considerable overlap between civilian fighting techniques and those practised by the armed forces because regular citizens were often pressed into military service. Civilians, however, typically had a much greater need for hand-to-hand combat skills that could help them cope with the everyday types of violence encountered outside the frame of organized warfare (Lorge 2012:211). Military training made extensive use of percussion music because of its importance in signalling formations and movements on the battlefield (Lorge 2012:26-27). One way of training this was through martial weapon dances that helped to familiarize soldiers with gong and drum rhythms during practice, to rouse their spirits before battle, to re-enact their victories after the fighting was done, and even to entertain gods and spirits during court rituals.

Martial dances and unarmed fighting skills were both significant influences on the emergence of kung fu styles, but there was yet one more component. Chinese martial arts

systems arose among civilians, and part of the new developments relied on the incorporation of self-cultivation callisthenics that had long been part of Taoism. It was not until the Ming dynasty that distinctive, organized styles of primarily unarmed martial arts began to emerge, as compared to the earlier, more generic types of boxing, kicking, and grappling. These new systems also had weapons, though empty hand training was the norm. The resulting styles had a novel approach that simultaneously trained fighting, performance, and self-cultivation. Shaolin participated in this trend, though the monastic influence tended to position the newly created, choreographed routines of fighting skills as moving meditations with primarily spiritual, rather than pugnacious, goals.

The primacy of Shaolin as the source of this type of martial art has perhaps more to do with hagiography than it does originality. The monks on Mount Song may not have done it first, but they are seen as having done it best, which changes the story to attribute innovation to them. It is fairly common in Chinese literature and philosophy to attach new ideas to ancient origins and/or powerful institutions in order to lend them validity, so sometimes the creation of historical narratives occurs in a non-chronological way. One example of this is found in Guan Yu's mythology and was used to link him to the Buddhist faith when it was under attack from the Confucian establishment (Duara 1988:778–779). A story was recorded in 820 C.E. about an event that was said to have occurred several hundred years before; Guan Yu's restless ghost was pacified through learning about the Buddhist teaching of *karma*, thereby establishing him as a tutelary

deity for the faith.⁹ This is also exemplified by the Shaolin origin myths that surround many styles of kung fu—including those practised at Hong Luck. These legends appear to have come into existence after the fact as a way to build legitimacy into new practices and also to superscribe older meanings onto them. There are various versions of the origin tale of Southern Chinese kung fu and I will now present a fairly typical, though by no means definitive, version of it.

After the Manchurians successfully invaded from the north and established the Qing dynasty in 1644, they began to fear Shaolin's martial heritage and loyalty to the Ming emperors. The Qing army pre-emptively burned down a Shaolin temple in the province of Fujian for fear that they might become involved in rebellion.¹⁰ Three martial monks, one warrior nun, and a lay-disciple, collectively known as the *Five Elders* (五祖), escaped from the conflagration of the Fujian temple. They fled south to Guangdong province and passed on more focused, practical, and refined versions of their kung fu skills, thereby founding some of the major styles of southern kung fu. The three styles that were combined by Chan Heung to form Choi Lee Fut all trace their lineage back to one particular member of the Five Elders, who was a Chan Buddhist master by the name of Ji Sin (至善禪師).

There is a lack of hard historical evidence for the existence of a Shaolin monastery in Fujian (Shahar 2008:184), which is more than compensated for by the power of the legend as a phenomenon. When Ming loyalists formed secret societies to

⁹ In Buddhism and Hinduism, *karma* is the accumulation of good and bad deeds that determine one's future situation, in both this life and after reincarnation.

¹⁰ The original Shaolin temple is on Mount Song (嵩山) in Henan province, but folk history suggests there were several others at the height of the monastery's influence.

resist the Qing usurpers, these rebels held Shaolin as both a symbol of allegiance to the Ming and the source of their fighting skills. By linking their kung fu with the established reputation of the monastery, they superscribed their practices with historical and cultural value. At the same time, this linkage had an influence on their martial arts and shaped them towards what they have become, whether or not they actually originated at Shaolin. The most important of these groups for Hong Luck's lineage is the Heaven and Earth Society (天地會), from which the contemporary Chinese Freemasons or *Hungmen* (洪門) is descended. The official goal of the old secret society was contained in their slogan: *overthrow Qing, restore Ming* (反清復明). The Manchu-controlled Qing dynasty branded them as outlaws, which was not far from the truth and also somewhat prophetic.

The Heaven and Earth Society incorporated political, criminal, martial, performance, and religious activity, with a concomitant diversity of involvement by their members. They came mostly from the lowest ranks of society and operated in the shadows of the underworld, but by the twentieth century had grown large and powerful. The organization ultimately fractured. One part gave up on rebellion and turned fully to organized crime as what is often called the Triad(s).¹¹ Another part became a legitimate political force under Dr. Sun Yat-Sen (孫逸仙博士), who was a member of many such secret societies. The Nationalists in the RoC (Taiwan) and the Communists in the PRC alike revere him as the father of the revolution that ended the Qing dynasty in 1911 and began China's modern era. He harnessed his secret society connections to support his

¹¹ The Triad refers heaven, earth, and man and is also known in Chinese as the *Three Harmonies Society* (三合會).

cause, including drawing on branches in the Chinese diapora (DeKorne 1934). The last splinter group of the Heaven and Earth Society became martial arts associations like Hong Luck. There does not appear to be any centralized governance of these interrelated descendant groups, which are instead loosely connected by pseudo-kinship hierarchies. However, the Chinese Freemasons do have their own international organization and Master Paul Chan was a member.

The traditional Chinese martial arts of today have multiple goals and functions, which arose from the practices of secret societies during the Qing dynasty. In the old days, there was a special value in the ambiguity of kung fu because the religious aura of Shaolin and the excitement of performance helped to draw attention away from seditious and combative purposes. Many of the practitioners were travellers in the world of the *jiānghú* (literally: *rivers and lakes*, 江湖), as the marginalized, underworld realm of itinerant adventurers and martial artists is sometimes known (Boretz 2011:31–37).¹² The occupations of these men included positions like bodyguard, security, street busker, opera performer, and self-defence instructor (Kennedy and Guo 2005:144–146). For the Heaven and Earth society, both teaching and performing were integral to their seditious goals. The former allowed them to train recruits under the guise of passing on self-defence for the good of the local community, while the latter gave them a means to attract members. All this was cloaked in the mantle of Shaolin’s Buddhism. This helped to assure them a site for training and a venue for performance at local temples in the towns and villages they passed through. Buddhism also formed the basis of the secret society’s

¹² The term *jianghu* uses Mandarin pinyin and has gained some currency in English thanks to its use in films, but is not yet found in standard dictionaries.

mythology, which was used to organize their private rites and oaths of loyalty. Elements of Shaolin were syncretised with aspects of Taoism and Confucianism, as well as characters from folklore such as Guan Yu.

Of particular interest in this dissertation is percussion music, which is related to the legacy of the Heaven and Earth Society in two main ways. The first is the military use of percussion music to signal troop movements and motivate soldiers during battle. In the past this was trained by participation in martial dances, but that evolved in the hands of the Ming loyalists to include lion dancing. The commanding, military style of drumming is still apparent in Hong Luck's lion dance, where the dancers must match their movements to the percussion rhythms. Similarly, the percussion music used for kung fu demonstrations is meant to provide motivation and energy, although the movements are asynchronous to the beats. The music for both these practices retains a superscribed military value attached to it, even though kung fu practitioners no longer engage in organized warfare requiring drum signals. The second has to do with public performances, accompanied by drumming, as an important way of gathering funds and attracting new members. For martial artists of the Qing dynasty, these shows were not limited to martial arts demonstrations or martial-acrobatic roles in Chinese opera. The lion dance had existed in China for some 1500 years, but secret societies in the South incorporated it into their kung fu and made some changes that have lived on into present day traditions.

The Republican Era in China lasted from the end of the Qing dynasty in 1911 to the victory of the Communists over the Nationalist in 1949, but is little discussed at Hong

Luck. During this time, the government actively promoted martial arts as a way of strengthening the populace through activities already embedded in Chinese culture (Kennedy and Guo 2005:102–113). The Nationalists viewed kung fu—along with participation in Western sports that would allow them to compete internationally—as a means of *self-strengthening* (自強). Their goal with this program, in tandem with policies in other areas, was to rid themselves of the damning title, “Sick Man of Asia.” After nearly a century of ongoing domination by Western powers and Imperialist Japan, the fledgling Republic of China sought to build up the bodies of its people as the root of national strength. The martial arts of this movement involved a modernization effort that did away with training methods thought to be outdated or dangerous, and the downplaying of superstitious beliefs surrounding martial arts. There was even a national martial arts institute to further these aims, but after the defeat of the Nationalists and their retreat to Taiwan in 1949, it was discontinued. When the Communists took power on the Mainland, traditional martial arts—and lion dance—were repressed for most of a generation as part of their sweeping program for social, cultural, and political change.

Lion Dance

Lions are not native to China and yet the lion dance has become a major symbol of the Chinese people, especially in the diaspora. Although there are historical records of lions being sent to China as gifts from neighbouring countries some 2000 years ago, the more important and widespread influence on lion dancing is probably the use of these big cats in Buddhist iconography (Liu 1981:15). The Asiatic lion is native to India (the birthplace

of the Buddha) and is sometimes depicted as a ferocious guardian of the *dharma*.¹³ As Buddhism spread throughout China, this image spread with it and took on a life beyond its original use. Pairs of *stone lion* (石獅) statues became common outside doorways as guardians of not only temples, but also tombs, palaces, and eventually homes and businesses.¹⁴ As with the Cantonese lion dance costume, these “lion” statues are exaggerated or even fantastical in their appearance, rather than being an accurate representation of natural cats (see Figure 5 below).



Figure 5: guardian lion statues

The earliest descriptions of lion dance are from the Tang dynasty (618–907 C.E.), but the practice likely evolved from the ancient tradition of mimetic animal dances going

¹³ The Buddha’s teachings are collectively known by the Sanskrit word *dharma*.

¹⁴ In the West, guardian lion statues are sometimes called *foo dogs*.

back to the Zhou dynasty (1045–256 B.C.E)(Liu 1981:31). The Tang lion was a court dance that embodied the Chinese philosophies of *five elements* (五行), *five directions* (五方), and *five virtues* (五常) through the use of colour, number of lions, and spatial positioning (Hu 1995:67–68). It also incorporated Buddhist symbolism and dramatic commentary on political events of the time (Liu 1981:33). The costume used for these performances featured a carved wooden head attached to a cloth body and animated by two people. In the *Official History of the Tang Dynasty* (舊唐書, cited in Hu 1995:69), five dancing lions were said to be accompanied by a one hundred forty-man chorus singing a tune called “Peace and Security Music” (rendered by Hu as “*T’ai-p’ing yüeh*,” 太平樂). Hu adds that there were also musicians playing wind, string, and percussion instruments. Unfortunately, we have no music notation to describe these performances, which is likely because imperial scholars tended not to bother documenting entertainment genres (Thrasher 2008:53). When detachments of the military were sent out on missions, they brought the lion dance with them and performed it in public, albeit in a less grandiose way than at the height of the Tang court (Hu 1995:4, 107). In this way, a dance that originated as a refined, philosophical entertainment for the nobility reached the common people.

The Tang dynasty is regarded as a golden age of Chinese civilization, and so attributing the contemporary lion dance’s origins to that time is compelling for practitioners because of the respect it entails. In addition to being a scholar, Hu was a lion dancer and member of Honolulu, Hawai’i’s Chinese Physical Culture Association (華人精武體育會) (1995:334), which may have influenced the way his historical

account reads somewhat like a lineage. Making connections going back to the Tang dynasty occurs in other places as well. For example, the Chinese name given to Chinatown is *Tang People Street* (唐人街). Such linkages are relevant to not only positive constructions of diasporic Chinese identity, but also to musical genres in China. The chamber musics of both the Chaozhou (Mandarin: *xiànshī* 線詩) and Fujianese/Minnan people (Mandarin: *nánguǎn*, 南管) claim direct Tang provenance (Thrasher 2008:7–14). Alan Thrasher cautions, however, that “[t]he problematic question of origin, which must be treated with great care” is complicated by more than a millennium of intervening history (2008:14). Interestingly, the drift of lion dance traditions from ancient, professional, Tang court performers to contemporary, amateur, village or working class, clan-based associations has parallels in *nanguan* music (cf., Chou 2002).

During the Song dynasty (960–1126 C.E.), martial artists in Zhejiang province, under the leadership of a master named Hsien-ch’iang Yang (楊顯槍), adapted the lion dance to enhance its entertainment value for the masses (Hu 1995:116-117). These performers started by doing away with the heavy wooden mask of the Tang dynasty and substituting a lighter one made from paper mache over a bamboo frame. This allowed them to infuse the sedate court dance inherited from imperial soldiers with a new martial vigour showcasing leaps, kicks, and balances. Furthermore, they reputedly performed stunts such as climbing high into the air on up to nine tables stacked on top of each other. Their final innovation was musical in nature:

Earlier, various musical instrumentations of percussion, wind, string and song were utilized. However, Master Yang Hsien-ch'iang was only familiar with military drumming so he used only percussion instruments of drums, gongs and cymbals. Moreover, the rhythmic patterns of drumming imitated the military style for the various signalling of troops. (Hu 1995:120)

William Hu uses the term “martial artist” to describe Yang (1995:116), but this is hundreds of years before the emergence of kung fu styles as we know them today (as described in the previous section), and the author does not clarify his meaning. Given the reference to military drumming in the quote above, Yang and his followers were probably former soldiers. Regardless, their contributions may be considered an important evolutionary step toward the kung fu style of lion dance developed during the Qing dynasty and maintained by clubs like Hong Luck.

By the Ming dynasty, the common people of Anhui province had identified the lion dance's exorcising quality and they performed it for New Year's ceremonies (Liu 1981:35). In this regard, the fearsome aspect of the lion mask and its superscribed role as a protector in Buddhist iconography combined to give the meaning of the exorcism ritual. Lion dancing was seen as driving away *negative chi energy* (邪氣) through the combination of a terrifying visage, vigorously aggressive movement, and thunderous percussion. This reduction in negative chi thereby paved the way for health, happiness, and prosperity to flourish, which parallels a Chinese approach to physical health that focuses on creating the conditions of wellbeing, rather than treating symptoms of disease. After the fall of the Ming, anti-Qing secret societies in Guangdong province promoted the auspicious lion dance in order to provide them with a smokescreen for various other aspects of their operations (Slovenz-Low 1994:189–191).

Hong Luck's website contains several legends regarding the origins of the lion dance and yet, when I asked my main teachers about these, they were not familiar with the myths. It seems that perhaps some of the club's seniors or elders know these stories, but that they have not been transmitted as thoroughly as the movement and music. Alternatively, the younger generation may be less interested in remembering these stories and would rather concentrate on praxis. The myths on the club's website are similar to those collected by other lion dance researchers (Hu 1995; Liu 1981; Slovenz-Low 1994) and I will quote Hong Luck's version at length here, to give an idea of the subject matter:

A popular belief is that the lion dance finds its roots in the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-906). Legend has it that the emperor had a strange dream one night. In his dream, an odd creature he had never laid eyes upon before saved his life and carried him to safety. The next day, wondering what this creature was and what the dream meant, the emperor described his reverie to his ministers. One of the ministers explained that the strange creature resembled an animal called a "lion", which did not exist in China at the time. The emperor, wanting to see this "lion" while awake, ordered them to create a model of it, and because of his dream, the lion came to symbolize good luck, happiness, and prosperity.

Another account tells of a lion frequently terrorising a small village in China. In order to stop the attacks of the beast, all the villagers banded together and beat their pots and pans to make a racket that could drive away the lion. It is said some even put on costumes that resembled the lion. Other versions of this account tell of the villagers consulting a Buddhist monk for protection. The monk eventually tamed the lion, which in turn became the protector of the people. This monk is often represented as a big-headed Buddha (*dai to fut*), as seen in most southern lion dances.

Probably, the most credible version of the origin of the lion dance is this (...) A mythical lion originating in heaven was reborn. Being very mischievous and having a fondness for practical jokes, he created a great deal of trouble for everyone. On one occasion, he decided to play a practical joke on the Jade Emperor. Angered at the trouble the lion caused, the Jade Emperor killed the lion by cutting the lion's head off and separating it from its body. He then threw both the head and the body of the lion down to the earth to rot. Upon discovering the fate of the lion, Kwan Yin (the goddess of mercy) felt sorry for the lion and decided to help him. Using a long red ribbon, she tied the lion's head back on and

brought him back to life. This red ribbon is still seen today, and is said to have the ability to ward off the evil spirits. Kwan Yin also adorned the lion with a horn and mirror to drive away evil spirits.¹⁵

Hong Luck's lion dance has its strongest historical roots in the Qing dynasty. In order to help foment a revolution, rebel groups used the lion dance to increase their ranks, disguise their martial arts training, and gather funds. They encouraged the ritual exorcism aspect of the performance as appropriate for a variety of occasions, thereby increasing their opportunities to present it in public. This gave them an excuse to practice their stances, footwork, and responses to drum signals, thereby taking the martial performance style of the Song dynasty lion and using it as actual kung fu training. It also increased their public profile, which exposed them to more potential recruits. The crowds that gathered for these events gave them opportunities to exchange messages with other members of the secret society without arousing suspicion from the authorities. Finally, they added a unique twist to the routine, which continues to be performed by lion dancers all over the world.

The highlight of a typical Cantonese lion dance is when the lion "eats" a bunch of vegetables, then spits them back out. This section is called *plucking-the-greens* (採青) and is based on a pair of double entendres. The word for vegetable in Cantonese (*choi*, 菜) sounds like the word for good fortune (*choih*, 財), so ingesting a single vegetable then spitting it back out in many pieces iconically signifies multiplying wealth. The Cantonese word for green (*chīng*, 青) used in the name *plucking-the-greens*, however, is

¹⁵ <http://www.hongluck.ca/lion-dance-history.php> accessed 30/08/2013

homophonous with the name of the hated Qing dynasty rulers (*Chīng*, 清), so the lion is iconically eating the oppressors. While there is a degree of iconicity in the semiotic chain, the double entendres are based on the arbitrary sounds of language and thus function symbolically, rather than iconically. A red envelope containing money is attached to the vegetable, which is kept when the greens are spit out. The plucking-the-greens sequence is universal in Southern Chinese lion dance traditions and is an essential part of most performances.

There are a number of related practices, some of which do not appear to have had a significant influence on Hong Luck's style, but should still be briefly listed here for the sake of completeness. These include other masked dances such as: Hakka *unicorn* (舞麒麟), Fujian/Taiwan *green lion* (舞青獅), Tibetan snow lion, Japanese lion, and Korean lion, as well as various types of Chinese *dragon dances* (舞龍).¹⁶ From an organological perspective, the percussion ensemble used in kung fu and lion dance is similar to those found in other forms of Chinese folk music, folk dance, religious ritual, and opera, though the exact sizes, shapes, and types varies from tradition to tradition (Jones 1995:104). The Northern Chinese style of lion dance has had an indirect influence on Hong Luck's practice, while the strongest sway has come from the other main type of Southern Chinese lion dance.

¹⁶ The lions used by Hong Luck and other Southern Chinese groups are easily mistaken by the uninitiated for dragons. Lion dancing essentially uses a mask costume big enough for two people, while dragon dancing uses a puppet on poles that is manipulated by more than two people. The biggest dragons can require nearly a hundred performers. Interestingly, the dragon dances I have observed utilize the same instruments and rhythms as Southern Chinese lion dancing.

Within Cantonese lion dance there are two main styles, which are named after the area of Guangdong where they originated. They both have their own characteristics, but many groups now mix their music, equipment, and movement for reasons that I shall outline below. These two styles are: *Futsan* (from the Foshan area, literally: Buddha Mountain, 佛山) and *Hoksan* (from the Heshan area, literally: Crane Mountain, 鶴山), while a hybrid style is sometimes called *Fut-Hok*. The *Futsan* lion dance and drumming styles that are at the core of my fieldwork are part of Hong Luck's kung fu and originated in China's Guangdong province during the mid-nineteenth century before coming to Canada in the 1950s. Another path of migration saw emigrants take the *Hoksan* style with them to Southeast Asia, which became especially popular in Singapore and Malaysia. In a world of air travel, telecommunication, and global commerce, there has been increasing amounts of mutual exposure and cross-pollination, so old categories have started to break down. The Internet and digital media have recently accelerated this transnational flow. Nonetheless, old stylistic distinctions remain, particularly in a conservation-oriented environment like Hong Luck.

Both *Futsan* and *Hoksan* perform the plucking-the-greens sequence, use the same percussion ensemble, and have similar looking lions. There are, however, many large and small differences between these two Cantonese lion dances. In terms of construction, the traditional *Futsan* lion has a curved mouth, pointy horn, and long tail (approximately three metres or almost ten feet), while the *Hoksan* has a straight mouth, a rounded horn, and short tail (approximately 2 metres or six-and-a-half feet). Much of the modern innovation in movement and lion construction has come from lion teams and workshops

in Malaysia and Singapore, where the *Hoksan* style is prevalent. This progression accelerated in the second half of the twentieth century when they developed a competition style of lion dance. The key apparatus is called the *plum flower poles* (梅花樁) and consists of pairs of metal pillars with dinner-plate-sized discs on top of them, spread a about a meter (three feet) apart, lined up in a row, and increasing in size from about thirty centimetres (one foot) to three meters (ten feet) in height. A single lion at a time does a routine where they employ a dazzling array of acrobatics to jump, twist, turn, and balance their way from the floor up to the highest poles, which is where they pluck the greens. The resulting technical and aesthetic development spurred by competition has led to it being labelled the so-called international style.

Hoksan lion dancing is generally cat-like and light footed, so lion dance competitions privilege that style of movement. The demands of these contests, however, have lead to changes in the style in order for groups to perform ever more demanding routines. Some of the developments were borrowed from Northern Chinese lion dancing, which is not related to kung fu, but rather comes from an acrobatic tradition. For this reason, the *Hoksan* lion style has become *southern lion northern dance* (南獅北舞) and many of the top competition teams do not practice martial, but rather focus solely on lion dance. The construction of the lion has changed to accommodate this type of performance practice. For example, the tail has been shortened to make it easier for the person in the rear to lift, carry, and support the person animating the head. The *Hoksan* lion head has become smaller and lighter. Finally, their lion costumes come in an array of cheerful colours, with luxuriant strips of fur on both face and body typically contrasting against

the painted part of the head and the cloth part of the tail. Many of them also include holographic paper or sequins that make the lion sparkle when it moves. The pleasant hues, twinkling accents, and overall fuzziness gives them a somewhat friendly or even cute appearance.

In contrast, the more traditional *Futsan* lion retains a look that is intended to be tough and fearsome. The beard, eyebrows, and eyelashes are bristling, crimped, or stringy, while the fur used to accent other parts of the head and body is shorter and sparser. There are three main colour schemes, though there remains a fair amount of room for interpretation in the way that these are implemented. They are based on the three sworn brothers from the aforementioned *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*: Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Chang Fei. Each of these three characters has an iconic meaning based on the personality of the warrior and an associated symbolic colour scheme (see Figure 6 below). Chang Fei is the youngest and most aggressive, which makes his lion suitable for a new kung fu club and/or one that is ready to fight. The colour scheme uses black fur with green and/or white accents. In Hong Luck's early days, they often used a Chang Fei lion head. Guan Yu is loyal, righteous, and brave, so his lion is suitable for any kung fu club. His lion has black fur with a red face and black alternating with red for the body. Liu Bei is the oldest of the three and was the leader of the group because he was of noble blood. His lion has white fur and a multicoloured body, which in the most traditional version uses the five colours associated with the Five Elements theory: black, white, yellow, red, and green. The Liu Bei lion often has an emphasis on yellow, which is rendered as golden, because of the iconic association between that colour and wealth.

This type of lion is most suitable for an established kung fu club with an older master, though other clubs use them because of their auspicious appearance. As with the plucking-the-greens sequence, the meanings of lion head colour schemes have an element of iconicity that is undergirded by conventional symbolism.



Figure 6: traditional *Futsan* lion heads

Kung fu clubs often favour the *Futsan* lion because of that style's low, strong stances and footwork, which harkens back to the Qing dynasty rebels who used it to disguise their martial arts training. The style tends to be more powerful and aggressive, with a character that suits a mythical beast, rather than being overtly cat-like. The lion dance and drumming I have learned during my fieldwork is descended from the same lineages as its kung fu, but there is no distinction of it being strictly Choi Lee Fut, Do Pi, or any of the other styles that have passed through the club. In fact, the movement and music seems to represent a confluence of all of them, which is a more extreme case of the

situation with the martial arts syllabus. The twenty-minute routine that forms the backbone of Hong Luck's lion dance curriculum contains no jumps, acrobatics, or apparatuses, although auxiliary training sometimes uses chairs, benches, or tables that act as obstacles to be climbed over or balanced on. The younger generation of lion dancers is well aware of the more spectacular *Hoksan* lion and sometimes practice jumping, but Master Paul Chan discouraged this in favour of attention to detail and ritual propriety. In particular, he emphasized synchronization of the lion's action with musical rhythm and the expression of emotion through movement and lion head manipulation.

The influence of *Hoksan* lion dancing is strong because of its high profile as a sport and its crowd-pleasing acrobatics. Despite Master Paul Chan's concerns, some of this has inevitably seeped into Hong Luck. Most of the lion costumes used at the club have shorter tails and fuzzier fur than the old-style *Futsan* lions, though they still retain the traditional colour schemes. In other cases, new colour schemes (e.g., gold and black) are used on otherwise very traditional lions. Some Hong Luck lion dancers like to perform *Hoksan*-style, high-flying jumps, especially for less traditional events. Drummers have picked up *Hoksan* rhythms, though their use at Hong Luck events has sometimes been the target of censure, as shall be detailed in the next chapter. There is even some debate at the club about feeling the need to compete with other kung fu clubs around Toronto who have either created hybrid styles of lion dance or jumped entirely on the *Hoksan* band wagon. During my fieldwork in Hong Kong, Master Joe Kwong (龐組寶師傅) of the New Asia Kung Fu Club (新亞國術會) told me that he would be hard pressed to get gigs if his group only did traditional *Futsan* lion dancing and that he

therefore has been forced to hybridize. Thus far, Hong Luck has made few concessions to the so-called international style, which speaks to the club's position as a bastion of tradition.

Discussion and Summary

The heroic display ethos of a culture or subculture is that collective set of behaviors, expected actions, and principles or codes of conduct that ideally guide and are displayed by a hero, and are the subject of many traditional ballads or epics where seemingly superhuman heroes display bravery, courage, and valor in the face of death. (Zarrilli 2001:419)

A key aspect of the preceding histories is the way that kung fu and lion dance have been used to manifest a heroic ethos in the face of oppression. Unarmed combat and fighting with archaic weapons have long been obsolete on the battlefield and yet they embody the ideal of self-defence. Qing dynasty revolutionaries and Hong Luck's founders in Canada had no chance of overturning the systems set against them using just their kung fu.¹⁷ Nonetheless, martial arts played an important role in both situations. For the Qing-era secret societies of Southern China, kung fu and lion dance were ways of fanning the flame of resistance that eventually contributed to a full-scale revolution. In the early days of Hong Luck, self-defence skills and a strong body allowed members to act against violent racism in their neighbourhood to better themselves and their community. Public displays of kung fu and lion dance have bolstered the spirit of

¹⁷ At the turn of twentieth century, the Boxer Rebellion in Northern China staged by the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists (義和團運動) used martial arts—emboldened by heterodox religious practice preaching imperviousness to weapons—to attempt to drive foreigners out of China and thereby prop up the Qing dynasty. It was unsuccessful in its goals and the collateral damage to the country had the ironic, unintended effect of contributing to the immanent end of Qing rule.

subaltern practitioners and audiences not necessarily as the grandiose symbol of regime changing warriors, but rather more practically as an index of people who refuse to be trodden down and have the muscle to protect themselves in everyday life.

The efforts of the Republican era Nationalist government may not get much recognition in folk history, but the spirit of that time period is still evident in today's kung fu. The ideals espoused by practitioners at the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club include the idea of self-strengthening through an art of self-defence and the manifestation of that spirit in performance. This is superscribed on the older secret society attachment to Shaolin that holds kung fu to be a type of martial self-cultivation with spiritual overtones and an interest in resistance to oppression. Both these layers of signification rely on the even older tradition of real fighting skills, which makes combat application a hot topic at Hong Luck, despite the diversity of goals in the training program.¹⁸

Traditional *Futsan* lion dancing is also a form of heroic display that has had layers of meaning superscribed on it. During the later years of the Qing dynasty, the performance was dubbed the *awakened lion* (醒獅) in a reference to China's international reputation as a sleeping giant. Starting with losses during the first Opium War (1839–1842), China experienced a century of humiliation brought on by a series of unequal treaties with Western nations (Scott 2008:2–3). The idea of a ritually awakened lion mask imbued the dance with meaning and became an icon for people's hopes that China would rise from its solipsistic slumber to free itself from domination by foreign powers (Liu

¹⁸ Self-defence remains at the forefront of discourse at Hong Luck, including when people are working on the performance-oriented, choreographed forms. Even lion dance is construed as being good for one's fighting ability because of the strong-but-flexible stances and embodied kung fu spirit.

1981:86–87). The backs of many lion heads still have the Chinese characters for *awakened lion* painted on them and, before being used, the head martial arts instructor ritually awakens the mask by *dotting the eyes* (點睛) with liquid cinnabar. In the early days of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club, the significance of the awakened lion became more local when they would often use the green and black, Chang Fei, fighting lion for parades and public performances. China was still asleep, caught in the nightmare of the Cultural Revolution (1966–1976), while Hong Luck was asserting the presence and steadfast independence of Chinese Canadians in Toronto’s Chinatown.

China is now an international power with both political and economic clout; the lion is awake and roaring. Chinese Canadians are no longer subject to systemic discrimination, though some Hong Luck members have reported individual cases of interpersonal racism towards them. On June 22, 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper offered a full apology for the exclusion of, and discrimination against, the Chinese in Canada, with a particular emphasis on the injustice of the Head Tax. He also recognized the key part played by the Chinese railway workers in Canada’s confederation as a country. With the rise of China on the global scene and the much-improved position of Chinese Canadians, resistance to domination is no longer as essential as it once was.

The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club continues to serve the tongs and the members of the Chinatown(s), but the scene is changing. Competition for lion dance gigs is increasing because there are now over ten kung fu clubs in the Toronto area with active lion dance troupes. A new generation of potential students seem more attracted to the showy acrobatics of contemporary *Hoksan* lion dancing or eschew traditional kung fu in favour

of modern combat sports like mixed martial arts (MMA). The death of Master Paul Chan in 2012 caused much sorrow, but also fostered discussion about the future direction of the club. Since then, Master Jin Chan has stepped in as Hong Luck's head instructor and training has returned to the status quo. Nonetheless, many members have expressed their concern about a dwindling of students, lion dance gigs, and support from the aging members of the Hong Luck Association. For now, being a not-for-profit and having ownership of the building are the club's saving graces as it pursues a highly traditional agenda in an increasingly modern world.

In this chapter I have given a brief history of the Chinese in Canada, and the martial arts that some of them brought over from China, in order to contextualize the traditions that are maintained in Toronto by the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. The discussion has included—but not exhausted—the many ways that meaning has been layered on these practices through processes of superscription. The next chapters will focus on the results of my fieldwork since 2008. First, I will be looking at Hong Luck's public performances of lion dance as a living practice, which is specific to the club and local community, while remaining deeply embedded in the histories and stories outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 3 **The Public Face of Hong Luck:** **Lion Dance Parades and Performances**

Introduction

The acrid smell of burning gunpowder fills the cold afternoon air as a deafening cacophony of violent noises echoes off the buildings lining a narrow street. Random bursts of explosions form a ragged chain, which makes an unsynchronized counterpoint against the regular crash of metal on metal and the rhythmic throbbing of wood pounding on skin. A throng of onlookers has gathered around the source of this uproar, but is held at bay by a group of armed men forming a wide circle with their staves and pole-arms. Despite a cloud of smoke from the ongoing detonations, the crowd apperceives a pair of red and black beasts who are thrashing about and rending the air. The ruckus takes place in front of a red painted storefront whose signboard is written in golden-yellow with both Chinese characters and English letters. The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club is sending out its lion dance crew to drum in Chinese New Year, and they start the festivities off with a bang from a long string of firecrackers exceeded in loudness only by the efforts of the percussion ensemble.¹

The preceding description suggests the rich field of experience offered by lion dance parades, which will form the basis of this chapter. This practice combines ritual meaning and entertaining spectacle into a multivalent practice. In Toronto, the diasporic, multicultural, and multigenerational context contributes to the lion dance's potential for heterogeneous-yet-coextensive meanings. In Chapter 2, I summarized some of the main

¹ During my fieldwork I have typically been either inside one of the lions or playing percussion at the start of a parade, so this passage represents an effort to imagine what a passerby might see.

signs associated with lion dance, kung fu, and their percussion music, with a focus on the various strands that came to make up the lore of Qing dynasty secret societies. From a Peircian semiotic perspective, these are mostly symbols, which are general signs that achieve meaning through the conventions of linguistic definition and tend to be based on rational cognitive processes (Peirce 1985 (1903):8). Thomas Turino has labelled these *P-symbols* in order to distinguish them from the more casual use of the word *symbol* when it refers to signs in general (2014:198).² My discussion in the last chapter was based on historical, social, and cultural information drawn mostly from secondary and tertiary sources that I used to supplement Hong Luck members' statements regarding their own practices. As such, it tended towards normative description of P-symbols such as the colours of the costumes or the plucking-the-greens sequence. Without having necessarily exhausted the history or broad cultural context of lion dance and kung fu, I will now turn to the primary ethnographic data of my research, which is rooted in lived experience, rather than written texts.

This chapter will describe and interpret Hong Luck's public musical activities. During my fieldwork this has consisted primarily of lion dance performances; kung fu demonstrations with percussion accompaniment were much less frequent and will be reserved for the fifth chapter. I will be discussing lion dance as a ritual, albeit one whose complex cultural and performative roles thwart simple categorization. This will start with an overview of Hong Luck's Chinese New Year lion dance parades, including a description of the music and dance, followed by a discussion of people's negotiation

² Although Turino does not specify, the *P* in *P-symbol* is likely short for *Peirce*.

surrounding certain aspects of the ritual sequence and repertoire of rhythms. Next I will provide an analysis of lion dance as a form of entertainment with important implications for people's sense of self—even when the ceremonial aspects of the rite are downplayed. This will be followed by a discussion of how the supernatural function of the lion dance is coextensive with the social and musical construction of Chinatown's space. First, however, I will position my discussion theoretically in terms of studies of ritual, semiotics, and performance ethnography.

Victor Turner has defined ritual as “a stereotyped sequence of activities involving gestures, words, and objects, performed in a sequestered place, and designed to influence preternatural entities or forces on behalf of the actors' goals and interests” (1973:1100). While this describes the majority of Hong Luck’s lion dancing, in other situations the supernatural aspect is superscribed by reaffirming social bonds, creating the space of Chinatown, and/or constructing (sub)cultural identity. In fact, it is not uncommon for there to be negotiation between patrons and performers, as well as internally among Hong Luck elders, seniors, and juniors, regarding the relative importance of the lion dance’s various interpretations and how these are manifested. This is in line with Richard Schechner’s expanded view:

Rituals have been considered: 1) as part of the evolutionary development of animals; 2) as structures with formal qualities and definable relationships; 3) as symbolic systems of meaning; 4) as performative actions or processes; 5) as experiences. These categories overlap. It is also clear that rituals are not safe deposit vaults of accepted ideas but in many cases dynamic performative systems generating new materials and recombining traditional actions in new ways. (1993:228)

It is useful to separate these differing categories for analytical purposes, though any given performance could—and often does—showcase more than one meaning because of the diversity of the participants. Schechner organizes the seeming opposition of ritual efficacy and theatrical entertainment into a dyad that forms a continuum where “No performance is pure efficacy or pure entertainment” (1974:468), which has proven to be a fruitful interpretive frame for Timothy Cooley’s (2006) work on folklore festivals as ritual in Podhale, Poland. I will proceed from this idea and position lion dance as both preternatural and social, with varying degrees of efficacy and entertainment depending on context and audience.

In order to engage with lion dance as a lived experience I will be focusing on the way it is presented by Hong Luck's specific situation, rather than the historical generalities of the previous chapter. My discussion of this ritual performance practice will be rooted in an analysis of the signification process, which Victor Turner calls “the interpretation of the meaning of symbols considered as dynamic systems of signifiers, signifieds, and changing modes of signification in temporal socio-cultural processes” (1977:77).³ Turner further privileges context, performance, event, and situation as being key determinants of ritual meaning (1975:150–151). Thomas Turino’s work on semiotics and music is useful here for the toolkit of terms it provides, and his ideas dovetail nicely with Turner’s conception of ritual because,

From a Peircian perspective: (1) every musical sound, performance or dance movement, and contextual feature that affects an actual perceiver is

³ Turner distinguishes between *signs* as univocal and conventionalized in their meanings versus *symbols* as polysemic and having a likeness to that which they signify. N.B. this usage differs from the Peircean definitions that I have employed.

a sign, and (2) every perceiver is affected by signs in relation to his or her own personal history of experience, which is at once a partially unique but largely shared social experience. (Turino 2014:188)

Turino argues that much of the impact of musical experience is rooted in the more visceral sign types of icons and indexes (2008:13–15). During analysis or verbal explanation, P-symbols often come to the fore, in part due to the fact that language itself is highly P-symbolic, but also because the discussion is abstracted from the phenomenon. In the heat of the moment, however, lived experience often has more to do with meanings arising from similarity and association, which draw on iconic and indexical signs. Part of the challenge here is to turn my investigation towards these semiotic categories without diminishing the importance of traditional P-symbolism. Hong Luck’s ritual practices operate on several levels of meaning simultaneously, which is a function of the combined impact of costume, dance, and music to create what Turino calls *semiotic density* in referring to “the relative number of signs potentially operating together in any given medium” (2014:189).

The description, explanation, and interpretation in this chapter stem from my performances in thirteen lion dance parades and over sixty lion dance performances, during a period of approximately six years (2008–2014). In Toronto this included working with not only the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club, but also the affiliated Northern Leg Southern Fist (NLSF) group.⁴ My acceptance as a researcher at Hong Luck has been contingent on my ongoing participation in their martial arts, dance, and music. As a

⁴ The leader of NLSF is also a senior member of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club and the two groups maintain close, mutually supportive ties.

result, I have a lion's eye-view of their practices because, by my fifth year of fieldwork, I ended up with the privilege and responsibility of being the most regular lion dance performer at the club. The flip side of this situation is that I have spent relatively less time on the outside looking in at performances than I have being right in the middle of them. In addition, I have also studied private archival videos from Hong Luck, along with recordings of events I have been a part of.

This type of participant-observation can be characterized as *performance ethnography*. In the emergent field of martial arts studies, it has been tied back to the work of Victor Turner through Philip Zarrilli's groundbreaking studies on the South Indian martial art of *kalaripayattu* (Farrer and Whalen-Bridge 2011:10–11). Similarly, Deborah Wong (2008, further to Denzin 2003) discusses *performative ethnography* in regards to her study of *taiko* drumming, where her roles as performer and ethnographer are methodologically linked. The auto-ethnographic tendency of this approach reduces the difference between observer and observed, thereby attempting to put a more direct experience onto the page, although I am careful not to make this about me, but rather stay focused on Hong Luck. A healthy dose of thick description (Geertz 1973) is therefore still helpful here in order to explicate the experienced meaning of cultural practices within their social context. In addition to acquiring bi-musicality (Hood 1960), performance ethnography on kung fu also requires extensive physical training. At Hong Luck, teachers constantly shape the embodied knowledge thus acquired by intersubjectively evaluating, critiquing, and thereby informing performance. Their collective and individual views of lion dance, kung fu, and percussion music have been

integral to my research and undergird my interpretation. Hong Luck members gauge a practitioner's understanding and embodied knowledge as they are manifested in performance, so it is from there that this chapter will flow.

Chinese New Year Lion Dance Parade: Overview and Sequence

New Years is the most important holiday on the Chinese calendar and Cantonese lion dance is an important part of the celebrations in both Southern China and the associated diaspora. These festivities occur at a different time every year according to the Gregorian calendar because the traditional Chinese system of reckoning is lunar—or more properly, lunar-solar. The first day of the New Year typically falls around the end of January or beginning of February, though celebrations can last for several weeks. In China, this whole period is an official civic holiday, but since in Canada it is not, Hong Luck's lion dance parades are scheduled for a weekend within the holiday season. The Chinese name for their New Year is either Spring Festival (春節) or Lunar New Year (農曆新年). In Toronto, however, the more northerly latitude means the festivities fall in the dead of winter.

As much as Chinese New Year is about giving an auspicious start to another cycle of the earth around the sun, it is also about family and friends. Older people give small *red packets* (紅包) stuffed with *lucky money* (利是) to the young and unmarried. Similarly, Hong Luck's lions go around Chinatown collecting the little crimson envelopes of cash from shops, restaurants, and associations. There are many businesses in the neighbourhood that are connected to the kung fu club through the network of mutual

aid groups or social ties and therefore make generous monetary contributions through lion dance patronage at New Years. Other supporters have no such affiliation but still desire the ritual blessing and exorcism of a lion dance to start the year on the right foot. There are also people who appear to enjoy the entertaining spectacle for its own sake, with less concern for any supernatural function. Not every business in Chinatown participates, however, and some of the owners explained their reasoning to me when I was helping Hong Luck promote the lion dance parade for their fifty-second anniversary in August of 2013.⁵ Some of the reasons included: being Christian and not wanting to participate in pagan rituals; having no interest or connection to the tradition, particularly among recent Northern Chinese immigrants; and even viewing lion dance as unwelcome panhandling for money.

In the days leading up to a parade, Hong Luck representatives go around Chinatown to hand out flyers announcing the day and time that their lions will be taking to the streets (see Figure 7 below). These red paper leaflets are written in traditional Chinese characters that go from right to left in vertically descending columns, the combination of which signifies several things. The PRC and Singapore use simplified characters, while Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan, and the majority of the diaspora have retained traditional script. Even in the places that continue to use older characters, left-to-right horizontal lines of text are now more common than the old-style, right-to-left vertical columns. Hong Luck's notices therefore act as an immediate icon to literate

⁵ The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club usually does two lion dance processions per year in Chinatown. Most of the discussion in this chapter is focused on the Chinese New Year parade because that event has wider significance in Chinese culture than does Hong Luck's anniversary. The overall sequence, organization, and ritual action are basically the same for both processions.

Sinophones that something traditional is afoot because they are visually presented in way that resembles older practices.

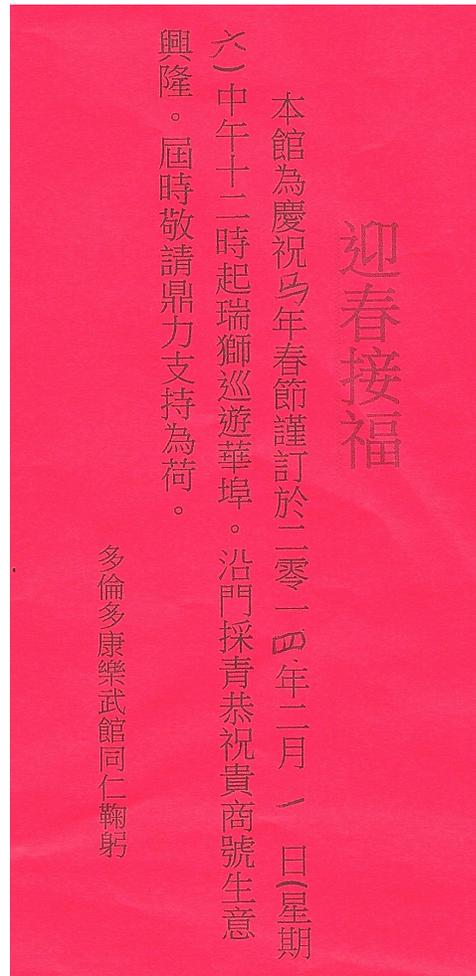


Figure 7: lion dance parade flyer 01/02/2014

The colour of the paper is as significant as the style of writing. Red is considered happy and lucky in Chinese culture, so it is used not only for New Year's decorations and red envelopes, but also for weddings.⁶ Another layer of signification undergirds the

⁶ Traditional Chinese wedding gowns are red, though many Canadian-born Chinese opt for a white gown. Some of them now use both by having a wardrobe change at some point during the day of their nuptials, which I observed when I attended a kung fu classmate's wedding. The two (or more!) wedding dress system is also gaining popularity in Hong Kong, as attested by my teachers at CUHK.

conventional P-symbolism of red being equated with happiness and good fortune. Fire, burning coals, and hot metal all share an iconic relationship with red, which is thus a warm colour. Red as a sign is then linked to the object heat by an interpretant based on resemblance. Consequently, Chinese New Year is fuelled by red decorations that signify not only joy and luck, but also warmth. In Chinese culture, a valued trait of social occasions is that they should be *hot and noisy* (熱鬧), meaning bustling with people and filled with sound. Hong Luck's red flyers tie into the heat of the former part of this cultural value with an iconic use of colour that foreshadows the energetic performance style of the lions and the size of the entourage of non-performing members who accompany the parade. While not mentioned explicitly on the flyer, the gong and drum music is extremely noisy—in a positive way—and will fulfil the auditory part of a hot and noisy atmosphere.

Looking more closely at these lion dance notices, the language itself gives clues about what audiences can expect and how to participate. They are written in a formal and polite style, which dignifies the whole affair as being proper in terms of its ritual function. Businesses are informed that those whose doorways are prepared for the auspicious lion to pluck the greens will be wished good luck, success, and prosperous commerce.⁷ Hong Luck seniors make a point of explaining the importance of this blessing to new lion dancers. For some members of the local community, the success of their business in the coming year depends on a correctly executed lion dance. The handbill further expresses gratitude in advance for the patrons' support, which indicates

⁷ The P-symbolism of plucking-the-greens was explained in Chapter 2.

that not only is there a ritual function, but also a charitable one. Nowhere does the flyer explicitly mention anything about red envelopes or money, however, so there is a certain amount of expected or implicit cultural knowledge.

As compared to some of Toronto's other parades, such as the large-scale Santa Claus Parade and Saint Patrick's Day Parade, Hong Luck's Chinese New Year lion dances require active participation from patrons. The processions do not occur on blocked off streets thronged by spectators who remain at a distance from the proceedings more-or-less passively watching, but instead happen right on the sidewalks, making stops to perform for clients. Even when Hong Luck does parades that are more geared towards entertainment, the ritual function is never far from the group's modus operandi. For example, Canada Day parades organized by the National Congress of Chinese Canadians (CCC, 全加華人聯會) might start with a brief lion dance, but are primarily street processions. These involve freestyle lion walking i.e., without choreography; drumming based on extended variations of a few basic rhythms; and a continuous cavalcade that does not stop for patrons. I participated in one of these parades in the summer of 2013, which ended at the Chinese Railroad Workers Memorial. It seemed odd to me to stop just in front of the monument, so I asked the other members of Hong Luck's lion team if perhaps we should regroup and do a brief ritual. The significance of our concluding performance was not lost on the organizers of the event, who appeared moved by this unexpected honour and heartily shook our hands after the dance. We were wearing CCC t-shirts that read "Canada is my home, 加拿大是我家" and bowing in front of a memorial to the early Chinese in Canada who were the victims of exclusion and

discrimination. The ritual indexed the relationship between history and the present by “pointing at the real transactions even as they help people avoid too direct a confrontation with these events” (Schechner 1993:230). The two other lion teams who participated in the parade, however, did not perform at the memorial, to which Hong Luck members contrasted our efforts by saying things like, “that’s how we do it” and “respect, yo.” These comments show the group’s sensitivity to ritual efficacy even in more entertainment-oriented situations.

I participated in the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club’s Chinese New Year lion dance parades in 2009–2011, missed 2012 because I was on exchange in Hong Kong (though I observed several parades while I was there), and joined in with Hong Luck again in 2013 and 2014. By and large, there has been a routine procedure followed from year to year, which I can describe in summation because of its consistency. The parade starts at the club, consists of many short lion dances for individual businesses and associations along a route covering about two blocks in each direction through Chinatown’s main cross-streets (Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West), and returns back to where it began. It typically lasts between four and five hours, which is delimited by both a police enforced permit from the City of Toronto and the physical resources of the membership. With enough performers participating, I have seen Hong Luck processions go as long as six and half hours, which included not only street level patrons, but also the two main shopping malls in Chinatown (Dragon City, 龍城 and Chinatown Centre, 文華中心). While in Hong Kong, I observed a Chinese New Year lion dance parade at the large IFC Mall and will briefly describe their procedure for comparison. Although there were half

as many businesses compared to the Spadina/Dundas area, participation levels from patrons was near one hundred percent, so the number of performances was nearly the same. This parade might thus have gone on for as long as one of Hong Luck's (over four hours) were it not for the smaller space and there being enough performers to have a full lion dance team working simultaneously on each of the mall's two levels. The result was that the IFC parade lasted just over two hours.

Hong Luck parades usually get going around noon, but people start gathering at the club several hours before. The first arrivals tend to have responsibilities such as preparing the offerings on the altar, organizing the lion dance equipment, and unfurling the flags that are carried by non-performing members. Other people show up early to socialize with old friends who are rarely seen except at that time of year. As the building begins to fill up, the diversity of Hong Luck's membership is apparent. The group encompasses people from ages five to eighty-five and is composed of a variety of different ethnicities. The elders are all Chinese Canadian, but the younger generations are more multicultural, which reflects Toronto's diversity. All those in attendance have a connection to Hong Luck, but not everyone currently practises kung fu or lion dance there. The Hong Luck Association is well represented and quite a few Hong Luck Kung Fu Club "graduates" return just for the parade.⁸ There are often people from NLSF and sometimes participants from other martial arts groups or tong associations. By the time

⁸ Members remain part of the club even when they are not currently training and the hierarchy of seniority is based on a pseudo-kinship model, rather than the formal, coloured-belt, ranking system used by many Japanese and Korean martial arts. The Hong Luck anniversary lion dance parade in August thus usually has a greater number of performers and flag-bearers than the Chinese New Year procession not only because the weather is warmer and people have fewer obligations in the summer, but also because of a sense of group loyalty. There is less participation in Hong Luck's anniversary parade from Chinatown's businesses, however, due to the lion dance ritual being considered less essential than it is at New Years.

the parade is nearly ready to start, the training hall resounds with the lively chatter of between twenty-five and fifty people. Not all of these individuals join the parade, however, as many of the elderly members are too weak to walk around in the cold for hours at time. Over the course of the day, the number of participants varies as some people leave early and other people show up late, but in order to get the parade started, there needs to be a critical mass of participants.

The energy level for the procession is raised by three sonic stimuli: music, shouts, and firecrackers. As the time to begin draws near, the percussionists start warming up, which in Cantonese is called *opening the drum* (開鼓). These mini-performances happen without the lions, but still tend to loosely follow the rhythms and form of a lion dance, albeit with more room for ornamentation and variation. As mentioned earlier, a hot and noisy atmosphere is a Chinese cultural value. The percussion loudly heats up the room and acts as a catalyst that incites the parade participants to a state of enhanced readiness by aurally setting the mood. Before the lion dancing begins, everyone lines up and performs the Do Pi and Choi Lee Fut bows, first towards the altar, then towards the photos of kung fu ancestors on the eastern wall. These actions are punctuated by vigorous, martial shouts that unite the group in vocalization. Then the percussionists start playing again and musically cue a pair of lions to bow at the altar, do a short dance, bow to the lineage portraits on the wall, and exit the building. The final act before starting the parade in earnest is lighting a string of firecrackers in front of the club. At this point the dancers aggressively shake the lion heads at the explosions while

kicking and leaping from stance to stance. The percussionists play extra loud to compete with the firecrackers and the whole group is energized for the day's activities.

When I first joined Hong Luck, I was excited about getting to participate in a parade, but, after having done a couple of them, the novelty wore off. It was replaced with a slight feeling of apprehension because I came to know just how much effort I would exert as part of the lion team over the course of the afternoon. The day after a parade is guaranteed to find me weary and sore. Nonetheless, any hesitation or lethargy is banished by the pre-procession ritual; the call of the drum now jolts me to action, as my body responds energetically to the familiar rhythms. Peirce would call this is an *energetic interpretant* to the music as an indexical sign because I am physically in relation to it. An interpretant “does away with the dichotomy of interpretation and meaning, and fuses the act of interpretation (verb) and the result (noun)” (Turino 2014:202–203). This is important for understanding the power of ritual actions because as Steven Friedson suggests in regards to Tumbuka healing ceremonies “Interpretation does not arise from or flow out of experience; lived experience is, at its very inception, an interpretation” (1996:5). Hong Luck members need not stop to reflect about their music when they are embodying a reflexive understanding of its motivational meaning.

The percussion is played continuously for the duration of the parade, which requires a group of musicians who take turns playing the instruments, switching with each other when one of them gets tired. The default musical pattern between ritual performances is the moderately paced *walking beat* (行路鼓). Lion dancers remain under the head, but conserve their energy while in transit. The lack of structured movement

during this phase allows for more freedom in rhythmic variations by the drummer, which helps to keep things interesting over the length of the day. The most basic walking rhythm resembles a heartbeat and underlies the semi-improvised versions played by Hong Luck's drummers. Variety is more the rule than repetition, although it must still conform to a pace and mood conducive to ambulation. It is usually senior members who play the drum because they know how and when to cue the various parts of a lion dance; they are also responsible for maintaining the group's energy levels with their rhythms. They do this through moderating the tempo, volume, and style throughout the day. While walking, drummers play variations that prevent boredom, but restrain the tempo to help people conserve energy. For performances, however, they play louder and faster to boost the group's spirit, but also more conservatively to make sure the rhythm cues clearly outline the choreography. I will discuss the issues surrounding variation in more depth below and also in subsequent chapters.

Lion dance requires teamwork, not only from seasoned performers, but also from junior dancers and from non-performers. Senior Hong Luck members interact with patrons, keep track of money, and write thank you notes. When a frontrunner spies a green vegetable and/or red packet hanging in a doorway, they signal for the drummer to switch to the rhythm pattern that starts the routine. Normally the instruments stay outside on the street even if the lion(s) go into a building, which requires non-performing members to position themselves for a relay chain of hand signals to show the drummer when to play the rhythm cues. In the case of short stage shows and/or tableside performances at some of the larger banquet halls, the whole lion team (including the

instruments) goes inside the restaurant. The basic version, however, occurs entirely on the front sidewalk, lasts about one minute, and involves simple choreography. Beginner lion dancers cut their teeth during parades because it provides the opportunity to get a lot of experience in a relatively low-pressure setting. More advanced lion dancers are usually called upon to do any ceremonies that go beyond a typical parade routine, such as more elaborate rituals for particularly observant shops or tong associations that require paying respects at an altar. Nonetheless, beginners are sometimes under the head when a more complex routine is requested and so they get on-the-job training through verbal and physical directions from senior members. Juniors also pull the drum cart, hold the lion's tail, and play cymbals.⁹

Individual parade performances always begin with three bows. The rhythm for *bowing lion* (拜獅) is a series of rolls separated by a pause and/or muted drum hit(s). Next, the lion head is lifted into the air and shaken with short, sharp motions that make the fur, eyes, and ears vibrate. The beat for the *head-up* (起獅) is a steady stream of fast, even notes interspersed at regular intervals with grace-note rolls and is in double-time compared to the walking beat. The lion then does what even Anglophone Hong Luck members call a *sāam sīng* (literally: three rises, 三升). Starting from a crouching position, dancers lift the head explosively into the air as they shift to a standing position, then drop back down into a low crouch. As the name suggests, this movement is repeated three times and is matched to a rhythm pattern based on a short motif that is also played thrice.

⁹ The long parades through Chinatown are too taxing on Hong Luck's human resources to have a dancer playing the tail throughout. For most performances, there is one person under the head and a second person merely holds the tail without donning it as a cape that would form the body of the lion.

The final part of the *saam sing* is a rhythmic cadence at the end of which the lion dancers briefly pose with the head in the air. This leads into the plucking-the-greens sequence, which is accompanied by continuous, un-metered, drum rolls for eating and a repeated rhythmic motif for swallowing followed by another rhythmic cadence that is similar to the one for the *saam sing* pattern.¹⁰ The performance finishes with three more bows and the parade continues with a return to the walking beat.

I have provided a transcription below of the rhythms for the basic parade routine, though this should be taken as only one possible version, rather than a definitive score (Figure 8). As such, it is closest to the way that I play the drum, which is based on the style of my two main teachers: David and Noah. Presenting it this way helps to avoid some of the issues with transcription, which I outlined in the first chapter, by focusing on what I have been taught to embody rather than *stealing learning* (偷學) from audio recordings of other Hong Luck members. The transcription was done from memory. This was a prerequisite imposed by my first teacher, Noah, who forbade me from writing down the rhythms until I could perform the lion dance and all percussion parts to his satisfaction. Following the work of Boyu Zhang (1997) on Chinese percussion, I have not imposed Western time signatures, but have instead used duple subdivision, bar lines, phrase marks, and inflections to describe the drumming in a way that more accurately reflects an insider's understanding. The transcription contains only the main drum

¹⁰ The younger generation of Hong Luck lion dancers prefer to do four swallows, while the older members insist it should be three. Repeating the pattern four times has the advantages of ensuring there is enough time to vigorously spit the greens and of being symmetrical. Four is generally considered an unlucky number in Chinese culture, however, because the word *four* (*sei*, 四) sounds like the word *to die* (*sei*, 死). Frank appears to have split the difference in his later years by playing the rhythm four times, but varying the timbre on the first iteration to break up the inauspicious numerology.

patterns and not the gong or cymbal accompaniment, but it does include indications for the lion movements associated with each section. The x note-head above the staff line is a rim click, the crosshatching on note stems indicates rolls, and the + sign above notes means a dampened drum stroke. I will expand on this notation in the fifth chapter, but it will suffice for the present discussion.

The musical score consists of eight staves of drum notation, each labeled 'Drum' on the left. The notation includes various rhythmic patterns, dynamics, and movement instructions:

- Staff 1:** Tempo marking $\bullet = 130$. Sections include 'basic walking' (marked *f*), 'walking variation e.g. 1', and 'walking variation e.g. 2'.
- Staff 2:** Sections labeled 'bows' (marked *mf*) with '+' signs above notes.
- Staff 3:** Sections labeled 'head up (intro)' and 'head up' (marked *ff*), featuring 'x' note-heads above the staff line.
- Staff 4:** Section labeled 'saam sing (three rises)' with 'x' note-heads above the staff line.
- Staff 5:** Section labeled 'eating' (marked *mf*) with a 'C' symbol above the staff line.
- Staff 6:** Section labeled 'swallowing' (marked *f*) with '+' signs above notes.
- Staff 7:** Section labeled 'spitting' with '+' signs above notes.
- Staff 8:** Section labeled 'bows' (marked *mf*) with '+' signs above notes.

Figure 8: Hong Luck's lion dance parade routine

Apart from the basic parade routine, there are many possible variations of both the sequence and the details of the sections. These depend on not only the limits of the

physical space and the requirements of the patron, but also the aesthetic choices of the performers. Accomplished drummers each have their own style based on their choice of variations and ornamentation. Similarly, each lion dancer has a unique interpretation of the movements. In both cases, idiosyncratic panache is encouraged, as long as it stays within the parameters of the required movement and rhythm. For example, David is known for his fancy drumming because he likes to play quickly while using more complex rhythms and a lot of ornamentation. One of the most common variations on the sequence of the routine is done for shopkeepers who want the lion to enter their premises and perform nine kneeling bows at their altars.¹¹ They are accommodated with an extended performance that recombines the basic movements and rhythm patterns to suit the specifics of the situation. Typically, an altar routine begins as usual, but after the *saam sing* the lion approaches the door, sniffs it cautiously, then enters and walks over to the altar. Nine bows are done as three sets of three with a bit of walking in place between each set. Drummers often throw in a head-up and/or a *saam sing* after the nine bows, while patrons may or may not have a red packet for the altar that would trigger a plucking-the-greens sequence. After completing the altar ritual, the lion looks for other altars (if found, the nine bows pattern is repeated) before backing out of the establishment to finish the routine by plucking the greens at the front door and giving a final three standing bows.

The first and last lion dances of the day are done inside Hong Luck, facing Guan Yu's altar at the back of the training hall and, although the music and movement are

¹¹ Regular lion dance bows are done while standing.

largely the same as the rest of the day's performances, there are two major differences in the routine. The first is that these dances are the only ones that do not involve the plucking-the-greens sequence. Inside the club, lions pay respect to the patron deity and the kung fu ancestors without the need for encouragement. This situation indicates belonging, in the sense of being part of the group as well as that of being at home, and the performance is indexical insofar as the action manifests a link of association. A Hong Luck lion dance during the Chinese New Year parade that does not include plucking-the-greens is sign of the lions being in their den with the rest of their pride. The second distinguishing feature is the direction a lion faces when entering and exiting a building. For parade performances, lion dancers enter face-first, but exit tail-first. On the one hand, this is respectful because—whether coming or going—the lion does not cross the threshold of the premises with its posterior towards to the patron. On the other, it is cautious as the lion does not turn its back on them, but rather keeps its vulnerable haunches towards the Hong Luck members waiting outside. When exiting Hong Luck to start the parade, lion dancers back out in a show of respect for Guan Yu. At the end of the parade the lions also back into the club, which allows them to see who might be following them home into their den.

Lion Dance Ritual: Protocols and Transgressions

Deviations from the established pattern of Hong Luck's New Year parade show the importance of certain elements of the ritual. Such moments of disjuncture have marked the particularity of the performance practice as a living process by revealing the ongoing

negotiation of lion dance propriety. Hong Luck's senior members and patrons alike enforce protocols, so the specific context of Toronto's Chinese community has shaped the ritual over time. Some customs have gradually disappeared, while other aspects appear to be more indispensable. Complicated plucking-the-greens sequences that involve symbolic puzzles are no longer seen during Hong Luck's New Years parades and some patrons dispense with the greens altogether by simply hanging a red packet for the lions. A *big head buddha* (大頭佛) used to lead the lions during performances. This was a role played by a masked person wearing monk's robes and wielding a fan; Hong Luck still has the mask displayed on a shelf, but it is no longer used. Those parts of the tradition that are most actively maintained in the face of deviation present themselves as having special significance to audiences and/or practitioners. In this section I will look at issues surrounding Hong Luck's general parade conventions and the ethos of bowing by considering several occasions when these expectations were disrupted.

Skipping or abbreviating important parts of the day's activities can generate an uncomfortable energy, which is not conducive to the lion dance's ritual function of dispelling bad chi. An example of this occurred at the start of the Chinese New Year parade in 2011. Around eleven o'clock, the group had not yet finished preparing when the (former) president of the Hong Luck Association suddenly started rushing people out the door for a lion dance on the stage of the Chinatown Centre shopping mall at the southern end of the neighbourhood. While there was some resentment from the performers that they had not been notified in advance, this was more of a problem because the opening sequence of actions at the club had been skipped. After the lion

dance at the mall, which included a photo opportunity with local dignitaries such as politician Olivia Chow (鄒至蕙), the group returned to the club to re-start the parade correctly. At this point, the day was nearly an hour behind schedule.

The procession could have just started from the shopping centre—indeed, it would have been more efficient to do so rather than backtracking—but instead the seniors had everyone walk several blocks back to the west side of Chinatown in order to initiate the procession with the conventional opening. There was no time to warm up the drum or light firecrackers on the street, but incense was burned, kung fu bows were made, and the lions did a brief routine at the altar. Nonetheless, the overall mood of the group was scattered and this was manifested in the way the parade proceeded from this rocky start. Instead of the usual, orderly procession through Chinatown, we inefficiently went two stores forwards only to return a half-block to a store that had somehow been missed. Furthermore, the lion dancers' movements lacked their usual spirit and the percussionists sounded erratic. I recall being under the lion head and struggling to follow the drum while missing the energy it should have imparted. Instead of an energetic interpretant of the music, I had to rely on analysis to keep track of the structure. This put me in the linguistic realm of P-symbolic meanings and resulted in a stiff, uninspired dance. Everything felt laboured and the usual pleasure I get from group performance was replaced with malaise. The other participants attributed this chaos to having rushed the initiatory ritual protocols and it took over an hour before the troupe managed to pull itself together.

Another example of disruption occurred during the Chinese New Year parade of 2013, when the large and busy Dim Sum King restaurant (翠濠庭海鮮酒家) requested an extended lion dance performance.¹² This in itself is not unusual, and many patrons request extra actions beyond the basics, such as altar routines or for the lion to perambulate the interior of their premises. The problem was that the manager of Dim Sum King wanted two altar routines (cash register and kitchen), a stage show, and for the lions to go around to all the customers' tables to pluck the greens. The owner of this restaurant is affiliated with Hong Luck and hosts the club's banquets, so the request was accommodated despite the disruption to the parade that this caused. The team went upstairs with both lions and we were told to treat it as though it was a banquet performance, rather than a parade routine. The people filling the tables that day seemed to really enjoy it and many of them wanted to feed the lions with greens and red packets, which were provided by Dim Sum King (patrons provided their own cash for the red packet). This required a minimum of three bows as gratitude and perhaps a bit of playful interaction, if not a miniature parade routine. The other lion dancer and I collected over thirty crimson envelopes of cash, but spent nearly an hour inside the restaurant at a time when we should have been out on the street.

The day was thrown off by this interruption in several ways. The command performance was at a specific time that did not coincide with the parade route's timing and required a two-block detour with an eventual return to pick up where the procession had left off. The non-performing entourage of Hong Luck members, who carry flags and

¹² Dim Sum King is located on the third floor of 421 Dundas Street West and has a seating capacity of over 500.

pole-arms, had to wait outside in the cold and were nonplussed. As I was dressed in layers appropriate for the weather outside, I removed as much clothing as I could before we started, but was still massively overdressed for lion dancing inside. Consequently, I was drenched in sweat by the time we were done, which made our return to the street very uncomfortable. My concerns about hypothermia were exceeded in intensity by the rancour of the owner of another banquet hall across Dundas from Dim Sum King. The Forestview Chinese Restaurant (客滿樓酒家) normally gets a lion dance, but rejected Hong Luck that year even after the group had hauled all their equipment up the stairs to the second floor. The staff had heard or seen the lion troupe pass by on the detour to Dim Sum King, and by the time the parade got back to Forestview, their lunch rush was already finished; they felt slighted by the favouritism shown to their competitors. Other patrons received hurried lion dances as the team tried to make up for lost time.

Part of the goal with Hong Luck's Chinese New Year parade is to adjust the ritual to make it fit into the space of Chinatown, the human resources of the club, the needs of the community, and the time limits of the police permit. When Hong Luck's lion team threw out this plan in order to meet the demands of one restaurant, it created problems for non-performing members and other patrons. While the extra money generated at Dim Sum King was welcome, it was not worth the disharmony it created and was deemed to not meet the conventions of the New Years parade. The next year, Hong Luck coordinated with the restaurant's manager to do an early performance before the procession officially started, which mitigated socio-ritual disruptions while still satisfying

personal obligations. The club was also invited to perform at Chinatown Centre, but had to respectfully decline, as it did not fit into the *modus operandi* of the day.

A full, traditional lion dance routine can last more than twenty minutes, so a brief parade performance presents only the most essential parts in the interest of time.

Nonetheless, there is a limit to how stripped down this can be before it starts to lose its ritual efficacy. I have observed over-shortening when there were not enough performers for the rotation or when the day was almost over without having covered all of Chinatown. Some drummers tried to abbreviate the already short parade routine by leaving out the *saam sing* and rushing through everything else. The effect was somewhat rude, despite the bows before and after, because it was the equivalent of a dinner guest who barely talks to the host, scarfs down their food, and is already on their way out the door before they finish chewing. The lack of a *saam sing* meant there was very little actual dancing, while a rushed plucking of the greens often resulted in the veggies being inadequately dispersed when they were spit out. Patrons' reactions to this were obvious from the frowns and the looks of disappointment on their faces, as well as their anxious demeanours. As a ritual, the lions had not spent enough time to fully disperse bad chi, and the plucking-the-greens sequence that is supposed to symbolize good fortune was too weak to bring much luck.

Hong Luck's non-performing seniors often encourage the lion dance team to do two stores at the same time as a way of speeding up the parade, but this can cause problems when they are not the same routine. The issue lies with the specific drum rhythms that are used for each section and the lion dance movements that go with them.

When there is a pair of lions and only one percussion ensemble, doing two stores at a time works if both of them are using the same routine. In fact, this is an effective way of expediting the day's proceedings. However, if one routine occurs entirely on the street and the other requires paying respects at an altar inside, for example, only the first part of the rituals lines up. When confronted with this situation, drummers are forced to play for only one lion and the other one is left to their own devices. Advanced lion dancers can continue their performance without the drum, but this feels off and requires extra effort to not only dance without musical support, but also to go against the rhythmic pull of the other routine. Junior lion dancers, on the other hand, get confused by the situation as they rely more heavily on the drummer to guide their movement. In either case, the resulting performance is unlikely to satisfy patrons. Members of the local community can generally tell that something is not right and seem displeased, although I have not seen anyone reject a lion dance outright in such situations.

During my first Chinese New Year parade in 2009, I was under the head for one of these double routines. I got muddled when the drummer played the rhythm for the other lion to sniff the door while a senior member was trying to get me to pluck the greens. I poked my lion head halfway into the store before getting shooed back, then tried to “eat” the lettuce and red packet while hearing a walking beat being played for the other dancer. Once I had the greens, I waited for the other lion to pluck theirs, but this took so long that I lost my concentration and missed the cue to swallow. It was one of the worst lion dances I have ever done. As I have become more experienced, I have begun to be more wary of this and to refuse to do two performances at a time, unless they are

guaranteed to be the same routine. The first couple times I did this, I was quite nervous to contradict my seniors, but with a bit of explanation from my performer's perspective about how the ritual would be compromised by a lack of synchronization between lion and drum, they agreed.

The first and last series of movements in every individual performance involves three bows, which have proven to be a key feature of the ritual. When these are not correct, patrons have gone as far as demanding a different lion dancer. During the Chinese New Year of 2009, for example, a relatively inexperienced performer responded late to the drum rhythm for bowing and made a flustered mess of the moves. The abbreviated first bow was followed by a second bow that caught the lion head on the store's awning and a cautious third bow that was totally unsynchronized with the percussion. The shopkeeper in this case was obviously nonplussed after the dancer butchered these actions and he pushed the lion head back while shouting angrily. At that point, another lion dancer took over and the drummer recommenced the routine to assuage the concerned patron with a correct performance.

It is rare for a shopkeeper to reject a lion dance as vigorously as in the example above, which suggests the importance of the bows in establishing the correct frame for the rest of the actions. Bowing is not an everyday part of contemporary Chinese culture in either the diaspora or China and is now primarily reserved for formal, ceremonial, ritual, and performance contexts. Lion dance obeisance, as with other types of bows, uses a lowering of the head to signify respect by putting the bower in a subordinate physical position relative to the receiver of the bow. This action has become more P-symbolic than

iconic over time. The traditional *kowtow* (叩頭) of Imperial China actually had people on all fours knocking their head on the ground in a posture of complete subservience. Contemporary bows are usually performed standing, with a motion that slightly lowers the upper body using a bend at the waist. The standard lion dance bows during Hong Luck's Chinese New Year parades fall somewhere in between the traditional and contemporary versions of a Chinese bow.¹³ The dancer remains standing, but makes an exaggerated motion that rolls the head in a semicircle ending somewhere around the knees. The significance of this action maintains an iconic connection with the type of situation where bowing still occurs in Chinese culture. A correct bow connects the lion dance with other ceremonies and rituals through a tie of resemblance.

I have participated in and observed a number of Chinese bowing practices both in Canada and overseas, which I will briefly describe in order to contextualize the types of activities that lion dance bows are iconically linked to. In Hong Kong I had the opportunity to *pay respects on the mountain* (拜山) with my girlfriend's (now fiancée's) family, where we paid our respects at the graves of their ancestors.¹⁴ In Chinese culture, people also bow when burning incense at altars such as the one in Hong Luck's training hall, those found in many Chinese businesses or homes, and at temples. Another example

¹³ The lion dance bows I observed during a Chinese New Year parade in Hong Kong were not nearly as deep as Hong Luck's, which may be a reflection of contemporary bowing practice in Chinese culture versus Hong Luck's position as a bastion of tradition.

¹⁴ An important time for *paying respects on the mountain* is the Pure Brightness Festival (*Ching Mihng Jit*, 清明節), also known as Festival of the Tombs or Tomb-sweeping Festival, which occurs fifteen days before the Spring Equinox. Relatives visit the graveyards or temple mausoleums of their forbears and perform an obeisance involving three standing bows followed by an offering and finishing with another three bows. The offerings my girlfriend's family gave were either incense or food and they also cleaned the gravesite. I observed many other families burning paper effigies of money, clothing, electronics, cars, and even houses. Chinese graves are traditionally built on high ground, hence the name *pay respects on the mountain*.

that I have not personally witnessed involves the bride and groom bowing to their parents in a pre-wedding rite. Hong Luck's kung fu bows have more elaborate movement patterns, with distinctive characteristics for both Choi Lee Fut and Do Pi. These types of bows are performed before and after formal classes, while demonstrations of choreographed fighting skills also include bows that are even more stylized and are specific to each individual set. There is also a generic kung fu bow, common to many styles, where the clenched right fist is pressed against the open palm of the left hand with or without bending the upper body slightly at the waist. It is sometimes used as a greeting or acknowledgment among martial artists, as well as before demonstrations or competitions and is considered a Shaolin bow. The civilian version of this bow sees the left hand wrapped more loosely around the right fist while being rocked forward and backwards.

In the bowing section of Hong Luck's basic Chinese New Year lion dance, the drum, gong, and cymbals play their rolls in heterophonic unison. These bursts of rapid and evenly spaced notes by the instruments make a noisy-yet-organized texture lasting approximately one to two seconds per bow. The first roll is often preceded by a pause or a click of the drummer's stick on the rim of the drum, which must be responded to quickly by the lion dancer(s) because there is precious little room for the musicians to adjust the length of their playing to match erratic movement. The fundamental routine has six bows (three at the start and three at the end), but more bows are added for businesses or associations that want the lion to come inside and perform nine kneeling kowtows in front of their altars. I have seen and done lion dances on parade that involve as many as

thirty-three bows: three at the start, nine at the front door altar, nine at an altar at the back of the business or in the kitchen, nine at the cash register (with or without an altar), and a final three after plucking the greens. The sheer volume of bows in such a performance speaks to their importance. Altar routines highlight the ritual function of the lion dance and when a patron calls for nine (or more!) kowtows, a more advanced performer usually takes the head to ensure a correct delivery. It is therefore common in such situations for junior lion dancers to be replaced pre-emptively, but I have occasionally had to step in for intermediate dancers in mid-ritual when a patron was not satisfied. When I make these deep bows, I ensure that the movement is smooth and unhurried, which contrasts with the sharp actions of the rest of the routine. This is a performative act that does not merely show respect, but rather must embody it.

Lion Dancer Gender: Ritual Efficacy and Discrimination

The gender of lion dancers is another factor that some business owners in Toronto's Spadina/Dundas Chinatown are very particular about. Traditionally, only males perform lion dance and the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club used to limit females who desired to participate in the ritual to playing cymbals. During my fieldwork, the club no longer placed restrictions on the gender of lion dance students, but the vast majority of learners and performers at Hong Luck are still male. Avron Boretz (2011) has categorized the ritual logic of this tradition as being part of the Chinese worldview that constructs existence as the endless interplay of *yin and yang* (陰陽). The yin principle is female, dark, negative, and cold, while yang is male, bright, positive, and hot, though they are

also coextensive, mutually arising, and always-already mingled. According to Boretz, "the lion, it turns out, is a strongly *yang* creature with the power to drive away or destroy ghosts and other forms of death pollution" (2011:54).

Tying the ritual efficacy of lion dance to the gender of performers, rather than yin yang principles, has some problematic implications. It can perpetuate the naturalization of patriarchal social structures where women are treated as less than equal to men. A senior Hong Luck member, who happens to be female, has had more to say about the issue of women lion dancers than anyone else I have spoken with. She told me that in traditional Chinese culture men are dominant because they are stronger and more aggressive. Males therefore do the lion dancing because they have the right spirit to animate the head and achieve the ritual's goals. While her description of this cultural view has been supported by my observations during fieldwork, the rationalization contains unexamined assumptions and limiting generalizations.

As Judith Butler has so convincingly argued, gender is performed, "but if this continuous act is mistaken for a natural or linguistic given, power is relinquished to expand the cultural field bodily through subversive performances of various kinds" (1988:531). The ban of women and girls from lion dance can construct the female gender as categorically weak, whereas this limitation is not universal. During my time with the New Asia Kung Fu Society in Hong Kong, one of their top lion dancers was female. In Toronto, NLSF regularly fields female lion dancers and several other clubs do as well. Since 1998, Boston, Massachusetts, has had an all-women's lion dance group called *Gund Kwok* (Cantonese: *Gàn Gwok*, from the first two characters of the word *heroine*,

巾幗英雄). In all these examples, female lion dancers are subverting cultural stereotypes by showing that strength is not the exclusive domain of males and that manifesting yang energy for ritual efficacy need not be gender exclusive. Training in lion dance actually builds the physical power required to perform it, so excluding women from this practice reinforces unequal gender constructions by preventing self-strengthening in this context. Female lion dancers can therefore challenge patriarchal values by embodying yang energy through strong performances. This performative act contests the discourses of physical power that are used to gender social power.

The Chinese New Year parade of 2010 saw Northern Leg Southern Fist bring a group of people that included several girls to help with the parade, which preceded Hong Luck having any female lion dancers. A few Hong Luck members commented on it as being unusual and one long-time lion dancer told me that it was the first time he had ever seen a female do lion dance. I did not see any girls prevented from performing the ritual by storeowners, but this may have been because the mask hid the identity of the dancer and people assumed the performers were male. I did see some patrons looking distressed when they realized there were girls under the lion head, but this was usually after the dance was complete. Performers are supposed to stay in character under the lion head and are not allowed to remove the mask unless they are passing it off to another dancer. The exception is when the head is rolled back for bowing. In the first series of bows, patrons could have caught a glimpse of the performer (obscured by layers of winter clothing), but by the time they were able to confirm her gender, it was usually too late.

In the years subsequent to 2010, business owners became more vigilant and made complaints to the senior members of Hong Luck. During the fiftieth anniversary parade in the summer of 2011, the girls from NLSF came to help again. Within the first hour of that event, they were completely barred from lion dancing by Hong Luck's leaders when a storeowner became angry after one of their performances. Near the beginning of the parade, an NLSF girl had done a lion dance and her inexperience showed in a sloppy routine; but I surmise the 2011 ban had more to do with gender than ability because equally clumsy, neophyte males were afforded more leeway. The reason given by the Hong Luck seniors responsible for the proscription was that the NLSF girls were too weak and unskilled. They argued that the fiftieth anniversary was a significant event requiring extra dignity or *face* (面子), so only more experienced lion dancers should perform, all of whom were male.

By the middle of 2012, Hong Luck had one female member learning to lion dance. During the Chinese New Year parade of 2013, the gender discrimination was more transparent than in the first few years with the girls from NLSF. Concerned patrons had grown wise to the possibility of females being under the lion and started complaining as soon as the rolling of the head in the initial bowing sequence revealed the identity of the dancer. Some business owners went further by pre-emptively requesting male lion dancers, which even extended to the person holding the tail. The fact that Hong Luck's leaders acquiesced to this pressure has discouraged the club's female lion dancer, and she has become ambivalent about participating in parades. In her words: "It's stupid." This barrier made it difficult for her to gain performance experience; even if not all patrons

excluded females, the rejection from those who did was hurtful. While she continued to come to lion dance class and to help out with non-parade gigs, she was slowed in reaching the level of ability required to play the head for stage performances or weddings. Her first formal gig under the lion head did not happen until July 12th, 2014 at the sixtieth anniversary of the Eastern Canada Taishan Association (台山加東校友會). I believe that this was the first time Hong Luck has ever had a female do a choreographed stage routine. I also performed that night, along with three other lions (for a total of five), and was relieved that there were no complaints from the patrons or venue (Dim Sum King). Despite this progress in breaking down gender barriers, Hong Luck's lone female lion dancer remains hesitant about participating in parades because the club's seniors still capitulate to the demands of patrons.

Some things that used to cause friction no longer appear to be an issue. In the early 2000s, ethnicity does not appear to have been a problem for business owners, and Hong Luck has regularly fielded visibly non-Chinese lion dancers. One participant in particular is of dark skinned, Afro-Caribbean extraction and has his hair in dreadlocks that hang down past his waist, making his ethnicity nearly impossible to hide. I have not seen patrons complain about non-Chinese lion dancers, although I hear from some of the old-timers that it used to be a problem in the 1960s and 1970s. Master Paul Chan, however, would not yield to this pressure and Hong Luck has maintained its firm stance on promoting inter-cultural understanding through kung fu and lion dance.

Some patrons and audience members—in both Toronto and Hong Kong—have verbally expressed their surprise in response to visibly non-Chinese lion dancers.

Notwithstanding their apparent shock, no one has ever tried to prevent me from getting under the head. Before performances, some of them have questioned whether or not a non-Chinese would know how to lion dance properly, though afterwards that has tended towards amazement that a *gwailóu* (literally: ghost fellow, 鬼佬) can deliver an acceptable lion dance.¹⁵ Perhaps if Hong Luck's seniors gave as much support for gender inclusivity as they have for ethnic diversity, patrons who insist on male dancers might soften their stance. At the time of writing, however, traditional gender views remain well entrenched during Chinese New Year parades in Toronto's Spadina/Dundas Chinatown, despite their incongruence with modern, Canadian values.

Performing Identity: Lions, Percussion, and Culture

The lion dance's traditional role as a blessing and exorcism is often superscribed by other functions, which helps to account for the appeal of this practice beyond ritual contexts. In this section I will discuss Hong Luck's performances as they pertain to the construction and expression of identity for the club, patrons, and the neighbourhood. People manifest a diversity of stances on lion dance that do not negate its function as a rite, but rather build other values onto the para-liturgical foundation. In cases where they are less concerned about ritual propriety—or even ignorant of it—the performance's role as a marker of identity often supersedes its supernatural function. This is as true for performers as it is for patrons, but in different ways. The same performance can simultaneously display a number of meanings that, while diverse, are not mutually exclusive.

¹⁵ The Cantonese term *gwailóu* (鬼佬) is a reference to pale, “ghost-like,” Western skin and can have somewhat pejorative connotations. A Western female would be a *gwaimūi* (literally: ghost girl, 鬼妹).

The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club is not the only lion dance team in town, so it is not the only group to perform in Chinatown either.¹⁶ In some cases, there is peaceful coexistence or cooperation with other lion dancers, while in others there is tension. The Chinese Freemasons' (*Hungmen*, 洪門) Toronto branch is headquartered two blocks east of Hong Luck on Dundas. They also practise kung fu and do lion dance parades in the area for Chinese New Year. Master Paul Chan was a member of their association and the two lion dance teams make performance stops for each other when on parade, so the relationship seems cordial. When the two clubs' lions met on the street during the Chinese New Year of 2009, however, the air fairly crackled with thinly veiled aggressive energy.

Lion dancing represents the identity of a kung fu club and two teams meeting has the potential to erupt into violence if the correct protocols are not followed—regardless of good relations between the organizations. The moment Hong Luck and the Chinese Freemasons encountered each other it became obvious that the long rattan sticks used by senior members to block off space on the sidewalk for lion dancing, the ceremonial pole arms carried by non-performing members, and even the throng of kung fu practitioners carrying flags were not supplementary extras in the proceedings, but rather constituted a show of force that underwrote the Chinese New Year lion dance ritual with latent martial power.¹⁷ While no-one made any overt threats—physical or verbal—I could see the

¹⁶ I estimate that there are at least twelve active kung fu clubs offering paid lion dance services in the Greater Toronto Area. This number does not include school programs or community groups who perform on an amateur basis.

¹⁷ In theory, everyone at a kung fu club can fight, though in practice people vary in experience, ability, and interest with regards to actual combat.

dynamic tension in the bodies of trained fighters from both sides: grips on sticks were adjusted, fists brought up to waist level, eyes narrowed, chests puffed out, and stances slightly widened, all of which constituted postures of readiness for action. In that moment my heart began pounding as I realized we were one false move away from a violent confrontation.

I do not think it coincidental that lion dancing uses a mask to embody the spirit of a kung fu club and that the Chinese refer to one's honour as *face*, which can be given by others or lost in cases of disrespect. Thankfully there were no problems because Hong Luck and the Chinese Freemasons showed each other all due respect when their lions crossed paths. Over the course of the day, the two groups came close to each other several times. When that happened the lion dancers from both clubs kept the heads low and refrained from making sudden movements, while the musicians slowed their tempos and played more softly. The combined effect of these two things was one of deference, whereas raising the lion heads into the air with powerful drumming would have been perceived as a challenge. The parade went back to normal after the two groups were further apart from each other. I had heard stories about brawls over lion dancing between rival kung fu clubs in Hong Kong during the mid-twentieth century. Those recurring problems apparently caused public performances to be banned for several years. Lions rarely meet on the streets of Toronto because the city-issued permits usually allow only one team to parade in a given area at a time, and I was relieved that no blood was shed that day.

Hong Luck has a closer relationship with Northern Leg Southern Fist, which has revealed another side of identity in—and as—performance. NLSF does not have a facility in the Spadina/Dundas area, but they still regularly perform lion dance (and kung fu) in Chinatown with Hong Luck, as well as under their own name. Although their leader still follows Master Jin Chan—as his father did before him—he has learned from other people too and has developed his own take on drumming and lion dance. When the two clubs perform at parades together, they have enough in common that no rehearsal is required. Nonetheless, stylistic differences are apparent and are pronounced enough that new students are thrown off when performing with the other group for the first time.

NLSF does both *Futsan* and *Hoksan* lion dancing, but when helping with Hong Luck's parades they stick closer to the former. During the rotation of performers, however, it occasionally happens that everyone is from NLSF, and if so they often throw in some competition-style *Hoksan* beats. Their walking rhythm, for example, repeats the basic heartbeat pattern more times than the *Futsan* version and also uses much greater dynamic range by interspersing loud accents into otherwise quiet drumming. I have seen this draw disapproving looks from senior Hong Luck people, as it sonically misrepresents their club's conservative ethos. Even when NLSF plays more traditionally, however, it is obvious that they are not from the same group. The effect is like hearing someone speak a common language with a different accent. In the transcription below (Figure 9), I have selected one of the more obvious examples where the length of the rhythmic cadence at the end of a *saam sing* is different between the two clubs. NLSF's version is two beats shorter, which catches some Hong Luck people off-guard if they are not ready for it.

Over time I have picked up on this, but it took several years of only hearing it during parades. When I see an NLSF drummer pick up the sticks, I get ready to end the cadence early, though some of their more experienced players make an effort to play longer Hong Luck version. This transcription—as with all those found in this dissertation—describes possible rhythmic variations, rather than giving a rigid prescription. It is intended to draw attention to differences in phrase length.

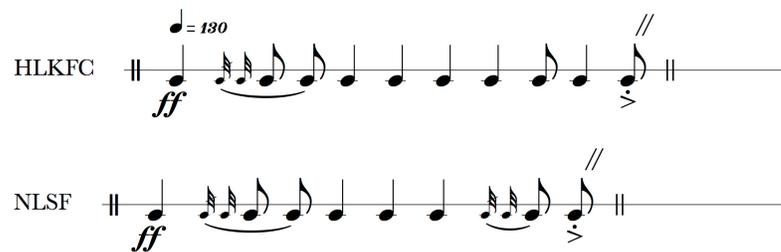


Figure 9: Hong Luck Kung Fu Club and Northern Leg Southern Fist *saam sing* cadences

Much traditional Chinese music privileges the adept and idiosyncratic variation of shared repertoires, which has been related to the self-image of both individuals and ensembles. See for example the discussion by J. Lawrence Witzleben (1987) of this phenomenon among silk and bamboo ensembles in the Shanghai area. I have heard repeatedly from Hong Luck members that no two people drum the same way and that they should not try to. The development of a personal style is therefore an aesthetic goal. During parades, I can now usually tell who is playing the drum even at a distance of half a block and without being able to see them. One senior Hong Luck member claims to be able to know a drummer upon hearing a single beat. The parameters most commonly affected by personal interpretation are rhythm selection, dynamics, timbre, accentuation,

and ornamentation, but more advanced players will also create new rhythms and extend phrase lengths.

In discussing jazz, Lee Konitz has identified a continuum of improvisation from the embellishment of existing material to “an act of pure inspiration” (Kastin 1985:56). Similarly, Gunther Schuller writes that jazz’s “Improvisatory procedures can be divided roughly into two broad and sometimes overlapping categories which have been called *paraphrase* and *chorus* improvisation” (italics in original 1999:86), and adds that in the classical Western art music of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries these would have been called *ornamentation* and *free variation*. Hong Luck drummers often stay on the conservative half of Konitz’s continuum when accompanying lion dance performances. During the walking section of a parade, however, they have the opportunity to push the envelope. While training with the New Asia Kung Fu Society in Hong Kong, I was encouraged to *play as you please* (隨便打), but cautioned that it must fit into the same number of beats as the basic version of the rhythm and maintain the same feel or groove. This suggests that in theory there is a high degree rhythmic freedom within short phrases, but in practice few drummers appear to have the ability—or desire—to play completely extemporaneous variations. They instead select from a body of versions of the basic rhythms and embellish these with varying amounts of intensity. More rarely, I have heard top drummers, such as David and the leader of NLSF, play on the more free side of Konitz’s continuum, particularly when the instruments play without the lion. This would be up to around the eighth gradient (out of ten) that Konitz categorizes as “still a subtle reference to the original song,” but with the addition of new material (Kastin 1985:56). In

contrast to what I was told in Hong Kong, Hong Luck's advanced drummers vary phrase length while extemporizing, which gives them more room to work. I will discuss this type of extension further toward the end of Chapter 5. For comparison, similar processes of variation, expansion, and insertion are also used in Chinese ritual parade music that includes melodic instruments, such as the *wind and percussion* (literally: blowing and beating, Mandarin: *chuīdǎ*, 吹打) that accompanies Taiwanese funeral processions (Li 1996).

Personal expression aside, drummers must remain within the recognizable bounds of the club's style. Conforming to common practice is particularly important during parades because these events bring together members from different generations who do not regularly play with each other. In such situations, there is less tolerance for individual flair because it can be difficult for people to follow. Inclusive drumming trumps virtuosity because it better facilitates what William Hardy McNeil (1995) calls *muscular bonding*, which is the feeling of union engendered by collective rhythmic movement. Music is essential for Hong Luck in building connections that transcend barriers of language, age, and culture through the shared, pleasurable experience of Hardy's *being in time together*. When inclusive playing is required, judicious embellishment is more effective than improvisation.

During the Chinese New Year of 2014, a person whom I did not recognize joined the parade and was helping out with the instruments. It is not unusual for an old member that I have not met to come back, for a new recruit to join us for the first time, or for associates from other clubs to help out, which is what I assumed was the case here. He

also threw off the non-performing seniors who normally take care of gate-keeping because, being the dead winter, everyone was wearing heavy jackets, so the interloper's lack of a Hong Luck uniform went unnoticed. He was able to insinuate himself in by following us for several blocks, always staying near the instruments, until one of the musicians got tired and looked around for a replacement. This fellow obviously knew the drill because he was right there to take the cymbals and could play the supporting patterns in an acceptable fashion. Afterwards, I found out that senior members instantly knew he was not Hong Luck by his playing, but that he was able to fit in so they assumed he must be somehow affiliated.¹⁸ When he managed to get on the drum, however, it was apparent to everyone that he was neither a Hong Luck member nor an associate. Although he could play some sort of lion dance rhythms, he did not know the club's characteristic patterns or specific routine. It was jarring to the dancers and I saw not only the rest of the group, but also a patron turn towards the interloper with scowls on their faces. One of the seniors ordered me to take over and not to let him play anymore, which I did post-haste.

On October 1st, 2010, I witnessed a particularly powerful example of the embodiment and policing of identity through music. Hong Luck was participating in a flag-raising ceremony at Queen's Park (provincial parliament building) for China's national day. About an hour before the event, a group of elders had proudly donned their club jackets and met the performers on the lawn. Although they were not performing that day, the elders clearly considered the event to be an honour for the club. They wanted to

¹⁸ There was a rumour that this person had learned from the Chinese Freemasons, but I was not able to confirm this.

open the drum, which was a rare opportunity to hear them play live and not just on recording. This happened before any spectators or media had arrived and was almost a private session, despite occurring in public. Frank Ng (Hong Luck's retired master drummer) demonstrated that, despite advanced age and Parkinson's disease, he could still play. Some of the other elders, including Master Jin Chan, took turns on the drum as well, and they rotated the instruments among themselves to keep the beat continuous. They played some variations that I had not heard before and put a different spin on familiar rhythms, while still remaining within the bounds of the Hong Luck style. Their playing showcased older versions or variants, but it was still recognizable as being related to what I had heard my seniors do.

Eventually one of the elders bellowed "young men!" and Hong Luck's current generation of performers started taking up the instruments, all while keeping the music going. Apart from the aforementioned variations in rhythm, there were two noticeable differences when the younger men took over: firstly the energy of youth was expressed in loudness and speed, but secondly the texture was punchier thanks to an increased use of staccato articulation. While the elders tended to allow the percussion instruments to ring and used shorter sounds sparingly, the younger performers tended towards more regularly muting the decay of notes, especially on the drum and gong. This was most apparent during walking beats and the thrice-repeated figure of the *saam sing* rhythm. Some of the elders then joined back in and people from NLSF (who had come to help out) also took a turn. When an NLSF drummer played *Hoksan* walking beats, however, one of the elders stopped playing and put his cymbals on the ground, rather than passing them to another

person. As he turned his back on the drummer, he made it clear that those rhythms were not Hong Luck. I asked several of the people who were there that day if they had observed this, but apparently I was the only one who noticed. Nonetheless, Noah and David did recall other situations where seniors and elders had done similar policing of the boundaries of Hong Luck's sonic identity through negative reactions to—or active discouragement of—unfamiliar rhythms.

The lion dance remains a strong index of Chinese identity even in situations when it is more geared towards the entertainment side of Schechner's (1974) ritual/performance continuum. I have often observed this at weddings where Canadian-born Chinese want a lion dance, but seem to know very little about it.¹⁹ The situation is even more pronounced when only one side of the wedding party is Chinese and especially when the bride or groom is only one-quarter or even one-eighth Chinese. These clients equate the lion with Chineseness and wish to express that identity at their nuptials through entertainment for their guests. The fact that such people still feel it is important to have a lion dance because of their heritage—even when they are uneducated about it and mistakenly call the lion a *dragon*—speaks to the enduring power of the performance's role in constructing identity. The ritual function for them is less supernatural and more social, as with the folk festivals discussed by Cooley where the Górale of Podhale “ritually create for themselves a distinct identity by referencing

¹⁹ Not all Canadian-born Chinese are unschooled in lion dance culture, which was evident when two senior members of Hong Luck married each other. They had specific instructions about what type of movement they wanted to see and which lion heads they wanted. They also specified that only males would do the performance, stating at first that it was because their parents are traditional, but later admitting that they were concerned about ritual efficacy. As part of their nuptials, they said they wanted to ensure the most auspicious ritual possible and were unwilling to take chances with it.

heritage through an elaborate framework of symbols, enacted and physical, in the face of a changing world” (2006:81). In most cases, clients who are monolingual Anglophones and inexperienced with Chinese culture will lack an understanding of both the ritual P-symbols and resemblances to other lion dances. Un-knowledgeable patrons thus usually defer to Hong Luck's experts on matters of propriety, while they enjoy the social ritual.

Sometimes clients request changes to the performance meant to express the hybridity of their identity, but which conflict with lion dance traditions. For example, a couple wanted Hong Luck to perform at their reception on November 6th, 2010, using a song called "Forty Six and 2" by the American progressive rock band Tool. The groom was one-eighth Chinese and wanted a lion dance to honour that part of his heritage, but knew next to nothing about the cultural beliefs surrounding the performance or its ritual use. He and his bride were major fans of Tool and had a deep personal attachment to "Forty Six and 2." They had little experience with lion dance, however, and saw no problem in mixing it with rock music. To them the performance was entertainment that visually acted as a sign of identity indexing Chineseness—where there is lion dance there are Chinese people—and the sonic aspects were fungible.

The request was made several months in advance, which allowed plenty of time for debate by the lion dancers about the respectability and correctness of doing such a performance. The consensus was that lion dancing to Tool was wrong for two main reasons: it was neither Hong Luck's music nor an appropriate substitution. The polyrhythms and moments of additive meter in "Forty Six and 2" conflicted with the characteristic movements of lion dancing and would leave the lions without guidance

from the drummer. Furthermore, weddings are happy events requiring an auspicious performance, but the timbre of the distorted guitar and aggressive singing were deemed too dark and angry-sounding for a lion dance. It did not seem appropriate to Hong Luck's team to not do a proper ritual, and doing it to Tool was out of the question. In the end, a solution was negotiated with the bride and groom. The lions entered the room and mingled with the crowd while "Forty Six and 2" was playing, but then proceeded to do a traditional performance to their own percussion music. This satisfied the newlywed's desire to represent the groom's Chineseness alongside their own identity as Tool fans, but also allowed Hong Luck to maintain the standards of ritual propriety and the character of their lion dance.

The Spadina/Dundas area is a physical place, but lion dance helps to transform it into a familiar and welcoming space for members of the Chinese diaspora in multicultural Toronto (c.f., Wrazen 2007). Before becoming Chinatown in the 1960s (as described in Chapter 2), the neighbourhood had a large Jewish population, and one of the few remnants of that time is the Ashei Minsk synagogue on St. Andrew Street, just a block north of Hong Luck. The architectural style of the area is similar to adjacent districts of Toronto and was already established before the Chinese moved in, as compared to Vancouver, B.C., where Chinatown features many buildings purpose-built with Asian characteristics. The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club thus not only provides ritual services through the lion dance, but also helps to enact the identity of Chinatown by performing culture in a public way that helps to transform the place through iconic action. The regular presence of lions is similar to other places where Chinese people congregate and

serves to create a distinct heritage identity for the neighbourhood. In discussing the material culture of Paris' Little Asia, Anne Raulin suggests that lion dance is the liveliest and most public manifestation of what she calls the "evident continuity between decorative, religious, and festive practices" (1991:46). She could have been writing about Toronto when she argues that, "in a foreign metropolis, a pluri-cultural one at that, the Lion Dance celebrates thusly a sense of territoriality" (1991:47).

The high sound pressure level created by the percussion ensemble in the heat of performance (as much as 105 dB, which is as loud as a jackhammer breaking concrete) is crucial in defining the space of the Chinatown neighbourhood. Hong Luck's gong and drum corps draws on its ancient origins as military percussion to sonically patrol the boundaries during ritual parades for their anniversary and Chinese New Year. Furthermore, during the annual Chinatown festival, the club usually joins forces with NLSF to march their lions along the closed-off streets in the core of the neighbourhood, where they mingle with people in the crowd, but do not stop to perform for patrons. Hong Luck's rhythms are no longer used to signal troop movements, but they could still cut through the din of a battle. Whether or not people choose to participate in ritual performances as patrons or interact with the lions as they go by, the sound of the percussion fills the space and can easily be heard over top of other sounds. The gong and drum music therefore states, "this is Chinatown" to all within earshot and thereby reinforces the existence of a Chinese identity within the larger, urban, Canadian environment. While this message might not be quite so clear to a random passerby, who

might perceive it as a more general sign of some sort of ethnic particularity, it is obvious for members of the community and those familiar with Chinese culture.

The distinctive Southern Chinese lion (as compared to Northern Chinese, Taiwanese, Tibetan, or Japanese lions) is present in the neighbourhood in other ways as well (see Figure 10 below). One can find souvenirs in the local shops such as hand puppets, statues, and child-size lion heads. There is even lion graffiti, as seen on the back of a stop sign in the image below. Perhaps the most obvious and pervasive use of the Southern lion image is the previously mentioned banners flown by the Chinatown Business Improvement Association on the lampposts along Spadina Avenue and Dundas Street West.²⁰ These show a traditional, red and black, Guan Yu lion being animated by two dancers and are emblazoned with the words, "Welcome to Chinatown." These flags do not indicate the identity of the performers, however, as the lions are intended as an index of Chinese people rather than a specific kung fu club.



Figure 10: mini lion heads for sale in a shop and lion graffiti on the back of a stop sign

²⁰ The lampposts rotate between the lion banner, Chinese lanterns made from LED lights, or advertisements for Chinese cultural exhibits that come to the Royal Ontario Museum or Art Gallery of Ontario.

Conclusion: Source and Stream

The goal in this chapter has been to present ethnographic vignettes and interpretation of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club's interdisciplinary performance practice. This multigenerational group maintains their vibrant tradition in a multicultural environment, which has contributed to a distinctive approach to the lion dance and its percussion music. Ethnomusicologists are often concerned with both the documentation/preservation of folk musics and attention to change in these practices (Nettl 2005). My fieldwork with Hong Luck has revealed a variety of differences compared to the club's older generations, the other groups I have worked with, and the lion dance as documented by other researchers. In describing these practices, I have not attempted to provide a compendium of all versions and variants because, as I explained in the first chapter, my seniors at Hong Luck would prefer to preserve their traditions orally, and they have steered me towards interpretation over documentation. Rather, my discussion comes out of performance ethnography because it is based on my experiences as a lion dancer and percussionist with the club. Nonetheless, I have avoided making this about me by balancing auto-ethnographic tendencies with thick description.

The emergent quality of Hong Luck's lion dance participates in what Stephen Jones (1996) has identified as a common thread in both Chinese classical and folk music traditions. A metaphor of *source and stream* (源流) connects origins and developments in a way that leaves room for both. China has an ancient culture where the influence of Confucianism has bred a strong respect for elders and antiquity. There is also an appreciation of the fact that a stream must follow its own path, which is balanced by

caution about the danger of drying up if cut off from its source. In the first part of this chapter, I provided a description and a number of examples that showed how the ritual aspects of Chinese New Year parades have been handled during my fieldwork. This stream may be a long way from the source, but remains connected through a well-established transmission process.

The particular context of Hong Luck's lion dancing leads to a flexible semiotic state where aesthetics, function, and meaning are often contested. The club's elders, seniors, juniors, and associates, as well as patrons of varying backgrounds, engage in ongoing negotiation regarding the ontology of lion dancing and how it should be manifested in performance. The perceived being of the practice determines ideas about how it should be done and what that will mean. This process results in dialogue that is contentious, but not usually factious. In fact, lion dance—and its music—usually helps to connect people across social, cultural, generational, and linguistic boundaries in Toronto. The exception to this general rule is the traditional exclusion of females demanded by some patrons, which has the potential to perpetuate sex-based discrimination and unequal constructions of gender.

In the second part of this chapter, I discussed how other concerns could superscribe the ceremonial aspects of lion dance. Part of the enduring value of this practice is its ability to function on several different levels simultaneously, and people can have hybrid views or change their stance depending on context. The traditional ritual serves as a para-liturgical blessing and exorcism, but it is also a performance of identity. For many patrons, a lion dance at Chinese New Year, the opening of a new business, or a

wedding is essential for ensuring a happy, healthy, and prosperous future. From a less mystical perspective, the beastly image is used to represent Chineseness through banners, decorations, parades, and performances that create the space of Chinatown and imbue events with an index of cultural heritage. For Hong Luck, the lion also embodies the spirit of their kung fu club and brings together its diverse members in the muscular bonding of shared musical and dance performance.

The multiplicity of perspectives on lion dance in Toronto is not a problem to be resolved, but rather one source of its dynamism. All these views and interpretations are contingent upon a compelling performance because a weak lion dance lacks the yang energy required by the ritual, is unlikely to inspire feelings of identification, and is not particularly entertaining. Another key source of a lion dance's power is therefore the training of its performers. Participant observation of parades and events has provided important data, but these peak moments are like the tip of an iceberg compared to the bigger picture of practice. The week-in and week-out grind of being an active member of Hong Luck is the crucible where lion dancers are forged. It is for that reason that my consultants insisted my research on their music should start with practising kung fu. The next chapter will turn to a description of what happens inside the training hall and the discourses that shape it.

Chapter 4 Inside the Lion's Den: Training, Embodiment, and a Kung Fu Habitus

Introduction

Prior to beginning my doctoral studies, I was investigating my options for fieldwork sites to learn the percussion associated with Chinese martial arts and lion dance. I asked my long-time Wing Chun kung fu teacher, Master Henry Lo, for advice about where in the Greater Toronto Area he thought I should go.¹ His answer was unequivocal: the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club was not only the most traditional, but they also had the best drummers in the region. When I started my PhD, I promptly went down to Hong Luck to ask about their drumming. I was not disappointed by the rich tradition of kung fu, dance, ritual, and music that I found, but despite my background in both music and martial arts, their transmission process surprised me. As I will describe in this chapter, kung fu and lion dance are the pathway to learning how to drum. This was the first time I had encountered such an interdisciplinary system and their approach to drumming was quite different from anything I had experienced before.² Regarding the study of music, Timothy Rice writes that *transmission* is widely understood to refer to “the means by which musical compositions, performing practices and knowledge are passed from musician to musician,” whose dimensions include: “the technical, the social, the cognitive and the institutional.”³ Bruno Nettl has further divided transmission processes

¹ Previous to joining Hong Luck, I had already been practising the Wing Chun style of kung fu for ten years and had another fifteen years of experience in a variety of other martial arts styles (Eastern and Western).

² My musical background includes having performed, composed, and/or produced: electronic dance music (EDM), electroacoustic music, jazz, Irish folk music, and Western art music (WAM).

³ Timothy Rice. "Transmission." *Grove Music Online*. Oxford University Press, accessed October 21, 2014, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com.ezproxy.library.yorku.ca/subscriber/article/grove/music/46823>.

into recorded, printed, written, oral, and aural traditions (2005:319). After having trained at Hong Luck, I suggest *embodied* (through martial arts and lion dance) be added to Netti's list.



Figure 11: Hong Luck's building (548 Dundas St. West)

I walked into the club for the first time on a Tuesday night in early September 2008. It was just a bit before the start of a beginner class and several students were

already on the floor stretching and/or shadowboxing. I was pleased to see that the back of the training hall was lined with lion heads and I was suitably impressed with the gritty atmosphere of the place. Quang Thang, a senior member and the teacher for Tuesday's novice class, casually fielded my questions and barely raised an eyebrow when I told him that I was looking to do research at Hong Luck.⁴ He answered my initial queries about drumming with a general introduction and then told me that the best way to learn would be by doing it. He also informed me that—just like everybody else—I would have to start with basic martial arts training because admittance to other classes is based on students' effort, dedication, and progress with the foundational curriculum. He invited me to watch the class that night and, shortly after that, I filled out some forms, bought a uniform, paid a registration fee, and became a de jure member of Hong Luck. It would be some time, however, before I was fully accepted as part of the group. Quang's reception to my inquiries had been cordial, yet matter-of-fact; the club's storefront location (see Figure 11 above) attracts a lot of attention from passersby, but only a small percentage of people who show interest actually join up—even fewer persevere longer than a month or two. I later discovered that paying dues in the beginner class is not only a form of gate-keeping, but also an integral part of the transmission process.

In this chapter I will describe the day-to-day goings-on of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club and show how they inculcate the pre-requisites for being a successful drummer. In order to learn how to drum, students must first acquire a kung fu habitus, embody the rhythms of lion dance, and negotiate active membership in the association, which puts

⁴ Quang's name is Vietnamese and is pronounced like the instrument, *gong*.

them in a practical and social position to practise drumming. Relatively few people become drummers because it is not formally taught, but rather must be learned through transferable knowledge and practice. Good drumming is also dependent on receiving the benefit of collective expertise from a cross-section of the group, which can only be achieved through participation in the network of relationships that make up the association.

The word *kung fu* (功夫) connotes martial arts, but its literal meaning is skill achieved through hard work and, in both senses, drumming is considered one of Hong Luck's most advanced accomplishments. The road to becoming a drummer is paved with sweat; basic martial arts training is physically gruelling and lasts months before students are allowed to join other classes. The percussion instruments are learned as part of lion dance training, which is reserved for intermediate and/or advanced students and is predicated on the foundation training from the novice class. Students who earn a spot in lion class begin with dance movements and eventually learn to play cymbals, gong, and finally the drum. By the time anyone becomes proficient as a drummer, they are therefore already familiar with the rest of Hong Luck's repertoire. This is important because the drum is used to accompany and structure not only lion dance performances, but also martial arts demonstrations. Drummers need comprehensive kung fu, in the richest sense of the word, so that they can fulfil their musical, organizational, and motivational responsibilities.

Becoming a drummer at Hong Luck is thought to happen organically and all the best musicians at the club maintain that they began playing more or less spontaneously

after having been exposed to the rhythms through long-term participation in lion dance and kung fu. The teaching and learning of music have been of sustained interest to ethnomusicologists (Merriam 1964; Nettl 2005 [1983]; Wong 2004; Wrazen 2010) and borrowing a phrase from Timothy Rice (2003), Hong Luck's drumming falls under the category of *learned but not taught*. My fieldwork experience confirms that there is no systematic approach to percussion pedagogy, or at least not as there is with the other parts of Hong Luck's curriculum. Elders, seniors, and peers do, however, provide tips, corrections, and commentary about drumming that are an indispensable part of not just being able to play the drum, but being able to do so effectively. Given that drummers acknowledge learning their instrument through other practices, I will look at the rest of the curriculum to discover how it generates transferable dispositions (Bourdieu 1977 [1972], 1990 [1980]) that are used for drumming.⁵ This is a rather distinctive transmission process if we imagine the equivalent would be having to learn how to dance a polka, mazurka, and polonaise before being able to play Chopin. The kung fu method of learning music is similar to Greg Downey's suggestion that in the case of Brazilian capoeira "Dancing, then, is an apprenticeship in hearing" (2002:504), as practitioners in both arts experience the music through or with movement. Based on my discipleship at Hong Luck, I take the entire transmission process to be part and parcel of studying their drumming.

Researching an embodied practice like kung fu benefits from careful attention to the corporeal dimension of existence and experience. As such, my own body has been a

⁵ The introductory chapter of this dissertation contains my summary of Bourdieu's theories on practical logic and habitus, which I will therefore not repeat here.

fieldwork site and I am now faced with the task of expressing in words things that I have learned through intense training under the watchful eyes of Hong Luck's teachers. Incorporating Bourdieu's well known concept of habitus into hands-on research, Loïc Wacquant's study of an inner-city, African American, boxing gym shows how this type of participant observation "is better characterized as an 'observant participation'" (2004:6). He acknowledges that fieldwork on—and with—the body has elements of auto-ethnography, but balances this by documenting not only the physical process of his boxer's apprenticeship, but also the inseparable social aspects. This move is not unlike Rice's (1994:72) hermeneutic arc connecting insider and outsider perspectives through his personal struggles to learn the ornamentation required to play the Bulgarian bagpipes (*gaida*) in a culturally acceptable way. The rigorous physical regimen of martial arts inculcates transferable schemata that are at once bodily and socio-cultural. Approaching these dispositions requires an interior understanding in one's muscles, bones, and sinews that is inseparable from the intersubjectivity of the external learning environment; the habitus thus acquired is both producer and product of these martial practices, inhabiting the intersection of self and other.

Building on Wacquant's theories and methods, other scholars have also thrown their bodies into research on martial arts, broadly defined. Sara Delamont and Neil Stephens (2008) have positioned capoeira as falling between Wacquant's pugilistic habitus and that of a dancer, while further interrogating the discourses of identity that are confronted by non-Brazilian *capoeiristas* (as adepts of that dance-fight-game are called) who learn their art in the UK. These issues are equally salient at Hong Luck where the

Chineseness of kung fu is often emphasized as having primary importance, despite the club's Canadian location. In a useful countermeasure to the purported durability of Bourdieu's structuring structures, Dale Spencer has applied "a phenomenological conceptualization of habitus to discuss the production of an *MMA fighter's habitus* as a lived-through structure-in-process that is continually subject to change through learning additional body techniques" (italics in original, 2009:120).⁶ Similarly, there are no black belts at Hong Luck, and mastery is a lifelong pursuit, so a kung fu habitus must also be considered emergent. A key factor in all these scholars' works is that reaping the fruits of bodily apprenticeship takes not months, but rather years, just as it has in my own research.

This chapter will look at what happens inside Hong Luck's practice hall and reflects my experiences in the process of learning how to drum. First I will describe the club as a physical place, with consideration of how full membership in the association requires investing time into not only training, but also building maintenance. Next I will analyze how (re)learning to stand and move structures practitioners' being-in-the-world. This will include an investigation of how Hong Luck's mission to preserve and promote Chinese martial arts is made explicitly cultural in practice, with the attendant challenges of a multicultural, diasporic context. The final sections will look at lion dance class and how its distinctly martial character builds on the basics of kung fu. Lion dancing formally and simultaneously teaches both movement and musical rhythms, after which students learn to play the instruments. Drumming is largely untaught, however, and prospective

⁶ MMA is an acronym for mixed martial arts, which is a syncretic combat sport developed in the late twentieth century.

drummers must gather the embodied knowledge acquired through their apprenticeship, translate it into instrumental technique, and present it to their seniors for evaluation. I argue that the transmission process (re)constructs a Chinese martial arts body and opens the door to the drum, but that crossing the threshold to become a drummer is up to the student.

The Martial Gymnasium: Forge of Kung Fu

The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club is long and narrow, with the main-floor dominated by a practice hall used for all the classes. To the left of the entrance, an L-shaped, glass-topped counter displays weapons, musical instruments, memorabilia, Chinese *bruise liniment* (跌打酒) and uniforms, while also cordoning off a makeshift office-come-storage space. This is followed by a small sitting area with chairs lined up along the edges for people to watch the classes and/or socialize (see Figure 12 below). The walls are covered with photographs: group shots from anniversaries; portraits of the founding masters, Paul and Jin Chan; posed and action pictures of various Hong Luck members; and souvenir photos of visits from celebrities and dignitaries, including former Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, American kickboxing legend Benny "The Jet" Urquidez, and Chinese kung fu film star Jackie Chan.



Figure 12: Hong Luck sitting area

A black, three-inch-wide line painted on the floor separates the linoleum-covered training space from the carpeted social and commercial area at the entrance. The club's membership agreement specifies that when students cross that line—either entering or exiting—they must bow. This is done facing towards Guan Yu's altar at the far end of the hall, opposite from the main entrance. The bow signifies respect for the space and the training that occurs within it, which becomes so ingrained in long-time members that they often do it even when they are not attending a formal class as students. The obeisance can vary from a slight movement of the head and/or hand(s) as the threshold is crossed, to a full pause with a deep bend from the waist and hands pressed together at chest level in a

salute. The practice of bowing that is such an integral part of lion dance performances (as described in the last chapter) thus begins from the moment a new student sets foot on the training floor.



Figure 13: Hong Luck training hall

Just past the threshold of the martial hall hang two heavy sandbags for practising full-power strikes (see Figure 13 above). The left wall has two windows with railings underneath used for balance while stretching (similar to a ballet barre). Any available wall space is covered with commemorative banners, plaques from tournaments, and more Hong Luck group photos. The right wall is lined with mirrors that students use to check

their positions, above which hang the portraits of the club's lineage masters. At the back of the room sits Guan Yu's altar (as described in Chapter 3), which is flanked by racks of weapons. The long armaments are primarily staves, halberds, and spears, while the short ones are mostly swords and knives, although there are a number of miscellaneous implements such as martially stylized rakes, hoes, axes, maces, flails, benches, and some truly idiosyncratic things like the paired, spiky, metal rings called *wind and fire wheels* (風火輪). Behind the weapon racks, the older lion dance equipment that is used for practice sits on the floor, while performance heads hang on the wall and a newer drum is tucked into the far corner. The equipment at the back of the hall is rounded out by stacks of grappling mats that are pulled out for training throws, a set of rarely-used weights, and the rolled up flags that are displayed during parades and anniversary banquets.

The brute material that makes up Hong Luck's building, furnishings, and paraphernalia is generally rundown and perpetually a bit shabby from hard use, so the ongoing volunteer efforts to maintain it are an important part of being an active member. The club is a registered not-for-profit organization and, as the vagaries of public popularity have shifted from traditional martial arts to the current vogue for combat sports related to mixed martial arts (MMA), revenue from fee-paying students alone is not enough to keep the doors open. Many senior members no longer pay at all, but rather volunteer as teachers, performers, administrators, and de facto superintendents. Lion dance is an important source of revenue—perhaps more so than tuition fees—but volunteer labour is nonetheless always required to bridge the gap between expenses and income.

What keeps the club going is a collective effort that is mostly self-organizing or horizontally integrated, rather than regimented by centralized authority. Anyone who has stuck around Hong Luck for a few years has probably done chores; repairing, fixing, cleaning, painting, and/or generally maintaining. This contribution of labour, in addition to carrying out teaching, administrative, and/or performance duties, binds members to the club through a sense of responsibility. The association is embodied in the physical place and materials, such that committed membership incorporates a feeling of duty to maintain the club's collective "body." For example, I have shovelled snow, swept floors, dusted surfaces, repaired weapons, fixed lion dance equipment, taken out the trash, and replaced light bulbs. At first my seniors occasionally asked me to help them with some chore they were working on. As I began to feel the need to do these things when I saw that they needed doing, I also noticed myself changing pronouns and referring to the club in the first person plural (we), rather than second person (you). Other members regularly do the same sorts of maintenance activities I listed above, but have also painted or even done more serious structural repairs, according to their abilities. People also volunteer to work on the club's virtual presence on the Internet.⁷ After decades of cobbling the place together with donations, recycled materials, and volunteer labour, the whole building—from roof to foundation—has at some point had work done on it. While some senior members might remember who did what when, the general feeling is that of collectivism found in traces inscribed onto the physical material of the building. Hong Luck's slightly rundown

⁷ <http://www.hongluck.ca/>

appearance belies the amount of repair, attention, and care that the membership puts into it.

Full-fledged Hong Luck members actively contribute to the club not only physically, but also socially. It was not until I began bringing in revenue as a lion dancer and taking a regular share of responsibility for the building that I became more fully accepted as part of the group. Helping out is part of what separates the core membership from regular students, who tend to take more than they give. Being incorporated into Hong Luck on this level has meant, for me, people being more willing to share resources and knowledge. In Chinese, this is called *guanxi* (關係), which means relationships built on trust, loyalty, and mutual indebtedness.⁸ This concept is an important part of familial, social, and business relationships in China, so it is not surprising that it also governs the web of interactions at Hong Luck. An example of good *guanxi* at the club is being entrusted with a key to the building. These are in limited supply and several senior members (at different times) have given me theirs on long-term loan, thus imparting the privilege of twenty-four hour access and the responsibility to help out with teaching, lion dancing, and/or building maintenance. Good *guanxi* is also essential for learning how to drum, as I will show later in this chapter.

The importance of these ties of affinity is manifested in the titles members use to refer to each other, which are always in Chinese, even when people are speaking English. These are based on kinship relationships, but prefixed by the word for *teacher* (師): *sījé* (teaching older sister, 師姐), *sīhīng* (teaching older brother, 師兄), *sīmūi* (teaching

⁸ *Guanxi* comes into English from Mandarin and is pronounced “gwaan-shee.”

younger sister, 師妹), and *sīdai* (teaching younger brother, 師弟). Even though Master Paul Chan's widow does not practice kung fu, she is called *sīmou* (teaching mother, 師母) out of respect. Other Hong Luck elders or associates are called by their given names followed by a respectful familial title like *sūk* (uncle, 叔) or *gō* (older brother, 哥). This system extends to all relationships within the club, so the title *master* (*sīfú*, 師傅) can also be written with the second character changed to a homophonous one giving the meaning *teaching father* (*sīfú*, 師父), which is more in line with the way people use it at Hong Luck when referring to either Master Paul or Master Jin.⁹

People who have contributed deeply over time come to be such a part of the place that their presence continues to be felt even when they are no longer there in body. Their legacy remains in the work they put into not only the physical place, but also kung fu. Master Paul Chan has had one of the strongest impacts. After a year of mourning when he passed away in 2012, his portrait was hung with the other lineage ancestors on the east wall in an emotional ceremony in 2013 (see Figure 14 below). Apart from the formal bows toward the kung fu forebears before and after class, people often look to Master Paul's photo when speaking of him or some technique learned from him. In one way this could be attributed to the prominence of *filial piety* (孝) in Chinese culture, which in general terms is a Confucian virtue promoting respect and honour for one's parents, elders, and ancestors. In another way, the reverence Hong Luck members show toward

⁹ Throughout this dissertation, I have chosen to refer to Hong Luck's founders by the English honorific *master* because that is the club's practice when communicating with outsiders, particularly those who are non-Sinophones. Internally, however, Master Paul Chan and Master Jin Chan are addressed using the Cantonese title *sifu* and their given name (i.e., Sifu Paul and Sifu Jin).

Master Paul's photo is recognition of what David Brown calls *body-experience lineage* (2014). The embodied knowledge of an adept martial artist is valuable because it incorporates a high degree of skill with extensive experience, but unfortunately it is also quite transient unless transmitted to students. Brown writes:

the loss of incorporated capital becomes even more acutely realised when something embedded in the body needs to be passed on to the next generation in order for the collective socio-cultural practice to survive. One such instance is the passing away (or cessation of teaching due to infirmity) of a celebrated master martial artist. (2014:68)

Recognition of body-experience lineage also happens (even without a photo to refer to) toward other seniors and elders, such as demonstrating the way someone played certain drum rhythms or recalling how another person performed their signature, choreographed routine. The legacy of the club can even be found by sense of smell, as when a relatively new lion dancer remarked on Hong Luck's special aroma: musty and dusty with the reverent odour of incense mixed into stale perspiration. Noah told her that it was the scent of the kung fu ancestors, comprised of fifty-plus years of burnt offerings, a patina of dirt, and, most importantly, copious amounts of sweat.



Figure 13: kung fu lineage ancestor portraits

Basic Training: Forging a Kung Fu Body

During my fieldwork at Hong Luck, there have been three beginner classes per week, each with a different teacher. The instructors on Thursday evenings and Sunday afternoons have varied, but Quang has consistently taught on Tuesday nights. I will describe his class because it was the one I attended most regularly as a novice, and also because it remained very consistent in its content. Students usually arrived a little early to change into their uniforms (a Hong Luck t-shirt, black pants, and black waist-sash) and warm up before the two-and-half hour workout. Quang's classes were rigorous and covered a full range of traditional basics: stances, footwork, strikes, blocks, stretching, and choreographed sets of fighting movements (i.e., *forms*, 套路). Less frequently, he also had us work with a partner to practise attack and defence or hit hand-held striking pads.

As mentioned previously, the teacher lighting incense on the altar precedes all formal classes, after which the whole class performs stylized Do Pi and Choi Lee Fut bows towards first Guan Yu and then the portraits of the lineage ancestors. Quang invariably started training with the all-important *horse stance* (四平馬). Physically this posture requires planting one's feet about double shoulder-width apart and bending the knees into a squat; in basic training an extra deep horse stance is held till one's legs burn from the isometric tension. Quang also used it as the default position, so we always returned to it after practising other stances and techniques. At first this type of training is agony, but it builds self-discipline to remain in such a low squat despite the pain. As one becomes stronger and more flexible, the horse stance also becomes more efficient and therefore more stable. The training is more than physical, however, and also calls for a body-mind shift, as I show in the next section. Through repetition, this posture is the lynchpin in recasting students' habitus. While it may seem trite to reduce the basis of a habitus down to a single pose, it would be difficult to over-exaggerate the importance of the horse stance in kung fu discourse; it is literally and figuratively the foundation of kung fu, lion dance, and drumming.¹⁰

Hong Luck stories about the rigours of training at an unspecified point in the past (i.e., "back in the day") often tell of students doing nothing but holding the horse stance for the first three months. This was supposed to have tested their dedication by enduring simultaneous pain and boredom, while also building up their strength and stamina. My basic training in horse stance also lasted three months before I was invited to start lion

¹⁰ Not all styles of kung fu are based on horse stance training.

dancing, but Quang emphasized the importance of the posture not by practising it exclusively, but rather by the seemingly eternal return to it. The following passage describes my typical experience during my first two years of beginner class at Hong Luck:¹¹

After finishing the formal bows, class begins with horse stance. We hold it in silence for approximately twenty seconds then sink lower on Quang's command, while he counts out loud for the last ten seconds. Next he calls for a forward stance. Again we hold it, before returning to horse stance. Barring the door stance. Horse stance. Sweat is dripping off my brow and into my eyes, but we're not supposed to move until switching to the next posture and so I resist wiping it away until Quang calls for the next pose. Sitting dragon stance. I'm living for those brief transitional reprieves from the pain of holding these postures. Horse stance. Girl stance. I try to push myself to go lower, to hold the position, to build my foundation. Horse stance. Kneeling stance. My legs are burning! Every fibre of my body is telling me to stop, but Quang's workout continues relentlessly. Single-blade stance. Horse stance. Cat stance. Horse stance. Always back to horse stance. At long last comes the crane stance where we get to stand up on one leg instead of having to sink down so low! Horse stance. Sitting on a lotus stance. Horse Stance. Now Quang calls for footwork drills, which require stepping and twisting from horse stance. And more horse stance.

Most of the training in beginner class was done as a group and organized by Quang's counting. After the stances came techniques, which were drilled in sets of ten with one count for each move or combination. At first, we moved in physical unison. This built a basic—but important—ability to synchronize newly acquired fighting skills to outside sources: verbal cues from the teacher and visual cues from fellow classmates. Performing moves exactly on the count is actually a crucial foundation skill for lion dancers. This means neither anticipating the cue by going early nor creating a delay by following behind, but rather locking one's movement to the pulse of the teacher's voice.

¹¹ Although I was able to start lion dance class after three months, I continued to attend beginner class regularly for two years. In theory, all students should continue working on their fundamentals in the novice class, but in practice people rarely have time and end up dropping out of one class when they join another.

Although senior members emphasize stance training as the physical prerequisite to developing further skills, the method of teaching those postures also inculcates basic rhythmic synchronization skills. For combinations of fighting movements, however, we started together, proceeded with slightly different timing, and restarted in sync with Quang's next count. In the longer patterns of fighting movements found in choreographed forms, variations in rhythm and tempo became more pronounced as the sequences were more complex, but were still initiated on the teacher's command. This push and pull of timing in motion has some important implications for combat, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Embodying Culture: Becoming Chinese through Martial Arts

The Hong Luck Kung Fu Club's *raison d'être* has transitioned from preparing members to deal with the inevitability of racial violence on the streets in the 1960s to prepping them for a more remote possibility of self-defence in the twenty-first century. As a result, the focus of training has shifted from hardcore combatives towards martial performance. This is not to say that people are practising new things outside the tradition or that old exercises have been discarded, but rather that the relative amount of time and energy spent on the various aspects of the club's curriculum have been reconfigured. Rough and tumble partner work or free sparring are not as common as they used to be, nor are conditioning drills—one of Master Paul's famous habits was repeatedly rapping his knuckles against hard surfaces to toughen them. The heart of Hong Luck's kung fu is still martial usage, but the body has taken a more performative turn.

These days, forms occupy much of the membership's time and effort as the club struggles to preserve the embarrassment of riches established by the founders. While the complete systems may not have been preserved, there are still estimated to be over one hundred routines between Do Pi and Choi Lee Fut. Only about twenty of these, however, are being actively practised at any one time. The others remain in the archive of the collective mind and body of Hong Luck, with some help from handwritten notes, photos, and video. Hong Luck's curriculum of forms has varied over time according to the emphasis of the teachers and the abilities of the students. People generally learn whatever beginner routines are specified in the current syllabus, but then have more flexibility about how they will proceed. Some people choose to stop learning forms in order to focus on lion dance (like Noah) or sparring (like Adrian). Others, like David, continue with forms even while participating in lion dance and/or sparring. People who have learned the beginner routines and wish to continue with forms (including weapons) may join the intermediate and, eventually, the advanced class. There are also unstructured training sessions where the floor is available for students to work on their own or with whatever senior member might be around to help them.

After about eight months of fieldwork at Hong Luck, I dropped in to an open workout and was privileged to receive direct tutelage from Master Paul Chan, who at that point normally only attended the Sunday afternoon advanced class. Traditional Chinese pedagogy tends to privilege criticism and be judicious with praise, which I already knew from my background in Wing Chun, but I was taken aback by the scolding I received that day. When I told my seniors about it, they explained that it was an honour to have been

singled out for verbal castigation because the elderly masters at Hong Luck only chastised when they took an interest in someone. Retrospectively I came to appreciate the deep value of the lesson, although at the time I was mostly just bewildered by it. With a great economy of words, Master Paul summarized how Chineseness is embodied in Hong Luck's kung fu. This marked an important moment of transmission, but understanding it would require more research, practice, and reflection. This experience is described below:

I've come down to the club to work on a basic Do Pi routine that's been giving me trouble in class. There's only one other student there and he's doing his own thing, so I'm relishing the room to focus on my own practice and the freedom to move without following anyone else's counting. It's a surprise to see Master Paul poke his head into the club, but I carry on somewhat self-consciously. He watches for a few minutes and then calls me off the floor to sit down next to him. Master Paul is obviously unimpressed with me and begins by telling me—in no uncertain terms—that my kung fu is truly lousy: ponderous, stiff, and lacklustre. I'm crestfallen and weakly protest that I'm just a beginner, which he completely ignores as he continues with his tongue-lashing. Master Paul goes on to tell me that the worst thing about my movement is that it doesn't look Chinese. Being a Westerner, I expect his next comment to be directed at my ethnicity, but he surprises me by saying that it looks Japanese!

After finishing his somewhat acrimonious and very thorough admonishment, Master Paul gives me a few pointers. Apparently my strength is so useless because it's slow and loosening up would help me generate more power.¹² It's not just speed, but also how one accelerates that matters, he elaborates. At this point he's fired up and I'm in rapt attention. It's hard work understanding the way he's using a combination of Taishanese, Cantonese, English, onomatopoeia, and gestures, but I'm determined not to miss a thing.

He tells me that the right way (i.e., the Chinese way) of performing kung fu requires coordinating the eyes, arms, hips, and stance to manifest power... I'm getting the idea now that this power is more than just physical. The outward manifestation is a strong, centred stance combined with footwork and twisting of the waist to deliver loose, flexible strikes that accelerate towards a final impact, but Master Paul tells me I must also summon up my martial spirit to imbue the movement with energy. He punctuates this point with a flash of ferocity across his face, a bloodthirsty yell, and a hacking punch so fast that I barely see it. The combined effect of this demo sends chills down my spine,

¹² Physics supports this because power is equal to force times velocity ($P=F.v$), which is an idea applied to many striking-based martial arts. Exactly when one gets a strike up to full speed is a function of increasing velocity, because force is equal to mass times acceleration ($F=ma$).

despite the fact that the aged master didn't even get out of his seat. He then sends me back onto the floor to continue practising, which I do with a white-hot motivation not to be lousy and the inkling that somehow I must become more Chinese in order to improve my kung fu.

While continuing with Hong Luck's gruelling training, I also investigated other avenues in order to illuminate Master Paul's lesson. The Little Pear Garden Collective (LPGC, 小梨園) has hosted two symposia in Toronto on the aesthetics of Chinese dance that contributed more scholarly explanations.¹³ The first was in 2009, when Professor Su Ya from the Beijing Dance Academy mentioned in her presentation that all her students were required to take martial arts classes. During the question period I asked her to expand on the relationship between dance and martial arts in China, to which she replied that they were "same same." She explained that the principles structuring movement in both disciplines came from a common cultural root, which she further justified by the homophonous words for *dance* and *martial* differing only in their written character (both pronounced *mouh* in Cantonese or *wu* in Mandarin, but written 舞 and 武 respectively).

The next symposium occurred in 2013 and included more in-depth discussion about the embodiment of Chinese culture in movement arts. One of the presenters, Wei Chengxin (graduated from the Beijing Dance Academy in 1997), has performed professionally in both Chinese and Western styles and founded his own company called Moving Dragon in 2004. His exposition of Chinese movement characteristics was strongly reminiscent of Master Paul's, and he positioned them as the embodiment of deeply embedded cultural beliefs that contrast with those in the West. In particular, he

¹³ The Little Pear Garden Collective is a Toronto-based Chinese traditional and contemporary dance company.

discussed rootedness as being related to the idea of China itself, which in Chinese is called the *Middle Kingdom* (中國). This worldview puts China in the centre and is embodied in movement that originates from the locus of the body's chi energy, known in Cantonese as the *dāantihn* (literally: cinnabar field, 丹田). This point is located approximately two inches below the navel and in traditional Chinese medicine is considered to be the centre of one's being. This explanation helped me to realize that an important aspect of horse stance training is learning to root oneself by sinking not only one's physical structure, but also one's energy away from the head or upper body and into the *daantihn*.

Wei further elaborated on a desirably circular quality of movement that embodies the coextensive opposites of yin and yang. In Taoist thought, the interplay of these two powers undergirds all of existence such that they are inseparable, despite being in constantly shifting opposition. This is symbolized by a well-known diagram showing a half-black, half-white circle with each part swirling around the other, but also containing a dot of its obverse within it. Wei demonstrated how this circularity occurs as movements of various sizes that whirl around each other. He also showed how these actions are balanced by their opposite. It is telling that Hong Luck has often used a yin yang symbol as part of their logo (see Figure 15 below) because Wei's description was a fit for many kung fu techniques. Even “straight” punches corkscrew to increase their acceleration at the last moment, and power always comes from twisting the waist.



Figure 15: Hong Luck logo #1

The Beijing Dance Academy is not alone in using martial arts to help dancers embody Chinese culture. Lin Yatin from the Taipei National University of the Arts presented at the second LPGC symposium and told me in discussion beforehand that her institution also incorporates martial arts training for their students. Furthermore, in an article on Taiwan's Cloud Gate Dance Theatre, she discusses that group's use of *tai chi chuan* (太極拳, a so-called internal or soft style of Chinese martial arts) to ground choreography that "preserves and synthesizes a new Sino-cultural-based identity which draws on an ancient Chinese tradition and gives it a new location and embodiment" (2010:259). This was manifested in a piece of contemporary dance entitled *Cursive*, where Cloud Gate's dancers improvised in response to Chinese characters using an embodied concept of chi that is common to calligraphy, dance, and martial arts. Lin writes that "the essence lies in the use of flow and its abrupt gathering of energy at the end" (ibid), which describes both brush strokes in calligraphy and Hong Luck's striking techniques.

The master who taught Cloud Gate Dance Theatre is Adam Hsu, a well-known Chinese martial artist, teacher, and author. In his book *The Sword Polisher's Record: The Way of Kung Fu* (based on a long-running series of magazine articles of the same name) he suggests that Western students could benefit from learning about Chinese culture through opera, philosophy, and language so that they can better "savor the unique flavor of China's martial arts and apply that knowledge to their practice" (1998:116). This statement might be equally applicable to some members of the Chinese diaspora who have been raised in a Westernized environment. I can attest to the benefits of understanding enough of the language to grasp the names of certain postures, techniques, and forms: *dīng jih mǎh* (丁字馬) refers to a stance where the feet are in an elongated, T-shaped position resembling the character *dīng* (丁), which is known as the fourth heavenly stem of calligraphy; the angle of certain sweeping strikes is described as similar to the top stroke of the character for *heaven* (天) because of its slightly downwards curve when painted with a brush; and a choreographed form named *Sahp Jih Kyùhn* (十字拳) contains a key sequence of blocks that resemble a cross like the character for the number *ten* (十).

I have already mentioned how ideas from Taoist philosophy inform kung fu practice (*daantih*n and yin yang), but as Hsu acknowledges, mental schemata are no substitute for training or embodied knowledge. For example, one well-respected, senior, Hong Luck member neither speaks a dialect of Chinese nor reads Chinese philosophy, but now runs his own club with the elders' blessings. At the anniversary banquet in 2009, he claimed that he developed his high level of kung fu purely through long-term, intense

training. While he may not have taken a scholarly approach to martial arts, he was nonetheless steeped in Chinese culture because he was at the club so much, spent a lot of time with Master Paul Chan, and went on the Hong Luck demo tour to China in 1985. He also continues to eat Chinese food, watch kung fu movies, and wear traditional Chinese clothing when he performs, which shows some of the ways that participation in Chinese martial arts can open the door to broader participation in the culture.

Whereas it may be possible to achieve an advanced level of proficiency through diligent practice and informal exposure to Chinese culture, immersion and/or focused study can expedite the process for both non-Chinese and overseas Chinese students. Tellingly, it was not until I returned from nine months living in Hong Kong and studying Cantonese that Hong Luck members acknowledged my kung fu had reached a higher level. According to Bourdieu, the essence of practical logic is that it is economical, such that embodied dispositions are transferable between practices. It could very well be, then, that practising calligraphy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong's Yale-China Chinese Language Centre (CLC, 雅禮中國語文研習所) helped my martial arts to flow more smoothly and accelerate into the final burst of energy required to execute Choi Lee Fut's signature hook punch in the correct Chinese style.¹⁴ Of course thousands of repetitions of that technique cannot be discounted either.

One must be careful in attributing essentialized qualities to any particular cultural practice. Centred rooting and the horse stance, for example, are also found in Japanese

¹⁴ This circular, whipping, overhand strike is usually referred to at Hong Luck by its Cantonese name, *sāau ch̀euih* (搗捶), which literally means a “delivering” punch. It is explained as a “sweeping” motion, however, that would more properly be *sou ch̀euih* (掃捶).

martial arts, which may show an influence from China but does not necessarily make karate Chinese. There is also considerable variation within Chinese martial arts according to style, lineage, and practitioner. These differences result in movement where the embodiment of centredness and yin yang can take many forms or even vary in their relative importance. Language, philosophy, symbolism, and media all contribute to the discourses that surround kung fu, but these things do not overdetermine the movement. Instead, they may be thought of as contributing to a way of being that is as much physical as it is intellectual and social. There is a Chinese way of doing martial arts, but this is not monolithic because it is informed by group style and individual personality. As Delamont and Stephens (2008:59) have written regarding diasporic capoeira,

The habitus is both a state of mind and a bodily state of being. At the individual level, a person's biology, and biography, gives him or her a unique habitus. Simultaneously, however, that person is also shaped by the collective history of any group(s) to which he or she belongs.

Hong Luck's kung fu is explicitly constructed as a practice meant to embody Chinese culture, which has been promoted not only by Master Paul Chan and his disciples, but has also been acknowledged by The Chinese Consulate General in Toronto. During Chinese New Year 2014 (Sunday, February 8th), the Consul himself, Zhong Hongnuo (鐘洪糯領事), came to pay his respects at the club. He commended the elders for their sustained impact on helping members of the diaspora to remain Chinese through participation in—and/or patronage of—kung fu and lion dance. Consul Zhong further commented that he thought it was important for Chinese Canadians to be *patriotic* (愛國) to both their adopted country and their ancestral homeland, implying that Hong Luck's

cultural program could also contribute to a political agenda.¹⁵ The President of the Hong Luck Association, Ken Lee (李景輝會長), countered that not only does the club service the cultural needs of the Chinese Canadian community, but also brings non-Chinese Canadians into the fold. Vice President Gordon Glasheen and I are both European Canadian, but in addition to practising kung fu, we also speak Cantonese, so we were held up as examples, much to the satisfaction of the Consul.

The club's transmission process uses intensive physical training within a system of values, mores, and beliefs that help to construct a habitus. The ideal result is a set of dispositions that act as what Bourdieu calls *structuring structures*. Hong Luck's training (re)produces—and is the product of—Chinese culture, which is not simply about moving a certain way, but rather amounts to a way of being-in-the-world. Horse stance training helps to find one's centre and learn to sink down through the *daantihn*; doing so with muscular strength alone is exhaustingly inefficient. This foundation is the prerequisite to being able to use the characteristically loose, flowing power that snaps at the end like a calligrapher's flourish on a brush stroke. The schema required to do this, however, is more than just physical and requires an acculturative shift such that the act of doing leads to a state of being. After five years of fieldwork at Hong Luck, David started to insist that I was Chinese, despite being a *gwailou*. Not long after, Master Jin Chan confirmed that I had acquired an acceptable kung fu habitus when he summoned David and I to eat dim

¹⁵ Consul Zhong did not specify whether his concept of China as a site for patriotism was the communist present of the PRC as a nation or the historico-cultural past that gave rise to kung fu. I suspect he may have conflated the two.

sum with him and said he wanted us to help him teach the advanced class.¹⁶ While he did not explicitly address the issue of Chineseness, I took it to mean that I had managed to overcome the problems Master Paul Chan had pointed out several years before. I suspect that kung fu alone would not have been able to produce as profound a result, however, without the practice of lion dance and drumming (cf., Johnson 2005; Chan 2001).

Lion Dance Class: Martial Artists Become Dancers

Before joining any classes beyond the beginner level (such as lion dance), Hong Luck students must be approved by an instructor who is familiar with their abilities. Depending on a person's talent, experience, fitness level, and dedication to practising, this can take anywhere from a couple months, up to a year or more. At the time I started my research with Hong Luck, there were no lion dance students and the ad hoc members of the lion dance team were sufficiently experienced that they no longer held rehearsals, except before special or unusual performances. After about three months of basic training I was invited to join two other students in forming a new class taught by Noah, the lion dance team leader.

The other members of my cohort and I had all joined Hong Luck around the same time. Both of them were second-generation Chinese Canadian and said they had an interest in lion dancing because of its importance to their cultural background. Mario was a university student in his early twenties who had already earned a black belt in karate

¹⁶ Both David and I were taken aback by Master Jin Chan telling us to help him teach because everybody else in the advanced class was more senior than us. I suspect that part of his reasoning may have been that we were younger and more energetic, but he insisted that their kung fu was *not acceptable* (唔得). He also let us know that we still had work to do ourselves, which emphasizes the endless nature of pursuing mastery and thus the emergent quality of a Chinese kung fu habitus.

before he started at Hong Luck, but had not learned to speak Chinese, while Luigi was a pre-teen with natural athletic ability who spoke Cantonese at home.¹⁷ Neither of them had any previous training in music or dance, but this was not a pre-requisite. Having confirmed our knowledge and ability in kung fu, Noah gave us a brief introduction to the ritual function of lion dancing and then began teaching.

The vehicle for learning to lion dance at the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club is the traditional routine, which according to Noah "has been passed down from generation, to generation, to generation... basically forever."¹⁸ It involves approximately twenty minutes worth of choreography and has a simple narrative that is divided into three sections: lion looking for food, lion eating, and happy lion. During my research, I never saw the whole traditional routine performed in public, although I have seen Hong Luck videos from the 1990s when it was still being done in its entirety at anniversary banquets. A number of members have agreed that the full piece seems too long for today's audiences, especially because of the amount of repetition. Shorter dances are choreographed by drawing sections from the full routine to suit the needs of a given performance, which is often preceded and/or followed by a crowd-pleasing freestyle where the lion dancers mingle with the spectators. A *Futsan* lion head weighs between three and twelve kilograms (five and twenty-five pounds), so doing a twenty-minute, choreographed dance in training remains excellent conditioning and preparation for performance.¹⁹ Various Hong Luck

¹⁷ The names Mario and Luigi are pseudonyms.

¹⁸ As per Hong Luck's fiftieth anniversary commemorative booklet, a kung fu generation is approximately a decade, so the age of the traditional lion dance routine may not be as ancient as Noah suggested.

¹⁹ Modern lion head construction, design, and materials are on the lighter side, especially for the *Hoksan* equipment used in competition. Most of Hong Luck's lion heads are mid-range in weight, although there are a few larger, more ornate heads that are heavier.

members have also positioned lion dance as a form of strength and endurance training designed to increase one's physical fitness for fighting, which coincides with the historical need to conceal rebel kung fu practices from Qing dynasty authorities (see Chapter 2).

When lion dancers first start training, they do so empty-handed (i.e., without actually using a lion head), and the pattern for learning is consistent with that for kung fu: observing, mimicking, and then internalizing movement. Noah demonstrated a short sequence of steps, repeated it while we tried to imitate him, and then we practised it on our own. All the while, he would say the drum rhythms as vocables (similar to other East Asian musics: Shehan 1987; Zhang 1997), which came to serve as a mnemonic device for both music and dance. This type of practice engrains the percussion parts and lion movement in one step, so much so that they become a sort of gestalt, as will be discussed in the next chapter. From a pedagogical perspective, the vocables facilitate oral communication during class by rendering musical sound as speech and allowing people to insert them into conversation. This is useful because Hong Luck's percussion music is an entirely oral/aural tradition, without any written notation. Vocables also let Noah stay closer to his apprentices while they are first learning, rather than being behind the drum. Once we got the hang of a section, however, we needed to practise moving to the sound of the musical instruments, and then these smaller sections were strung together to form the full traditional routine. Eventually, we also started to use the lion heads for basic drills, before trying to coordinate our footwork with the actions required to animate the mask while dancing.

Not surprisingly, lion dance involves a lot of horse stance, and other scholars have remarked on the homology with kung fu footwork (Hu 1995; Liu 1981; Slovenz-Low 1994). I would like to clarify, however, that while all of the lower body postures of the lion dance can be found in Hong Luck's core foundations form, Little Southern Boxing (小南拳), the way of moving between them is different.²⁰ Generally speaking, the character of the lion is meant to be powerful and fierce, yet also lively and noble. Novice dancers must continue to stand strong, as they have practised in beginner martial arts class, but learn to step lightly and in a way that is slightly exaggerated in the manner of a platform grace.

A wide stance is important not only for stability, but also appearances because it places the performer's feet past the edge of the lion's body, thereby making the legs look more balanced relative to the size of the head. The open position of the lower limbs takes up more space and gives the lion a stronger presence. My two main teachers and the other members of my cohort were all of less-than-average height in Canada (between 5 ft 4 in and 5 ft 7 in or 163–170 cm), but closer to normal in Southern China, which is the land of both their ancestors and the lion dance. Thus they could often get away with what Noah acknowledged as cheating by putting their feet wide apart (i.e., without actually sinking too deeply into their horse stances). At 5 ft 10 in or 178 cm, I am a bit taller than average in Canada, so I had the extra burden of having to keep a low stance as well as hunching my torso forward in order to keep the lion from looking too tall for the normative standard. Early on in training, the physical demands of maintaining this posture felt like a

²⁰ The first or foundational choreographed kung fu form in Hong Luck's curriculum has varied over time.

handicap and made everything more tiring. In the end, however, my body grew accustomed to it, which has improved not only my dancing, but also my kung fu. I have grown to be comfortable in this deep, wide stance and, in the process, have been forced to develop extra strength, endurance, and efficiency, which often comes in handy in situations where cheating is not an option. Luigi, on the other hand, began to struggle with the lion dance body position required of him as he grew in height; his foundation did not receive enough attention when he was shorter, which was exacerbated by him eventually dropping out of martial arts training in favour of lion dancing.

The way of using the upper body appears more dissimilar between kung fu and lion dance because of the requirements imposed by using the mask as an apparatus. Nonetheless, Hong Luck's characteristic lion movement is still aggressive looking because of its sharp abruptness that draws on a martial habitus to execute what Noah calls *popping* or *jerking*. This is achieved by making short, punch-like gestures that pop the head forwards, only to be stopped by the back of the mask slamming into the performers neck and shoulders. Jerking typically occurs during the walking sections of a dance. The violence of this movement helps to animate the lion by causing its fur, eyes, and pompoms to shake, but I have often ended up with scratches and bruises across my upper back, despite the padding built into the lion head. As an example to aspire to, Noah told us about one of the top lion dancers, with whom he used to train, who earned the nickname “Guns” after a performance where his popping actually destroyed the mask with its vigour. The level of aggression embodied in this style is a distinctive specialty of Hong Luck's lion dance and brings a martial flavour to performance that is often lacking

in other groups, especially those who do not practise kung fu (i.e., competition lion dancers).

Lion dance draws on not only the physical stances and martial dispositions of kung fu, but also the synchronization skills implicit in the beginner class. For many Hong Kong students, training at the club is their first exposure to music and dance. Following the teacher's counting in beginner kung fu class therefore functions as basic training in not only martial arts, but also in rhythm. This was illuminated in the winter of 2013 when a new student, whom I will call Theodore, was allowed to join the lion dance class. Quang had approved his stances, but Theodore was apparently still having difficulty with basic synching. Noah had gone away to university in another province, so David had shouldered the teaching duties. Theodore seemed unable to adequately match the timing of his movements to the vocables, much to his new teacher's chagrin.

This synchronization problem was evident right from the beginning of the traditional routine where the lion is supposed to look around while blinking its eyes and chomping the mouth in time with a simple accelerating pulse played on the drum. David had me demonstrate the movement while he said the vocables, then told the new student to mimic me. Try as he might, Theodore could not match the empty-hand lion gestures to the rhythm. I attempted to help by exaggerating my movements and making clear that he needed to imagine one hand was pulling the string that blinks the eyes, while the other was working the mouth, and that both moved together in time with the vocables. David said the rhythm again with increased enunciation, "Chek. Dooooom chek. Dooooom chek. Dooooom chek. Dom chek. Chek. Chk, chk-ck-kk," but Theodore continued to move

haphazardly and seemingly without regard for the beat. After class, David told me that this would-be lion dance apprentice was not ready and needed to go back to beginner kung fu class for remedial training. I asked why, considering that Theodore had an excellent horse stance. Was moving in time with the beat a kung fu skill, rather than a question of dance ability or musicianship? David exasperatedly replied, "YES!"

Hong Luck's Percussion: Dancers Becomes Musicians

As my classmates and I gradually made progress with the traditional lion dance routine, we also started to play the percussion. We began with cymbals, as do all novices, because these are considered the easiest instrument, both in terms of technique and rhythm, followed by the gong. This again requires basic sync ability and, at first, we were simply instructed to follow the beat of the drum. We started by playing a steady stream of quarter notes, broken only by rests when the drummer paused or played pick-ups. Shortly thereafter, we learned to reserve quarter notes for walking, to switch to a repeating motif of quarter followed by two eighths for the head-up beat, and to double the drum rhythm—albeit more simply—for other sections, such as the *saam sing*. The gong rhythms are the same as the cymbals for the head-up and *saam sing*, but during walking get to play a part that interlocks with some of the drum patterns and consists of: quarter rest, two eighths, quarter rest, and quarter note (see the transcription in Figure 16).

$\bullet = 180$
basic walking

Drum *f*

Gong *mf*

Cymbals *mf*

head up

Drum *ff*

Gong *f*

Cymbals *f*

Figure 16: ensemble walking and head-up beats

Most of this learning is accomplished not by being coached on the instruments, but rather by doing it. As students, we watched the drummer for cues, listened to more advanced players during performances, and drew on the embodied knowledge acquired from lion dancing. When Noah, or the other drummers, did teach us novices about cymbal playing, it usually came in the form of a correction after hearing a mistake or something that could be improved on. This on-the-job training in cymbal playing is also sometimes extended to Hong Luck members who have not learned the lion dance, but have been around long enough to pick up a general feel for the rhythms. In my case, I got a fast track because of my musical background and expressed interest in the percussion, which led to me being invited to help out on cymbals at a couple of gigs while I was still proving myself in beginner class and had not yet joined the lion dance group.

The role of the gong and cymbals in the ensemble are slightly different, although both are subordinate to the drum. If there are extra musicians available, they will take up a set of cymbals, but there is usually only one gong.²¹ Due to the fact that the gong part is not doubled, there is more room for variation on that instrument than there is in a group of cymbal players who are trying to play together. David, for example, has a number of syncopated variations that almost resemble West African bell patterns or the Afro-Cuban *clave*. When I asked him about their origin, he vaguely suggested he must have heard them somewhere. I later discovered there was another senior member who was decreasing his activity at the club when I joined, but who also played more complex gong patterns. Several years later, David showed me some YouTube videos of a group in Hong Kong who use syncopated rhythms similar to the ones he likes, but these are played in unison on both gongs and cymbals.²² Generally speaking, however, these more complex patterns appear to be uncommon in traditional *Futsan* lion dance percussion music, which tend towards straightforward accompaniment. Even at that, many Hong Luck members stick with cymbals because they have a hard time with the way the gong and drum part work together during some versions of the walking beat.

Although the gong part is more challenging and may allow more musical freedom, it turns out that the cymbals are a more essential component of the ensemble. This is not only because the cymbals are easier to play, but also because of their sonic characteristics. I discovered this when we were shorthanded for a gig one night and Noah

²¹ The only exception to this that I have observed came during Hong Luck's fiftieth anniversary banquet, when a tiny handheld gong was brought out from storage to complement the usual hanging gong.

²² http://youtu.be/9iaPxsHu2_E?t=2m5s

had to choose between cymbals or gong. He opted for cymbals and explained that they are louder and fill out the sound more, which speaks to their bright, full timbre versus the gong's slightly mellower tone colour. Noah's choice coincides with what I have seen from other groups, such as Northern Leg Southern Fist, who often perform without a gong and instead use two different types of cymbals. This also speaks to the performance practice of the two instruments. Cymbals are usually left to ring, except when the whole ensemble pauses and they are pressed together, then muted against the performer's chest. In contrast, the gong is typically played with the left hand touching the inside to hold it steady and half-mute the sound, but also regularly fully muted to create a more defined envelope or rests. These differences create a contrast in the texture of the music that helps to differentiate the two metalophones using duration. They also occupy slightly different frequency ranges, with the cymbals being higher and wider than the gong. In an interesting opposition to the typical hierarchy of many types of music, the lowest pitched instrument in the ensemble, the drum, plays lead.

So You Want To Be a Drummer: Putting It All into Practice

At Hong Luck's fiftieth anniversary banquet in 2011, I had the opportunity to sit next to Frank Ng, the club's master drummer, and soak up some of his wisdom. He is one of the group's original members, but no longer regularly participates because of the onset of Parkinson's disease. Seeing him shuffle into the club earlier that day with shaking hands and a slightly slack mouth, no one expected him to do any drumming. When he stood in front of Guan Yu's altar and picked up the drumsticks to play for the first lion dance of

the day, however, he was transformed from a weak, old man to a powerful warrior-musician. His performance was authoritative and seemed to come from somewhere deep within him that had remained impervious to the ravages of disease. It may not have been as loud or fast as it used to be, but Frank nonetheless held forth masterfully. At the banquet that evening, I asked him about his martial arts background, to which he replied that he began practising kung fu at Hong Luck when he came to Canada at the age of eighteen, but that he had long been exposed to lion dance in his native Taishan village. David was sitting across the large, round communal table and asked Frank for some pointers on drumming. His reply was brief, but neatly summed up the traditional approach to learning this music: "everyone plays different... (you) hear it in everyday life and then just play it."

As with the coaching I received from Master Paul Chan, Frank's dictum was easier said than done. Part of the problem was figuring out what to practice when everyone is supposed to play differently. After we had been having lion dance class for six months or so, Noah let us try our hands at the drum. Mario, Luigi, and I did not do very well, probably because we lacked sufficient experience to have embodied the rhythms. Noah helped us out by demonstrating a basic walking beat, which we repeated *ad nauseum* in a very uncharacteristic way (i.e., everyone the same and without variation). Most of our lion class was still spent dancing, but we would often get some time at the end to work on the instruments. Usually this would be cymbals and gong; it would be another half year before we would begin drumming in earnest. In the meantime,

we practised the drum infrequently and played whatever we could remember or figure out for ourselves.

In the fall of 2009, we had been lion dancing for almost a year and had nearly finished learning the traditional routine. Noah had recently left for university and David, who had much better drumming skills, was teaching the class. By dint of having been more fully steeped in the rhythms and some ludic messing around on the drum, our first faltering attempts had unsystematically progressed to being able to hack out of some of the basic beats. This was truer of Luigi and I, because Mario showed little interest in—or aptitude for—drumming. For some of the specific rhythms in the traditional routine, the vocables make them abundantly clear and variation is minimal. Translating the embodied knowledge acquired through dancing into drumming for these is thus not too difficult. For other rhythms, however, variation and ornamentation are the name of the game, such as the walking beat or the *saam sing*, which are key patterns for parades and performances. A repertoire of versions and the ability to embellish are acquired more slowly and require the personal interpretation alluded to by Frank. Being able to play an approximation of these rhythms does not by any stretch of the imagination mean we were doing it well. In fact, David found our skills to be in such a sorry state that he decided to help us, although he often repeated that no one taught him and he did not know how to teach. Towards the end of class, we would all take turns dutifully pounding away on the drum as our teacher watched, listened, and corrected mistakes or gave advice.

As with so many things in Chinese culture, there is a four-character idiom to cover this phenomenon. *Throw tiles collect jade* (拋磚引玉) means trying to figure things

out on one's own and being rewarded with guidance.²³ This is the general approach for not only learning to drum, but also participation in the advanced kung fu class, where senior students practise and practise, until the master gets up from his chair at the back to scold them. David sometimes gave us formal instruction on the drum, but still usually proceeded by just giving us the opportunity to practise and offering corrections.

Our teacher's commentary often surrounded physical things, rather than musical ones: how to draw on the centred strength of the horse stance and use the arms to generate flexible, kung fu-like power. The methods of standing and moving engrained from martial arts training remain consistent throughout the curriculum, so we were shown how to beat the drum in a way that drew on the transferable dispositions discussed earlier in this chapter. More specifically, David told us to apply sinking into our horse stances as a means of transferring bodyweight into drum strokes. As with punching, the power transfers from the stance by flowing loosely until an abrupt concentration of force that snaps through the final inch as it makes impact. In fact, several seniors have quite literally suggested that, "it's like punching" or even "you have to punch the drum." David has also made corporeal analogies that go the other way. In Master Jin's class, he showed me how he holds a pair of swords the same way he holds a pair of drumsticks: gripping with the thumb, index, and middle fingers while using the ring and pinkie fingers to amplify the whipping motion that travels down from his shoulder, elbow, and wrist. Given that our teacher had no musical training outside Hong Luck, there was an economy

²³ This idiom can also be used in conversation to humbly refer to starting a dialogue with one's own small ideas in order to attract more insightful commentary from others, or in strategy to mean making a gambit.

of vocabulary such that drumming could be explained using language from martial arts—and vice versa.

David attempted to expedite the learning process by showing us some rhythms, variations, and ornaments, though he also seemed somewhat conflicted about not being fully traditional with this pedagogical move. His choice was perhaps linked to the reasons my cohort had the opportunity to start lion dancing after only three months of basic training: the club was short on performers. It also recognized the barriers imposed by leaving students completely to their own devices and facilitated transmission, without entirely formalizing it. David has taught me more about drumming than anyone else, but this teaching was still minimal compared to the amount of class time and energy spent on lion dance.

Despite David's pedagogical concessions, real progress on the drum was learned but not taught because I still needed to throw out a lot of tiles to collect a few pieces of jade. I made an effort to practise on Hong Luck's big drum whenever I could, which was usually when other people were around the club, before and after other classes. I discovered by doing this that other seniors would sometimes come over and, similar to David's method, make comments or give criticisms. This process came to have an important influence on my progress. Even people with little-to-no drumming experience have not hesitated to tell me if something was not right or else was sounding good, which helped to intersubjectively evaluate my efforts. I was lucky to also receive coaching from some seniors who knew how to drum, but did not attend lion dance class. The leader of

Northern Leg Southern Fist, for example, gave me several important tips about how to structure variations on the walking beat and also the placement of ornamentation.

Due to the fact that there is no formal curriculum for learning to drum, tutelage is unsystematic and practising is self-directed. Haphazard pointers come from a variety of people when a student continues to throw out tiles. Luigi was interested in drumming, but ended up only attending lion dance class, performances, and parades. He therefore did not regularly have the wider Hong Luck membership available to him. As a result, he continued to do some things awkwardly that I received corrections on from people other than David and Noah. Learning to drum is thus a social process because the whole group contributes, rather than being solely transmitted by one's direct instructors. It is also a function of *guanxi* when people are more likely to help if there is an established relationship and they know the person is a contributor to the group's wellbeing. Although this chapter is about what happens inside Hong Luck, individual practice is also an indispensable part of learning to drum. David told us that we needed to practise at home, which Luigi and I have both done to positive effect.

During the winter of my stay in Hong Kong (2012), I also observed the tile and jade method while training with the New Asia Kung Fu Society. I had shown them one of my Hong Luck forms as a sort of placement exam and then Master Joe Kwong asked me what I wanted to learn. I replied drumming, to which he agreed, although I was of course still expected to learn their kung fu. After several weeks of adjusting to the class, Master Kwong asked me to play the drum for him so that he could evaluate my level. His first comments focused on my ornaments and he showed me three rudimentary exercises: two

for triplet rolls and one for quintuplets. These types of technique drills remain rare, however, and novice drummers—at Hong Luck or with the New Asian Kung Fu Society—mostly play full rhythm patterns, without breaking them down into components. After a couple months of trying to get on the drum whenever I could, Master Kwong pointed out that I was subtly emphasizing the wrong beats, and I realized I was unconsciously imposing a metric hierarchy of beat emphasis that was not germane to the music. I will return to this point, along with discussion of some of the other tips I received, in the next chapter.

Conclusion

The route to becoming a drummer at the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club is at once clear and murky, especially because there is no fixed or final destination. Quang basically laid the path out for me on my first day, yet Frank's dictum that everyone has to find their own path ensures that the journey is fraught with challenges. My musical motivation for joining Hong Luck was made explicit from the start, but it was quite some time before I was allowed to touch the drum. I did not receive any special privileges or advantage because of my position as a researcher and trained musician, although my cohort and I were told we were lucky that enrolment was down because, in years gone by, there would have been a much longer wait to join lion dance class. My previous background in martial arts helped me to take a running start at training, but despite what (by traditional standards) might be deemed an "accelerated" program, it still took approximately five years before I began to be given opportunities to play the drum for performances. I have

been assured by my seniors that I have experienced a correct, traditional transmission process, and I argue that understanding the importance of all the stages thereof was a key to being able to get up to cruising speed on the path within a relatively short amount of time. My drumming has come to be considered acceptable, and I feel confident enough to write about it, but nonetheless (and more often than not) I have ended up performing the lion dance while more senior, skilled, and experienced people played the drum for gigs.

In this chapter I have described and interpreted my experiences with learning to drum at Hong Luck. As much as possible, I have included observations of my cohort going through the same process, as well as lessons and ideas from our seniors and the elders. In broad strokes the transmission sequence is: martial arts, lion dance, metalophones, and drum. This progression applies universally, but those who are primarily or exclusively interested in lion dance and/or percussion end up doing the bare minimum of kung fu, which involves the basic stances and a beginner's choreographed form. The path of drumming is littered with obstacles, however, that must be overcome through diligent practice and the guidance of people who know the way. While I have focused on what happens inside Hong Luck's premises, becoming a drummer does not end there. When David was helping my fellow classmates and I with our drumming, he suggested that there were things we should be doing outside of the club too; it would be necessary to practise on our own in order to improve our basic skills. He told us that he often used his hands to play Hong Luck's rhythms at home, school, and on public transit. I began doing this too, though I went one step further and bought a miniature lion dance drum that is designed for practising. Luigi also took David's advice and after a few

months began to show a marked improvement in his coordination and timing. There are, of course, many differences between this type of practice and playing the big drum while surveying a situation in order to give signals for a lion dance. Nonetheless, it constitutes an indispensable aspect of the learning process and helps make the beats a part of everyday life.

The concept of paying dues takes on a number of meanings at Hong Luck. At first it is simply the price of tuition and a uniform to start taking classes. Then it becomes the effort put into basic training, especially the horse stance, without which students can never advance. Sinking one's being down into their centre (*daantihn*) and issuing flowing power that abruptly concentrates in the final moment are integral to embodying Chinese culture in a kung fu habitus. These transferable dispositions are linked to a host of other areas, even if philosophy, calligraphy, or world view are not specifically on the Choi Lee Fut/Do Pi syllabus. Performing kung fu in a Chinese way imparts a unique flavour to the movement and ultimately qualifies students to delve deeper into the curriculum. Eventually paying dues incorporates the concept of *guanxi* and involves giving back to the club through chores, performances, teaching, and/or administration.²⁴ For prospective drummers, being an active part of the association is essential for maintaining the relationships and good graces that qualify one to collect ad hoc jade when they throw out tiles.

²⁴ Hong Luck members donate their time to keep the club running and are not remunerated for teaching, administrative, or maintenance duties. The lion dance team, however, each usually receive an honorarium of \$10–\$20 per performance and a free meal after the gig.

In lion class, students are taught movement and vocables together, which they must eventually learn to translate onto the instruments. We even had to be able to say the rhythms while simultaneously performing the movement, which I still find challenging not only because of the required synchronizing, but also because I quickly run out of air to speak with while I am dancing. Despite the difficulty, Noah and David forced us to do this and it has helped engrain those musical patterns into me. Nonetheless, knowing the rhythms and being able to perform them on a drum in an acceptable way are not necessarily the same. The traditional routine is largely codified, but performances can be chaotic, which necessitates watchful awareness from the leader of the percussion ensemble. As Frank told me, good drummers also develop their own way of playing, which exceeds the minimum requirements of the tradition—without transgressing them—and adds elements of personal style.

Drumming requires a deep understanding of the lion dance. This is manifested in not only the ability to cue the correct choreography at the right time with the appropriate rhythm, but also to lead the percussion ensemble and to extend sections through variation and improvisation (when the situation calls for it). Learning to drum is undergirded by training and experience with lion dance, and is shaped by the collective input of the association. On a deeper level, drumming is also grounded in a kung fu habitus, which is the result of gruelling martial arts practice. Both kung fu and lion dance are embedded in Chinese culture such that they are structured by Chineseness and also serve to structure it. Drumming is learned, but not exactly taught, which makes it a prime example of the durability of Bourdieu's concept of habitus and the economical transferability of its

practical logic. The dispositions engrained through training in lion dance and kung fu supply the necessary physical, musical, social, and cultural material to learn how to drum. The student, however, is responsible for taking his or her own steps on the path to drumming.

Now that I have provided an overview of the transmission process that prepares an apprentice to become a drummer, I will proceed in the next chapter to discuss what things look like once one has crossed the threshold. If learning to drum involves throwing tiles and collecting fragments of jade from various sources, then I now need to show how these pieces form a mosaic in the musical phenomenon. Master Jin Chan has delineated the key areas that make up the experience of lion dance, which will be used to structure my interpretation. I will also engage with Hong Luck's martial arts and music from a more interdisciplinary perspective by considering the rhythm of combat.

Chapter 5

Experiencing Hong Luck's Music: The Rhythm of Combat and Embodied Meanings

Introduction

During Chinese New Year 2013, the Hong Luck lion dance team performed at Toronto's Topcliff Public School and received a reception worthy of famous rock stars. The coordinating teacher told us that most of the students had never seen a lion dance before, but that they had been introduced to Chinese New Year customs in their classes. I was playing the lion head that day and was amazed at the sheer loudness of the children's reaction. They were packed into the gymnasium, seated on the floor, and waiting impatiently; when I made my entrance, the students of Topcliff momentarily overpowered the percussion instruments with their cries of excitement, yells of amazement, and, particularly among the youngest of them, screams of fright. Many of the children were also vigorously waving small lion head decorations made from paper stencils affixed to plastic drinking straws. Their reaction was remarkable, and I have rarely had such a demonstrative audience at any point in my musical or martial arts career.

After the performance, the lion dance crew returned to Chinatown and had a meal together compliments of Hong Luck (as is the post-gig custom), during which I remarked on the raucous reception we had just received. Noah agreed that the children's energetic reaction was second-to-none, but he brushed it off as being due mostly to the novelty of the performance. I followed up by asking who are the most appreciative audiences for lion dance, particularly with regards to the percussion. Noah suggested that most

people—including the students at Topcliff—just hear "noise," but that kung fu and lion dance practitioners actually know what the rhythms mean. After a moment of thought, Noah further allowed that older folks, who are involved with the tradition over a lifetime, also develop a good understanding through their long-term experience. He then explained that the meanings he was referring to lay in knowing how movement and rhythm work together so that one could hear the beats and know what the lion might be doing—even if they could not actually see the lion dancers. That discussion provided the inspiration for this chapter, which will work through the question of meaning in the experience of Hong Luck's music using schemata rooted in the body. Noah's ideas speak to the embodied knowledge required to appreciate Hong Luck's percussion and are widely shared around the club. They also parallel growing scholarly interest in the body as a site of sense, logic, and significance. I will first frame this discussion with a short literature review of embodiment theory, before outlining how the rest of the chapter will unfold.

Research on the body/embodiment in the humanities and social sciences is not exactly new (e.g., Mauss 1934, Merleau-Ponty 2002 [1942]), but it has been gaining increasing prominence in recent years. The historically slow growth in this area can be at least partially attributed to the dominance of Cartesian dualism in Western thought: body/mind, subject/object, emotion/reason, and self/other (Csordas 1990; Johnson 1987; Walker 2000). The philosophical tradition of Descartes (trans. 1931) privileges objectivism and abstract thinking expressed in propositional language while downplaying the value of embodied knowledge as subjective and inferior. In Eastern thought, however, Buddhist theory maintains that the discursive intellect (i.e., the mind) is one of the six

senses, along with vision, taste, touch, smell, and hearing, and is therefore not separable from the subjectivities of the body (Kapleau 1965:13, 101). This is important for Hong Luck, with its kung fu tradition being linked to Buddhism through Shaolin Temple origins, and my consultants have consistently directed my research back to physical training as the path to understanding.

Scholars have taken a variety of approaches to embodiment, some of which I will briefly summarize here. In an article titled “Embodiment as a Paradigm for Anthropology,” Thomas Csordas (1990) collapses the Cartesian dichotomy by grounding the existence of culture in the body. To do so, he draws on Merleau-Ponty's concept of pre-objective (but not pre-cultural) perception and Bourdieu's logic of practice as embodied in the habitus. In this way, the body takes its place as the root of culture because it determines how—and thereby what—we perceive, all of which is always already shaped by our existence as social beings. In a parallel, but slightly divergent vein, philosopher Mark Johnson (1987) locates the cognitive ground of culture in the body. David Lidov's semiotics are worked out in terms of musical gestures where, "Music is significant only if we identify perceived sonorous motion with somatic experience" (1987:70). This identification of musical movement is also found in Thomas Clifton's (1983) phenomenology of music, and more recently by Jörgen Torp (2013), who suggests that it would make sense to use common terms in the study of both music and dance. As Margaret Walker remarks, "some of the clearest support for an embodied theory of music cognition and meaning comes not from musicologists, music philosophers or psychologists, but from dance scholars" (1990:38; for an example, see Hahn 2007:115-

133). I would argue that music scholars who engage with dance and/or martial arts as part of their research are also making important contributions to this area (Chernoff 1979; Downey 2002; Friedson 1996; Wrazen 2010; Yao 1990).

In this chapter, I engage with Noah's ideas about rhythmic meaning in the appreciation of Hong Luck's musical tradition by thinking through the body as the ground of cognition. This continues the pattern of the last three chapters by tightening the discussion's focus from the broad and external to the narrow and internal. Having covered socio-historical context, public performance, and training inside the club, I have established a knowledge base to support engagement with the corporeal cognition of rhythm and the experience of the percussion music used to accompany both lion dance and kung fu demos. The ethnographic vignettes in this section continue to draw on my own embodied knowledge as a regular performer at Hong Luck and are more extensive than in previous chapters. I use a phenomenological attitude to reveal these practices as given in experience. This is not, however, a purely subjective interpretation because the elders and seniors at Hong Luck have shaped my corporeal understanding with their regular evaluations and thus render my descriptions intersubjective. I also ground the discussion in historical and contemporary writing about martial arts and rhythm. Due to its length, this chapter is sub-divided into two sections. In the first, I will lay out a foundation of embodiment theory and method, and then I will analyze the club's common basis for its rhythmic practices as one that is fundamentally martial, with specific attention to the discourses of (a)synchronicity engrained through training. In the second

section, I will apply a performer's perspective to the interpretation of kung fu demos, lion dance, and drumming.

PART I

Embodied Meaning: Entrainment Schema and Cognitive Metaphor

The work of Mark Johnson (1987) on embodied cognition has been cited favourably by a number of music scholars (McLary 1994; Rice 2003; Zbikowski 2004), used as the basis for extended analysis by others (Echard 1999; Walser 1991), and will undergird much of this chapter. His work is often classified as cognitive semantics; he sees the body as the basis of culture because it provides the primary experiences of meaning that support processes of perception, judgment, and reasoning. From this perspective, he argues that the body is in the mind. Johnson calls the primary categories of embodied knowledge *image schemata*, which are pre-linguistic, pre-conceptual structures that connect up—and give meaning—to a host of similar experiences. A schema is necessarily abstract and general so that it can be attached to other more concrete and specific aspects of existence through metaphor. Used in this way, the word *metaphor* is not intended in the rhetorical or literary sense, but rather as a fundamental way of understanding one area of experience through another. This metaphorical approach is found in Steven Feld's (1990) work on the articulation of social identity through aesthetics among the Kaluli and John Miller Chernoff's (1979) linkage between rhythm and social values in Africa. Johnson explains:

in order for us to have meaningful, connected experiences that we can comprehend and reason about, there must be pattern and order to our actions, perceptions, and conceptions. *A schema is a recurrent pattern, shape, and regularity in, or of, these ongoing ordering activities.* These

patterns emerge as meaningful structures for us chiefly at the level of our bodily movements through space, our manipulation of objects, and our perceptual interactions. (*italics in original*, 1987:29)

One of Johnson's main examples is the *force* schema, which has a number of gestalt structures that arise from it. Without a deep understanding of *force*, we would not get very far as organisms because it is basic to gravity, locomotion, and object manipulation, among many other things. Johnson goes on to provide examples to support his argument for embodied meaning by focusing on a particular type of *force* schema. The different areas of experience that the *compulsive force* schema allows us to cognize through metaphor include: the perception of an airplane being propelled by its jets, a theoretical understanding of tectonic plates under the Earth's surface, and social pressure to join the local Parent/Teacher Association (1987:2). He has also written on embodied schemata and cognitive metaphor in music (1997), with a call for scholars to consider how patterns of musical meaning and inference are rooted in corporeal logic. Robert Walser provides an excellent summary of Johnson's thinking, as well as an example of how one might apply the *force* schema to music by interpreting perceptions of power in the overdrive of heavy metal guitar distortion:

To summarize, distortion is perceived as powerful in contemporary popular music because our socially-guided bodily experiences with distortion lead us to perceive it that way. Through disparate experiences with our own voices and the electronic devices that surround us, we recognize the image schema of force in the timbral quality of distortion. (1991:125)

I also wish to attend to the way culturally specific systems of physical cultivation inscribe the body with ideas. Dance scholar Susan Leigh Foster argues that corporeal existence is a function of how bodies are positioned in space and moved in time. She

builds on this proposition by suggesting that instruction in bodily arts like dance, sport, and etiquette inculcates a practice's essential discourses. These types of corporeal apprenticeship are highly repetitive, over long periods of time, and thus deeply engrain a set of values and beliefs into the embodied dispositions of learners. Foster writes that, "practical participation of a body in any of these disciplines makes of it a body-of-ideas" (1997:236), and her methodology involves studying training processes in order to reveal the types of bodily consciousness they cultivate. She then applies these realizations to specific moments by situating acquired corporeal awareness in action. While Foster does not reference them, her ideas about training complement Bourdieu's habitus and Johnson's image schema. Drawing on Johnson's concept of the body in the mind as the root of meaning, I will apply Foster's method to Hong Luck's practices in order to investigate the ways that meaning is inscribed on the body. Approached this way, training becomes a window into how the formation of corporeal consciousness connects image schemata and culture.

Embodiment theory is useful for explaining Hong Luck's practices but there could nonetheless remain a gap of understanding for those who have never participated. Drawing on epistemological distinctions between the understandings of insider versus outsider or emic versus etic, Geertz problematized ethnographers trying to study their consultants' experience when he wrote,

The ethnographer does not, and, in my opinion, largely cannot, perceive what his informants perceive. What he perceives, and that uncertainly enough, is what they perceive "with"—or "by means of," or "through" ... or whatever the word should be. (1983:58)

Downey cites Geertz as inspiration to focus not on what capoeira adepts hear in their music, but rather what they hear with, by means of, or through i.e., the skilled body (2002:288). While softening the insider/outsider dichotomy by drawing on his own experience as a *capoeirista*, Downey's approach is meant to help non-practitioners understand the music. This method takes into consideration that, even if an ethnographer might get close to the emic experience through participation, readers still need other tools to help them understand. Notwithstanding research in neurobiology that could be relevant to explaining what people experience (e.g., Calvo-Merino et al. 2005; Brown, Martinez, and Parsons 2006), and Judith Becker's (2009) example of how to use empirical methods in the study of music, I am focusing my efforts on performance ethnography, phenomenology, and interpretive metaphor.

Musicologist Mark Reybrouck (2001) has drawn on Johnson and Lidov to discuss issues pertinent to Noah's split between lion dancers' and audiences' appreciation of Hong Luck's drumming. Reybrouck uses the term *sensorimotor* when referring to the direct experience of participation in music making, but suggests that a mental understanding grounded in bodily schemata could be called *ideomotor*. He argues that when a listener is capable of not only reacting to music, but also predicting activity, then their cognition is functioning at the interface of mind and body.¹ Drawing on Reybrouck's dichotomy, it appears that Noah's informed audiences appear to be having an ideomotor experience, while practitioners have a sensorimotor one. That is to say a mental understanding built

¹ Reybrouck does not explicitly define *mind*, but uses it in the sense of the intellectual faculty capable of thinking, reasoning, judging, and understanding. From his reliance on Johnson's cognitive semantics, it is clear that he does not separate mind and body in the construction of meaning, but rather looks at their interdependence. He also discusses neuroscience, however, and appears to localize cognitive processes in the brain.

on physical possibilities and meanings allows both practitioners and listeners to embody the ideas of what they perceive, albeit in slightly different ways. To this end, I will look at the key components of Hong Luck's lion dance training process to uncover the body-of-ideas that shapes performance and provides a framework for ideomotor cognition. This will help me to explain the confluence of elements that practitioners perceive with, by means of, or through in order to bridge the gap between expert and non-expert capabilities.

At the beginning of my undergraduate studies, Steven Otto introduced me to the concept of *entrainment*, although it was not until some years later that I found published work in music on this phenomenon.² In a paper on the application of the entrainment concept in ethnomusicology, Clayton, Sager, and Will defined it as, "a phenomenon in which two or more independent rhythmic processes synchronize with each other," (2004:1–2). This definition includes the caveat that one system of vibration must not be caused by the other, as in the case of resonance. Phillips-Silver, Aktipis, and Bryant give an even broader definition while considering the basis and function of rhythmically coordinated movement in dance and music: "spatiotemporal coordination resulting from rhythmic responsiveness to a perceived rhythmic signal" (2010:3). Their framework is important for a consideration of entrainment in martial arts because it extends to non-pulse-based rhythms, such as language and gesture; fighting is rhythmic, but can lack a steady beat. Tying entrainment back to the question of musical significance, Rebecca

² Otto's point of view was somewhat metaphysical in that it positioned music as the sonic manifestation of the order of the cosmos, and his theory has had an admittedly profound effect on me. He suggested that life, the universe, and everything are energy, and thus in constant vibrating oscillation, so harmony—as a universal ideal—results from entrainment on levels from the sub-atomic through to the interstellar.

Sager looks at *nonreferential meanings*, which are “those emotional, physiological, or cognitive responses that do not necessarily involve symbolic meanings” (2012:32). More specifically, she looks at musical entrainment as a means of establishing ways of being in time that are capable of negotiating and reorganizing social relationships through transcendent experience.³ This meaning of music thus does not refer to specific things or ideas, but rather “relies upon patterned sound or movement to orient the person within time as well as within their physical and social surrounding” (2012:32).

I contend that entrainment—broadly conceived—provides a useful framework for thinking about not only embodied musical meaning, but also martial arts. Drawing on Johnson’s cognitive semantics, entrainment can be treated as an image schema whose embodiment undergirds a wide variety of metaphorical meanings, from how we understand the back and forth of a good conversation to our conception of the moon’s pull on the tides. We experience it as babies when our caregivers sing to us and gently rock us to entrain our consciousness into sleep or when we hold their hands and must adjust our walking pace to keep up with them. We learn to walk on our own, and eventually to run, which requires internally coordinating the rhythms of our upper and lower limbs. The daily cycles of light and dark entrain our circadian rhythms, while the cycles of clocks structure our working lives. We also observe entrainment all around us in the changing seasons’ impact on the pace of life. The body-of-ideas engrained by Hong Luck’s training regime is deeply invested with martial discourses of entrainment, which thus shapes the

³ There are interesting parallels between Sager’s *nonreferential meanings* and Suzel Reily’s (2002) idea of *enchantment*, although the latter integrates her analysis of the experience of participatory music making with dense symbolism in Brazilian *folia de reis* processions.

meaning of both kung fu and lion dance. Within this martial framework, drumming may not be “music” at all, but rather an extension of kung fu, which I will explain in the next section.

Sonic Kung Fu: When Percussion Does Not Make “Music”

As I explained in the last chapter, traditional kung fu is the first and most essential practice at Hong Luck. It thus acts as the primary frame of reference for the club's other arts and integrates both lion dance and percussion music into martial discourse. Long-term, intensive training at Hong Luck has revealed an approach to rhythm that is both military, in the sense of drilling and performing movement in time together, and combative, as when entrainment is manipulated in attack and defence. In fact, the training methods inculcate embodied martial meanings to such an extent that they supersede the perceived musicality of the percussion instruments. In this section, I will describe my consultants' explicit conceptualization of their music as an extension of kung fu.

Several drummers have expressed opinions suggesting that the loud percussion used to accompany lion dance and kung fu is not music, per se. My Wing Chun instructor, Master Henry Lo, seemed genuinely confused when I told him that I was planning on researching Chinese gong and drum music for my PhD. He told me it was “just” drumming and not really music at all, to which he added that it was missing melody. Similarly, one of Hong Luck's senior drummers told me that he does not consider himself a musician or capable of playing a musical instrument because he “only” knows how to drum. Both these evaluations imply that Hong Luck's percussion is

different from other types of music; in many ways, it is a department of the martial arts. Both Quang and the leader of NLSF have told me that drumming is considered one of the most advanced—if not the highest level—skills at the club because kung fu and lion dance training are both pre-requisites for it. To be a good drummer requires such an intimate knowledge of the other practices that musical ability alone would be insufficient; it is therefore a sonic embodiment of *kung fu* (功夫) in both the literal sense of skill achieved through hard work over time and the colloquial meaning of martial arts. The opinions of my consultants obviously require careful consideration.

There is some precedent for treating this type of percussion as a martial arts skill. In the introduction to this dissertation, I referenced Sun Tzu's discussion of gong and drum signals in the sixth-century BCE treatise, *The Art of War*. In addition to the use of these instruments for directing troop movements and rousing the energy of soldiers, an ancient commentator on the text named Wang Xi suggested that percussion was also used offensively to "startle their perceptions and make them fear your awesome martial power," which supports Master Sun claiming it can "take away the heart of their generals" (trans. Cleary 2003:125). Notably, the Chinese text (Wing 1988:98) does not contain the word *music* (音樂) in this section, and instead simply uses the names of the instruments, *gong* (鑼) and *drum* (鼓). In contrast, a venerable Chinese encyclopaedia compiled in 239 BCE called *The Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü Buwei* (呂氏春秋) did discuss music and defined it as "the harmony between Heaven and Earth, and the perfect blend of Yin and Yang" (trans. Knoblock and Riegel 2000:138). This definition further circumscribed music as not only pleasurable, but also a type of ritual that was both

product and producer of cosmic order in China. These annals went on to suggest that powerful drumming, like Hong Luck's, is best kept out of music because "the more extravagant the music, the gloomier are the people, the more disordered the state, and the more debased its ruler" (trans. Knoblock and Riegel 2000:140). This does not mean that percussion was forbidden, but rather that it was restricted in its function and use. The following passage was written before lion dancing, Choi Lee Fut, or Do Pi existed, but it could have been describing a Hong Luck performance:

If its tones are made by instruments of wood and skin, their sound is like the sound of rumbling thunder. If its tones are made by instruments of metal and stone, their sound is like the sound of claps of thunder. If its tones are made by instruments of string and bamboo or by singers and dancers, their sound is like the loud shouting of a crowd. If these sounds are employed to shock the mental energies, startle the ears and eyes, and agitate the inborn nature, it is permissible. (trans. Knoblock and Riegel 2000:140)

In a main stylistic dichotomy of traditional Chinese music between *literary* (文) and *martial* (武) (Jones 1995:104), the drumming used to accompany lion dance and kung fu is so far to the latter pole that some of my consultants and several ancient authors might not consider it to be music at all. Nonetheless, throughout this dissertation I use the word *music* when referring to the sound of Hong Luck's gong and drum ensemble, which draws on the English word's most inclusive meaning. I follow Blacking in this, who considered the purview of ethnomusicology to be "humanly organized sound" (1973:3–31). Some Hong Luck members also casually refer to the sound of their percussion as *music*, though this is less common than simply calling it *beats* or *drumming*. Playing drums, gongs, and cymbals is definitely a form of musicking (Small 1998), but culturally

this must be differentiated from the pleasurable sounds that harmonize Heaven and Earth described in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. More related to Sun Tzu's military percussion, Hong Luck's rhythms are used to organize lion dance and energize performances of kung fu, which put them on the extreme end of the martial/literary stylistic dichotomy. Conceiving of Hong Luck's drumming in this way respects how my consultants hear it as a sonic martial arts skill, while still recognizing the inherent musicality of the practice.

The conceptualization of music varies widely around the world, and so this issue is not confined to China or kung fu. In writing about the music concept, Bruno Nettl suggested that ethnomusicologists may be a bit gluttonous because they "as a group take a broad view, accepting everything conceivable into their scope of study" (2005:25). He goes on to write that this inclusivity is part of an effort to avoid ethnocentrism, but that it is only partially successful. The Western background of ethno-MUSIC-ology means that disciplinary understandings will not always line up with definitions in other languages and cultures. Even within the West, different subcultures may have other concepts of what constitutes music and therefore who is a musician. When I studied jazz as an undergrad, percussionists were frequently the butt of jokes like, "what do you call someone who hangs around with musicians? A drummer."

Ethnomusicologists sometimes need to perform a delicate balancing act in regards to incongruity between cultural concepts of music, which I will illustrate with a few examples. The fraught position of musical activity in Muslim cultures leads to a hierarchy where Quranic cantillation is privileged by not being considered music, which shelters it

from being forbidden under Islamic law (al Faruqi 1985). Nonetheless, this type of religious singing can safely be described musically (al Faruqi 1978). Similarly, the Inuit throat-game *katajjaq* is played as a vocal competition, but scholars have transcribed it in music notation and linked it to other circumpolar shamanic song traditions (Nattiez 1999).⁴ In a move that shows a keen awareness of the need to make space for native concepts within the linguistic limitations of English language scholarship, John Chernoff writes:

In African music, it is the listener or dancer who has to supply the beat: the listener must be *actively engaged* in making sense of the music; the music itself does not become the concentrated focus of an event, as at a concert. It is for this fundamental reason that African music should not be studied out of its context or as “music”: the African orchestra is not complete without a participant on the other side. The full drum ensemble is an accompaniment, a music-to-find-the-beat-by. (*italics in original*, 1979:50)

In writing about Hong Luck’s percussion as music I am not negating it as martial arts drumming, but rather am holding both concepts in a dynamic interpretation that is greater than the sum of its parts. Furthermore, I am also arguing for experiencing kung fu from a musical perspective because of the descriptive possibilities that this approach opens up, although I do not go so far as to claim that kung fu is actually music.

Combative Rhythms: Training a Martial Body-of-Ideas

In the last chapter, I described how beginners develop basic synchronization skills, which I will now return to in order to recast it in the *martial entrainment* schema. When Quang

⁴ Nattiez uses transcriptions from two other scholars (Nicole Beaudry and Denise Harvey) in his article.

and the other instructors drill their novices on basic strikes, blocks, and footwork, the teacher counts out loud and the pupils entrain their movement to the vocal stimulus. Synchronization is important here and students are admonished if they end up ahead or behind the pulse set by the leader. This basic ability to entrain one's movement to an external source ends up being of primary importance for those who go on to lion dance training. It is just as key for self-defence. Partner drills are limited in beginner's class, in part because they can be dangerous when students are still developing the ability to entrain to not only an auditory stimulus, but also visual and/or kinaesthetic ones. In cooperative attack and defence practice, each strike must be met with a homo-rhythmic block or evasion, which is also characteristic of applying successful defence skills in a real-life situation. Spatial and rhythmic synchronization thus undergirds students' success in partner drills where there is a risk of being struck. Through training in kung fu, the *entrainment* schema is metaphorically extended to the martial conceptualization of self-protection from physical violence.

Beginner class also features groupings of techniques into short combinations and, eventually, into longer choreographed *forms* (套路). In either case, teachers initially count each movement individually, which efficiently organizes the use of space for training groups of people and continues to build entrainment skills. Once students become more familiar with the movements, however, instructors use only one verbal count per combination of basics or short section of a choreographed form. At that point, the learners start together, are no longer expected to stay in sync within a combo, and then restart in time with each other on the teacher's next count. Depending on peoples'

abilities and interpretations of the movement, there can be a high degree of asynchronicity inside the larger entrainment structure. For basic training, the cycle of order and chaos is quite regular because each set of techniques is drilled repeatedly; the teacher's counting determines the points where students entrain with each other, and even though they naturally tend to become rhythmically independent inside combinations, the time interval is fairly steady for regrouping on the next count. This situation becomes increasingly complex in choreographed forms because each section of movement is different from the next, and they are of unequal length. The resulting constant-yet-erratic cycling between synchronicity and asynchronicity is characteristic of a *martial entrainment* schema, which becomes especially apparent for students who pursue the opportunities Hong Luck offers for training fighting applications more intensively through kickboxing.

As with lion dance, a solid foundation in traditional kung fu basics is the prerequisite for joining the sparring class. The coach for that session is Adrian Balça, who as previously mentioned is a gold medallist in Canadian national *sanshou/sanda* Chinese kickboxing competition, but also has a wealth of experience with self-defence on the street. Now in his late thirties, he emigrated from Romania as a young boy and was bullied by his classmates for being a foreigner with poor English skills. Adrian was no pushover, however, and fought back, which is part of the reason he joined Hong Luck: he was looking to improve his fighting abilities. Master Paul Chan recognized the all-too-familiar pattern of discrimination and took this new Canadian under his wing. He showed Adrian the rougher side of Hong Luck's kung fu, adding skill to the youngster's already

pugnacious disposition. The legacy of the club's early, more violent, years is preserved in the sparring class, where students focus on practical applications of martial arts rather than holding basic stances or performing choreographed forms. Nonetheless, Adrian is strict about ensuring that new trainees have proved themselves in beginner class, and have the approval of a teacher familiar with their abilities, before he allows them to join his group.

Notwithstanding the name, the "sparring" classes I attended rarely involved much free-fighting. Instead, they featured a self-directed warm-up followed by shadowboxing while facing the mirrors, and then went on to practical applications of striking, grappling, and defence. We hit handheld focus pads for accuracy, pounded on the heavy sandbags for power, and drilled semi-cooperative partner exercises for technique. Much less frequently, we donned protective gear and engaged in light-contact free-sparring, although I am told that in the old days the sessions were much more frequent and intense. My classmates and I were not interested in kickboxing competitively, nor were any of us facing the regular threat of violence on the street, so we lacked the motivation to risk unnecessary injury in class. Nonetheless, bruises, scrapes, and minor sprains were more normal in sparring class than Hong Luck's other sessions. Adrian also provided more freedom for exploring the applications of kung fu because his curriculum included the sum total of the club's techniques. I took advantage of the opportunity to investigate the rhythm of combat, which later opened up important avenues for thinking about the meanings of Hong Luck's music when it is used to accompany kung fu demonstrations.

As compared to the consistent entrainment of beginner class, the timing of the group members during sparring training was largely independent. Adrian assigned the techniques that we would work on, but did not usually count them out. This continued the progression from beginner class where students were gradually given more rhythmic freedom as they became familiar with the combinations, and it also parallels the shift in entrainment practice found in other martial arts. In related scholarly work, for examples, Avelina Espinosa and Guillermo Paz y Miño C. (2004, parts I and II) have advocated using a metronomic pulse played on a drum to help structure the synchronization of beginner training in aikido. John Donohue (2000) has remarked that the audible contact of bamboo swords, sound of moving feet, and yells in kendo classes are initially in sync at the start of basic technique training, become disordered during partner drills, and move towards sonic—and martial—chaos in the freestyle practice at the end of a session. For basic techniques, Adrian typically explained first and then set a number of repetitions or amount of time for practice, after which we got to work at our own pace, or with a partner for two-person drills. A combination of sound and movement manifested the rhythm of combat as: strikes hitting targets or being deflected, shuffling footwork, laboured breathing from exertion, and sharp exhaling on contact.

When we were hitting the focus pads, heavy bags, or (lightly) each other, Adrian tended to follow the traditional teaching method of letting us toss out tiles for a while until he offered up a piece of jade, although he was also very thorough in his explanations and was more than happy to answer questions. By mid-2013 I had been in his class for a few months and I became accustomed to modifying my kung fu to more closely match

the needs of practical application. At first this involved getting used to a greater economy of motion: cutting out the platform graces and exaggerated movements found in most choreographed forms, adjusting my footwork to cover distance more effectively, and improving my ability to strike powerfully while allowing the least amount of defensive vulnerability. Eventually Adrian began to help me with more subtle aspects of technique, particularly rhythm. As with most learners studiously drilling the basics, I was apparently throwing combinations of strikes like an automaton: one, two, three, pause, and repeat.

One night, while we were preparing for heavy bag work by wrapping our fists with long strips of cotton fabric to stabilize our bones under our boxing gloves, Adrian came over and told me I needed to start mixing up my striking patterns. He explained that throwing a combination the same way every time quickly becomes easy to predict for an opponent, but that it is neither efficient nor necessary to compensate by learning an ever greater amount of techniques.⁵ Adrian told me to continue working with the same combinations of punches I had been training for the last few months and to start playing with the timing. He then used vocables to speak some examples and, knowing about my research, told me I should be able to work out more rhythmic possibilities for myself. This began a dialogue over several more months of learning, experimentation, and training, during which Adrian encouraged me to express in words the embodied knowledge he possessed and I was acquiring. He also recognized that musical terms might prove particularly helpful in this endeavour.

⁵ Kung fu's arsenal of attack and defence techniques is extensive, but Adrian encouraged us to focus on the more practical aspects. Nonetheless, the range of skills covered in his class far exceeded what could legally be used in a *sanda/sanshou* competition.

The Rhythm of Combat: “Hearing” Martial Arts Using Music

While discussing the poststructuralist tendency to analyze all human experience as text, Jeff Titon proposed "we stand Ricoeur on his head, that meaningful actions be experienced as music, not read as text" (2008 [1997]:28). Around the same time Titon originally wrote this, Simon Frith critiqued reading events as text in favour of close attention to context, and further suggested that postmodernists “have more to learn from a study of popular music than popular music theorists have to learn from postmodernism” (1996:204). Hong Luck's kung fu and lion dance present an opportunity to “stand Ricoeur on his head” and hear the context of events. Thinking about martial arts in musical terms is also one of the things my consultants have been most supportive of, and interested in, as compared to some practitioners’ reticence toward me revealing too much information about the tong system or providing complete transcriptions of their music. From Hong Luck's training floor to the coaching that happens between rounds at the Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC), rhythm is frequently mentioned in combative practices, but rarely explained in much detail.

Just before his death in 1645, an undefeated Japanese samurai named Miyamoto Musashi wrote about rhythm in a series of letters to his student; these were later compiled as *The Book of Five Rings*. This text contains both theoretical and practical advice on the way of the warrior class. Musashi stated, "Victory is achieved in the *Heihō* of conflict by ascertaining the rhythm of each opponent, by attacking with a rhythm not anticipated by

the opponent, and by use of knowledge of the rhythm of the abstract" (1982:25).⁶ He also wrote, "From one thing, know ten thousand things" (1982:21), which is not unlike the idea of a durable habitus and economical transferability of practical logic. The writing of famous martial artist and movie star Bruce Lee (1975:59–67) presents a rare example of a more sustained and practical engagement with the topic of rhythm in combat. Lee's approach to martial arts was eclectic and syncretic, which is reflected in his section on timing by the use of terms drawn from music, Western fencing, and chess. Notwithstanding the idiosyncrasies of his style and an iconoclastic tone, Lee outlines several useful concepts that I will elaborate on below.

Building on my previous work in this area (McGuire 2010), I will now discuss some of the rhythmic aspects of kung fu. Good timing is essential in martial arts, combat sports, and combatives alike, and entrainment undergirds a variety of applications. As previously mentioned, successful defence—whether evasions, deflections, blocks, traps, or sprawls—relies on being able to entrain one's movement to that of the opponent. As a strike or takedown comes in, the defence must be synchronized with the attack in order to escape, parry, absorb, or control it. Seen from the opposite angle, it is important to vary the rhythm of offensive footwork, punches, kicks, knees, elbows, pokes, pushes, grabs, traps, locks, trips, throws, and takedowns because it makes them harder to predict and therefore more difficult to defend against.

As an example, a staple Choi Lee Fut combination of three punches (lead *backfist* [掛捶], rear *straight/cross* [穿捶], and lead *overhand* [搯捶]) can be applied in many

⁶ *Heihō* (兵法) is literally the *art of war*, but Musashi also uses it to refer to the path of the warrior class more generally, which he sees as a vehicle for achieving an understanding akin to Buddhist enlightenment.

different patterns, which I explored under Adrian's guidance. I present here a theoretical range of options within a consistent span of combat time conceptualized as a single beat, although I recognize that the actual moment of engagement can vary according to how many attacks are chained together, as well as how long opponents remain within striking distance before delivering a finishing move, transitioning to grappling, or moving apart again. The timing of the combo is expressed as points of impact—whether successfully landed or not. The main options, without getting into a finer level of subdivision like thirty-second notes, include: an even eighth-note triplet; a syncopated sixteenth-eighth-sixteenth; a delayed follow up with eighth-sixteenth-sixteenth; an embellished grace note on the first of two eighths; or a flurry of three sixteenths. For the sake of simplicity, this brief analysis is limited to only these three punches and does not include other strikes or defensive movements. I have transcribed these examples in music notation below (Figure 17). The notes above the line are for the lead hand and those below are for the rear hand. The single line staffs reflect the percussive nature of striking.

backfist-straight-overhand combos

Punches || $\overset{3}{\text{♩}} \text{♩} - ||$

Punches || $\underset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} \text{♩} \underset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} - ||$

Punches || $\underset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} \text{♩} \underset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} - ||$

Punches || $\overset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} \text{♩} - ||$

Punches || $\underset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} \text{♩} \underset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} \underset{\text{♩}}{\text{♩}} - ||$

Figure 17: punching combination rhythmic transcription

On the last sparring class before Christmas break in 2013, Adrian let me video record him punching, kicking, elbowing, and pushing the heavy bag, which was helpful because it allowed me to re-watch it as many times as necessary to pick up a more subtle element of his timing. He had often spoken in theory about using three-dimensional techniques, but in real-time application these became four-dimensional because of the element of time. In class Adrian encouraged us to develop striking methods that were neither locked in a one-dimensional straight line nor a two-dimensional angle along two planes, but rather took full advantage of three-dimensional space. He wanted us to juxtapose our simple movements with attacks based on complex motion along a three-dimensional axis of height, length, and width. After watching the video for a sixth and seventh time, I realized Adrian was also manipulating the timing in between the moment of initiating a strike and when it would land.

By combining the four dimensions of height, length, width, and time into one parameter, we get what can be called *space-time*. My intention is not to discuss this as geometry or physics, but rather as a component of the rhythm of combat. Drawing on my background in electroacoustic music, I propose that space-time in kung fu striking can be thought of as having an envelope like the ones used to shape amplitude or frequency during sound design. The speed and spatial position of a strike can thus be manipulated together for strategic purposes in a multidimensional way that connects the start and end of a movement. In discussing the possibility of a common vocabulary for music and dance, Jörgen Torp breaks rhythm down into time points of possible or real attacks and a

line that connects these points with movement (2013:240). In an explanation of the intersection between rhythm and movement, he writes:

I want to add that the points of attack are not conceivable when not somehow connected. The connection can be represented by movements or notions of movements. The dynamics between such points are not of lesser importance than the points themselves. What happens between the points represents the movement character of flowing rhythm. (ibid)

Conveniently for my purposes, Torp uses the word *attack*, which refers to both the transient at the beginning of a sound and an offensive combative movement. Whether in music, dance, or martial arts, experience bears this schema out; individual attacks in a rhythm, steps in a phrase of choreography, or strikes in a combination adhere to each other in a now-moment that lets us recognize them as presently occurring (Husserl 1964 [1928]) and are thus connected together. Complex space-time envelopes underwrote many of Adrian's attack rhythms within the individual strikes that made up his combinations. Connecting attacks together in this way made them rhythmically nuanced on a level of internal flow even in cases where the more obvious points of impact created a basic rhythmic pattern. That being said, sometimes the best strike is a simple one and Adrian was also employing single movements and straight line attacks alongside his more complex motions.

In light sparring with Adrian, I had experienced this type of movement as a constant misjudgement of where my defence should be. In essence, his smooth control of space-time allowed him to be out of phase or syncopated and he thus thwarted my attempts to entrain a guard. He either swerved and accelerated to land just ahead of my block, or pulled back and slowed down just enough to get behind my defence so that my

movement would miss and he could enter on the opening I created. He later explained it to me as combining three-dimensional movement with control of speed in order to be able to change course and/or velocity at any time until the final impact. At the last possible movement, he would add the power created by shifting his stance and body weight, which would condense space-time in an explosive acceleration. This type of movement belongs to what I described in the last chapter as the calligraphy-like flow that Master Paul Chan had scolded me about. Another way of thinking about this would be as rhythmic counterpoint. Advanced practitioners are able to “hear” their opponent’s rhythms clearly—or even anticipate them—and are thus able to fill in a counter-rhythm. They draw on their adversary’s movement patterns to improvise their own, and use fluid control of space-time to syncopate their attack or push/pull it out of phase against their opponent’s defence.

In the video I further noticed that Adrian was also using abrupt tempo shifts where he would throw a few combinations at one speed and then suddenly follow up at a much faster or slower rate. These rapid changes are part of Adrian's dislike of feints, in contrast to Bruce Lee’s recommendation to use feinting as a means to establish a tempo (1975:64). Instead, Hong Luck's sparring coach prefers to use real attacks because he feels that they draw a stronger reaction from the opponent and can cause damage, even when thrown with fifty percent power, whereas feints are meant to miss. Lee’s feints draw on the finesse of Western boxing and fencing as sports, whereas Adrian is channelling the directness of Hong Luck’s bare-knuckle street-fighting lineage where finishing the fight quickly meant not wasting time with false attacks. Despite this contrast

of stylistic approaches, the goal of both methods is to entrain the opponent's tempo.

Watching Adrian hit the bag, I could see how he would lull someone into a false sense of security with a steady pace of real, but half-strength, combinations and then flatten them with an unexpectedly large change of tempo and more powerful techniques.

This goes to show how the pulse that underlies combat time is highly unstable. It fluctuates as opponents vie for position at a distance and is responsive to the necessities of attack and defence when they engage; in some cases, it would be difficult to identify a pulse at all. When there is a distinct tempo, however, it can be used as a weapon. In addition to Adrian and Bruce Lee's entrainment trap, another example was recounted to me by an affiliate of Hong Luck from Florida who studies traditional kung fu and competes in both kickboxing and mixed martial arts (MMA). He suggested that his physical conditioning, stamina, and natural speed helped him to stay just a little bit ahead of his opponents. He would use this advantage to push the pace and make his adversary work until they started to tire, at which point he would take his tempo up a notch and overwhelm them with strikes.

At times Adrian has also used music as a metaphor for diversity in striking; he has suggested to me that in addition to rhythm, both music and fighting need to have a variety of tones. One evening he was attempting to discuss this as melody, but coming up short with the words to describe it. I asked if Hong Luck's percussion might not be a more appropriate analogy and he agreed. We then talked about the drum being low-pitched, while the gong is medium-high, and the cymbals are high, how the drum is capable of several different sounds depending on where it is hit (centre, middle, or edge of the

membrane—with or without dampening—or on the rim), and the way all the instruments can either be left to ring or muted for a staccato effect. The combined musical effect of the ensemble is achieved by contrasting pitch, timbre, and duration. Putting this into practice, Adrian showed us how attacking combinations should include a mix of low, middle, and high targets on the opponent’s body.

Sensible in theory, the efficacy of this approach was abundantly clear when I got a chance to try it with a partner, and even more so when our teacher did it to me. For example, a common goal of attack and defence drills in sparring class is to force an opponent to react to an attack and then tag on something unexpected. When Adrian set up these types of exercises, he specified the first move or two, but left the follow up undetermined. He only gave us strategic guidelines: one person attacks by causing pain, breaking balance, or “disappearing” behind while the other person tries to protect himself or herself. Adrian used the different sounds of the percussion instruments as a metaphor for tonal differentiation of strikes (i.e., hi, mid, or low targets) in the first stratagem, whereas the other two were not musical. Causing pain in this context means not only forgoing feints, but also never striking the same place twice in a row (assuming the strike lands) so as to distribute the hurt to different targets.⁷ When one applies strikes to various targets, the idea is to get into tonal counterpoint with the opponent’s defence—even when in a rhythmic unison. The first move or two of the exercise thus establishes a pattern that is maintained even while being subverted; you strike high once, twice, or three times until

⁷ *Breaking balance* means interspersing strikes with pulls, pushes, trips, and sweeps to force the opponent to focus on staying on their feet. *Disappearing* means to use footwork to attain a more advantageous angle or, even better, to get behind the opponent. Both of these tactics are ways of preventing the foe from being able to defend or counterattack until he or she repositions.

the opponent anticipates it, at which point you strike mid or low. If landed, this causes pain and an instinctive reaction to defend the injury, but you take advantage of that to strike a different target that is opened up by the opponent protecting the place that was just hurt. Each successive attack is more or less in time with the defence, but at a different location than the spot being defended. When Adrian has done this to me, his assault was aimed at my head, body, arms, and legs—both front and back—and was delivered in a variety of attacking rhythms, from every angle, using both simple and complex space-time envelopes, and interspersed with breaking my balance. Even with light contact, it was terrifying because the assault seemed to be coming from everywhere. On more than one occasion it has made me want to either run away or curl up in ball. In fact, those were the only two options I was left with.

Not everyone at Hong Luck is as musical in his or her martial arts as Adrian. At the fifty-third anniversary, one senior member told me he used to play the drum but had to stop because, “it was messing up my punching.” He argued that the relatively constant tempo and repetitive nature of Hong Luck’s percussion rhythms were not conducive to fighting, which is true in one sense, but not in another. The rhythm of combat is not exactly the same as in music; being rhythmically unpredictable is often desirable in a fight, but detrimental to a musical ensemble. Nonetheless, establishing predictable combat rhythm patterns or keeping a steady pace of fighting moves can be used to bait an opponent into a vulnerable position by leading their movement through entrainment. This senior member’s cognitive separation of music and kung fu suggests that not everyone is willing—or able—to draw on the common schemata between them.

Similarly, Adrian's old sparring partner is terrible at playing the instruments, but he is still an excellent fighter. He is a senior at Hong Luck and now runs his own club, so I was quite surprised when I heard him play cymbals one day and his timing was really off. Consistent entrainment to the beat of the drum appeared to elude him. When I had the chance to see him spar, however, I saw how he used that apparent rhythmic deficit to his advantage by shutting down his opponent's ability to entrain. He basically charged forward at the first opportunity, made contact with his opponent, and then stifled their movement with jerky, arrhythmic grabs, pushes, and strikes. I have not touched hands with him, but he is apparently quite difficult to defend against because of the smothering pressure and violent lack of regularity.⁸ I bring these examples up in order to show that the rhythm of combat need not be cognized musically, but I maintain that it can be fruitfully interpreted that way because of the underlying entrainment active in both practices. Successful attacks circumvent an opponent's efforts to entrain a defence, thus using an embodied understanding of this image schema in order to avoid it.

At the Foot of a Master I: Embodying Combat Strategy

Actual combat is more chaotic than either the studied rhythms of training or the neatly written description thereof, so fighters do not often get a chance to think about what they are doing during an altercation. Instead, they rely on patterns of movement and timing that have been engrained into them through diligent practice (Spencer 2009; Wacquant 2004). Strategy, however, is an important aspect of practical logic because “A

⁸ *Touching hands* is an expression used by some kung fu practitioners to mean a friendly exchange of technique and test of skills that is akin to light sparring.

particularly clear example of practical sense as proleptic adjustment to the demands of a field is what is called, in the language of sport, a ‘feel for the game’” (Bourdieu 1990:66). Similarly, Francis and Mary Kozub (2004) have argued that participants in combat sports are more likely to be successful if their skills are guided by an embodied understanding of how to set up an attack and how to proactively defend, rather than a prioritization of technical expertise. They suggest that strategy should thus be an integral part of technique training, which is logical if one considers that a mechanically flawed attack launched at the right time is more likely to land than a technically perfect attack initiated when there is no opening.

According to Hong Luck fighting theory, the best defence is a good offence. As such, there is relatively less time spent in sparring class on simply defending or evading. This lines up with traditional Chinese strategies common to various styles of kung fu such as *linked defence brings attack* (連消帶打), meaning to use defence as attack or attack as defence, and *move first gain initiative* (先發制人), which could mean simply attacking before an opponent is ready, but can also imply baiting someone into making the first move and countering before they can finish it. Control of entrainment during combat is a central action plan inscribed onto fighters bodies’ during training and it impinges directly on the previous two stratagems.

Master Jin was already in his eighties when I was invited to join his advanced class just after Chinese New Year 2013, so he was no longer in his physical prime. I only heard stories about how his blocks used to be crushing blows, thus turning them into an attack that could shift the tide of an engagement by linking attack and defence into the

same move. However, he could still use timing, position, and strategy to compensate for a lack of speed or power. One of Bruce Lee's most famous timing principles is the *broken rhythm* (1975), and is useful for talking about some of Hong Luck's methods. In a stalemate, each attack is met with a homorhythmic defence and neither opponent can gain the upper hand. Using a broken rhythm means to strike outside of a pattern of entrainment, while the opponent continues with it just long enough to get caught. There is a characteristic three-beat pattern found in all of Master Jin's choreographed forms that does just that. Musically it is a quarter-eighth-eighth or eighth-sixteenth-sixteenth rhythm and some senior members have even clapped it out for me (see the transcription in Figure 18 below). Master Jin has demonstrated this pattern with a sudden burst of speed and emphasis on the last move that makes it feel like rushing to the finish. As a combative rhythm, the first two moves can be thought of establishing the beat while the third one breaks the rhythm by arriving on the offbeat. This works by foiling an opponent's expectation that the time between move two and three will be the same as between one and two; many fighters rarely or inadequately vary their rhythm and an even rate of attack is thus a reasonable expectation. This rhythm can be applied in attack or defence, but is especially appropriate for *linked attack brings defence*.

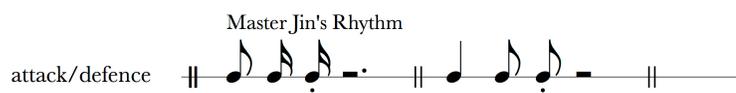


Figure 18: Master Jin's rhythm

For example, the *eagle claw* (鷹爪) technique uses the thumb, index, and middle fingers to form a "claw" and can be either an attack or a defence. In blocking, it partially

extends the arm to contact an opponent's strike, and is combined with footwork called *triangle stepping* (三角馬) to deflect the force at an angle. In the three-move eagle claw combos using Master Jin's rhythm pattern, this movement can be thought as two deflections followed by an eye-gauge. The first two are defences that create a homorhythmic stalemate while the counterattack breaks the pattern. Notwithstanding the presence of this pattern in the choreographed forms, Master Jin emphasizes that for fighting applications it is even better to not wait to block twice, but rather to use blocking and attacking simultaneously. This combat version combines *linked defence brings attack* and *move first gain initiative*. An example of this uses continuous motion that blocks the attack and, using the same hand, continues with a counterattack without resetting or withdrawing. In order for this to work, one must intercept an incoming strike halfway through its motion and follow up before the opponent is able to make a second move. Both the defence and counterstroke are syncopated sharply against the adversary's attacking rhythm. Although technically the opponent initiated, the idea is to interrupt their movement, finish before they do, and thus seize the initiative by landing the first strike. Bruce Lee refers to this strategy as a *stop-hit*, which is:

a timed hit made against the adversary at the same time he is making an attack. It *anticipates and intercepts* the final line of attack and is delivered in such a way that the executant is covered, either by being in line behind the hit or by supplementary covering. (1975:65)

I have transcribed Master Jin's stop-hit rhythm below (Figure 19) with the ghost notes above the staff representing an opponent's failed attack and those below showing the application of *linked defence brings attack/move first gain initiative* with a defence and a counter attack. Just as music notation does not show a drummer lifting the stick

before a drum stroke, it does not either show the initiation of a punch. The transcription thus looks like the defensive/counter line (bottom) starts first because it lands before the blocked attack (top) would have, but technically it is launched after the opponent has already started. The speed of this exchange, as performed by Master Jin, is quite fast and intended to essentially end a fight before it can actually begin. It is therefore impractical to suggest a tempo. Sixteenth and thirty-second notes might have given it a more accurate representation, but I have used longer note values to make it clearer.

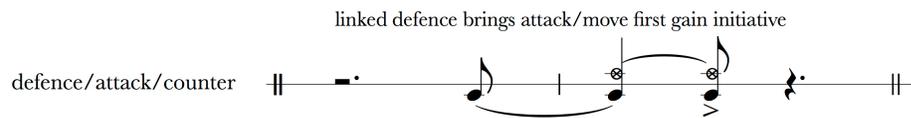


Figure 19: stop-hit transcription

I have participated in all the different classes Hong Luck has offered during my fieldwork, but have spent relatively more time on performance-oriented martial arts and lion dance training than sparring or partner drills. This is partly because more of the club's sessions are focused on choreographed forms and partly because I have chosen to prioritize lion dance due to its closer linkage with drumming. Even in performance, however, martial arts skills form a common ground for meaning. Master Jin insists that a good kung fu demo should give the audience a visceral feeling of violence, which is conveyed through not only the performer's expressive use of their eyes and yells, but also the practical character of the movement. My martial arts performance has therefore benefitted from time spent in sparring class because the fighting habitus is applicable to demonstrations, particularly in regards to rhythm. Entrainment in training during Master Jin's advanced class is also more similar to the asynchronicity of Adrian's sessions than it

is to the beginner's group. Thanks to my loud voice and decent memory, I have often ended up "leading" the group through choreographed forms while our teacher watched with an eagle eye from his seat at the back. Most of the class members remained more or less asynchronous to my verbal calls, however, because they were using their own internal timing and independent rhythmic interpretation of the combinations. We thus moved together, but not in time with each other. Only new students actually entrained to my counting, which is because they did not know the forms and were trying to copy the movement. The timing of group practice for choreographed forms in Hong Luck's advanced classes is related to the broken rhythms, interceptions, syncopations, and phasing I have been describing, and I will return to these ideas in a later section on kung fu performance with drumming.

At the Foot of a Master II: Rhythm, Cooperation, and Emotion

Master Jin's class usually focuses on kung fu, but in the spring of 2013 he took David aside to scold him about his drumming. My ears perked up at the mention of music and luckily Master Jin did not seem to mind me listening to what he had to say. It was an excellent opportunity to be privy to *throw tiles collect jade* pedagogy on a more advanced level. Master Jin started by telling David he was a very good drummer, but continued by saying that sometimes his playing was too fast, too fancy, and thus too hard to follow for both the other musicians and the lion dancers. This requirement to moderate one's playing in order to facilitate group cooperation and entrainment during lion dance performances is also characteristic of the synchronization of military close-order drill (McNeill 1995,

Sparshot 1995:164, 166, 488). Master Jin then said he wanted to teach David his *walking beat* (行路鼓), which initiated a series of short lessons at the end of class for the next month. These rhythms are not found anywhere else in Hong Luck's repertoire and none of the currently active membership was familiar with them until Master Jin taught them to David. The leader of NLSF was also invited to partake and other members of the advanced group observed, but did not participate. I managed to remain close enough to the proceedings to take it in, although the teaching was more directed towards my seniors.

In many ways, working on lion dance and drumming in Hong Luck's advanced class was a return to basics, which Master Jin spelled out in a remarkably clear way. The focus, clarity, and speed of pedagogy was uncharacteristic of the usual transmission process, but matched the aging master's seeming awareness of his own mortality and his desire to pass on his knowledge. Some other members of the class had remarked on the same thing regarding kung fu; whereas Master Jin used to slowly teach one movement of a choreographed form at a time over the course of a year, we learned three hand forms and three weapon forms from him in the span of a mere year and a half.

The first lesson Master Jin gave to David provides an important frame for understanding what practitioners of Hong Luck's lion dance and drumming perceive with, through, or by means of. He said that good lion dancing has four components, the sum of which combines with the ritual function to provide meaning. These four elements are: vocables, lion movement, drumming, and emotion. While I had experience with all those things, I had not considered them in the coextensive way that Master Jin was talking

about. David, as one of my teachers, was also well versed in these elements, but I could see that he was struggling with how they were supposed to work together. It was clearer how movement and drumming were linked, but vocables were more or less relegated to teaching, practising, and rehearsing, while emotion had always been somewhat vague.

Similar to the oral *drum texts* (鑼鼓經) of Chinese opera, Hong Luck's vocables are a mnemonic device for both rhythm and tone. In regular lion dance practice or for verbal communication, Noah and David use only loose, underdetermined sounds, particularly when vocalizing basic rhythms that they always vary in performance anyway. Master Jin's use of vocables, however, was more precise, which also occurs with some of the patterns in the traditional lion dance routine. More specifically, he said *chek* for a rim click; *dong* for an open drum tone after a rim click (sometimes after a rest too); *chang* for all other open drum tones, and *chit* for a mute.⁹ Master Jin further suggested that the vocables were not simply mnemonic or pedagogical devices, but rather undergirded both drumming and dancing. Perhaps this was his way of anchoring David's more free variations, but this approach implies that the fundamental vocal patterns exist during performance—even when they are not actually spoken out loud or when the music and movement do not correspond to them in a one-to-one manner. The oral drum text is thus meant to serve as a unifying, rhythmic framework for lion dance and drumming.

Vocables in general were not unfamiliar to David, but he appeared to struggle with the use of silence as part of the pattern. Master Jin's *chit* was a silencing in as much

⁹ While it may be possible to render these vocables in Chinese characters, Master Jin Chan only ever spoke them to us. His vocables for rolls were less clear than the main beats, but resembled the following: *da-dl-ek* for a three-beat roll on the rim; *da-dl-a-dl-ek* for a five-beat roll on the rim; and *ch-ch-chang* for a three beat roll on the drum head, with more *chs* added for five-beat or continuous rolls.

as the vocable indicates cutting off the sound of the drum. David's style of drumming is florid and virtuosic, so the *chit* was antithetical to his usual flair. As I mentioned in the last chapter regarding generational differences, the younger drummers at Hong Luck all use a much tighter, more staccato style of playing where they frequently use their hands to touch the drum head in order to dampen the decay of individual sounds. This style is especially evident in their walking beats and allows for more clarity when playing complex rhythms and ornaments at fast tempos. Master Jin's walking beat, however, uses mutes only in specific places, which have structural significance for phrasing. Furthermore, when David did use mutes for certain traditional patterns, he was in the habit of combining a drum stroke with simultaneous dampening of the drum head to create a specific tone, rather than using silence as a sound. The *chit* in this case means the action of stopping the sound and thus refers to the cut-off of the previous drum stroke, rather than a new attack with immediate muting.

The second aspect of Master Jin's lessons was lion movement, though he combined this discussion with the other elements of his fourfold structure. He spent relatively less time on dance and was less specific because he remained focused on drumming. This commentary was directed at me more than David: by that point I was Hong Luck's most regular lion dancer. He told us that the lion must follow the drum rhythm, but that the two together combined to make what he called (in English), *ACTION!* After a brief demonstration where he said the vocables and mimed lion movements, then repeated them with a different inflection, Master Jin segued into talking about drumming and emotion. He told us that the lion should exhibit *happiness anger*

sadness joy (喜怒哀樂), which we initially took literally. David and I discussed this after class, but were having trouble understanding a sad lion outside the context of rarely seen funeral rituals. Upon further research, I discovered that this four-character combination is also an idiom encompassing the idea of emotions in general.

Next class, Master Jin clarified his meaning by linking it to kung fu performance. Just as a good martial arts demo requires full commitment to embodying violence, so does a good lion dance need intentionality and intensity of feeling. While Hong Luck's lions are often aggressive when representing the club's spirit and performing rituals, they can also be noble, respectful, playful, affectionate, rambunctious, mischievous, curious, cautious, happy, excited, hungry, full, tired, and sleepy. Not all these emotions necessarily occur in the walking section that Master Jin was using as an example, but the point is that the drum needs to emphasize feelings and the lion must make them felt with movement. As with kung fu demos, the music animates and energizes the lion dance, but the martial arts and/or dancing complete the rhythms by giving them visual and spatial form in movement. As an example, a slow, quiet, and simplified walking beat may have any of several abstract connotations on its own, and so its more explicit meanings are defined by the performance context, position within the choreographic structure, and the lion dancers' actions. If such a moderate, low intensity beat were played before the eating section of a routine, lion dancers would probably interpret it as hungry and start looking for food. If, however, it were played while walking down the street during a parade, there would be more room for different emotions and the dancers could interact with the crowd or passersby by choosing whether to act playful, affectionate, mischievous, curious, or

cautious. Within the frame of context, the music and movement combine to generate emotional content.

As a visual aid to help explain the four-part lion dance schema, I am providing a transcription that includes all three instruments, the vocables, and lion movement for a basic walking beat (Figure 21 below). With all due respect for Master Jin's rhythms, I have selected a type of rhythm that would be more likely to be heard during a Hong Luck parade. In terms of the fourth element (emotional content), this example is marked as *aggressively prowling*, but, again, similar rhythms and movement patterns could embody other emotions depending on drummer/dancer interaction and context. Out of respect for some of my consultant's concern for not giving away too much technical detail I have made this more descriptive than prescriptive (Seeger 1958) and have notated neither an extensive set of variations on one beat, nor a whole routine. As with the other transcriptions, this walking beat does not represent an actual recording or performance, but rather notates rhythms that have been transmitted to me and form part of my repertoire. For comparison, I have also transcribed a very basic walking pattern and included it above the richer notation (Figure 20). My approach of combining vocables into the transcription—even though they are not part of the performance—draws on Boyu Zhang's (1997) work on Chinese percussion, while my use of words to refer to movement is related to Regula Qureshi's (1986) transcription of audience/performer interaction in sufi performance and Hai-Hsing Yao's (1990) work on percussion music for martial acrobatics in Chinese opera. The movement description focuses on where the lion is stepping and looking. In order to fit it into the notation I have abbreviated the

directions as: *L* for left, *R* for right, and *C* for centre. The double bar line divides the transcription into two parts, with the second being twice as long as the first because, as previously discussed, segmentation is based on drum/dance phrases and not on metre.

Figure 20: basic walking beat transcription

Figure 21: rich walking beat transcription with variation

This brief excerpt shows three main things. First is the relationship between the instruments. The cymbal part is the least demanding and basically anchors the pulse with an even attack on each quarter-note. Nonetheless, it can still be challenging for some people when there is as much variation as I have shown in Figure 21. The gong and drum parts allow more freedom, but are responsible for indicating driving toward—and emphasizing—the last beat. The drummer must be particularly clear with this because everyone else follows his or her phrasing. The gong line in Figure 21 shows offbeat syncopation in the second bar, which some advanced players will do at a parade to mix

things up, but usually avoid during a choreographed performance where cohesion is more important. In bars three and four of Figure 21, the drum line gives an example of variations created by mutes and rolls. The + sign above the quarter rest indicates a mute played as a sound (like Master Jin's *chit*), which is substituted for the beat that occurs there in the more basic version. The end of the third bar has what the leader of NLSF calls an *under-roll*, or grace notes on the last beat, while the start of the fourth bar has what he calls an *over-roll*, or grace notes added to the first beat. These ornaments help to link bars three and four together into a combined phrase. The second thing to observe is how the vocables in Figure 21 provide a composite of the three instrumental parts, which resembles the basic walking beats learned by beginner lion dancers and presented in the drum line of Figure 20 (the x note above the staff line is a rim click). While the drummer (and in some situations the gong player) is free to manipulate ornaments and rhythmic variations, it needs to fit into the underlying pattern of the vocables when the lion is dancing.

The third and final thing I would like to draw attention to is the phrasing of the lion dance steps and movements. As with the drum part, they are goal oriented towards the end of phrases, but they do not always follow the drum rhythm exactly. For a simple, a heartbeat-like drum pattern (i.e., the eighth-rest, eighth-note, and quarter-note in the first two bars of Figure 21), lion footwork can mimic the drum by lifting the foot on the upbeat and landing on the downbeat. The drumming in bars three and four is more elaborate. The lion dance therefore does not—and often cannot—follow the drum pattern

note for note. Instead dancers draw on the drummer's timing, style, and feeling but their movement is often closer to the unspoken vocable pattern.

Since he finished teaching us his distinctive walking beat, Master Jin has not brought up lion dance in advanced class. The transmission we received, however, went beyond learning a new rhythm pattern. Master Jin's fourfold schema provides a framework for understanding the embodied meanings of Hong Luck's lion dance that undergirds the symbolic features and the ritual function. It is very much what performers perceive with, by means of, or through, though I did not fully realize this until he pointed it out. David no longer regularly attends lion dance class, so any further work on Master Jin's ideas has been done at gigs. We have not since discussed the function and interrelation of the four elements, but I have noticed subtle improvements in our teamwork and expression in performance, which has been confirmed by some senior members who have seen us perform. In order to investigate this, and related issues, I will now turn to the experience of performing kung fu, lion dancing, and drumming, which will draw on the body-of-ideas I have been describing.

PART II

The Experience of Performance: Fighting, Dancing, and Drumming

The Hong Luck anniversary in August every year is the highlight of the club's calendar and includes a lion dance parade through Chinatown, as well as a ten-course banquet with martial arts demos and more lion dance performances. The kung fu demonstrations involve choreographed forms accompanied by percussion, which is a relative rarity; for

many members, it is the only time of the year (apart from dress rehearsals just before the anniversary) that they ever do martial arts to music or perform them in public. This situation presents some special challenges that I describe, explain, and interpret in this section according to discourses of (a)synchronicity in the rhythm of combat. I will also discuss the main lion dance performance at the banquet, with special attention to the *entrainment* schema and Master Jin's four elements. Finally, I will talk about drumming and the experience of Hong Luck's music, although not exclusively within the context of the anniversary. This whole section will be structured along an expanding awareness of situation and entrainment for the performer in each of these three areas (kung fu, lion, and drum), starting with the narrowest horizon during martial arts performance.

1) Kung Fu Demos

I was terrified the first time I performed at the Hong Luck anniversary in 2010. Luckily I received some good advice leading up to the event that helped me prepare. Despite near daily practise of my assigned beginner hand form, Small Plum Flower Boxing (小梅花拳), for six weeks before the anniversary, I was struggling with my inexperience in this type of kung fu. During dress rehearsals, I was overwhelmed by the unfamiliar drumming, which is based primarily on special variations of the lion dance head-up beat, but privileges maximum speed and volume.¹⁰ After I forgot the moves on several run-throughs, Quang gave me some advice about how to bow out if the same thing happened

¹⁰ Drummers may tone down their speed and power somewhat when accompanying younger and/or less experienced performers, but even the lower limit of the stylistic requirements for kung fu drumming remains sonically intense.

on stage, but then told me that the trick is to not follow the drum. He suggested I find and stick to my own rhythm because the fast, powerful beats are intended to provide energy, not guide my movement as with lion dance. This advice has been echoed and elaborated on over the years from a number of Hong Luck seniors and presents an interesting performance situation, namely that the rhythm of combat expressed in choreographed hand forms remains largely asynchronous from the music. My performance at the 2010 anniversary was more successful than in dress rehearsals and my interpretation was minimally acceptable, as evidenced by Master Paul's grudging "OK."

Thankfully, I have since become more comfortable with demos, although the drumming-fuelled adrenaline surge remains as intense as ever. At Hong Luck's fifty-third anniversary in 2014, I performed a more advanced choreographed form called Dragon Boxing (龍拳), which I had also demonstrated the year before:

The MC announces, "Colin McGuire performing *Lùhng Kyùhn*." I take a deep breath, then leave my position with the instruments and other performers next to the stairs and make my way up towards centre stage. Meanwhile, Noah softly beats out a special variation of the lion walking beat that's used to introduce kung fu demos. He dramatically gives three sharp rim-clicks as I lift my hands in a Shaolin salute to the audience of the packed Dim Sum King banquet hall. My heart is pounding in my chest... I soften my awareness of the crowd filled with my juniors, peers, and teachers, as well as various kung fu masters, local dignitaries, and guests. Now they're just a fuzzy mass of undifferentiated people and I hear Noah begin a continuous drum roll as I roll my fists through the air on their way back to my waist. I look down briefly to compose myself before launching into the opening bows of Master Jin's Dragon Boxing form. Step-by-step, I carefully proceed at a measured pace; the intro is a time for clear platform graces. I finish the opening by rolling my fists to my waist a second time, which Noah matches with a three-beat rhythmic cadence that I entrain to: *chek-dong-chit*.

The fast and furious kung fu percussion music goes off like a machine gun and I feel a potent rush of power shoot up my spine. It momentarily threatens to overwhelm me... my mind goes blank... then suddenly my awareness narrows to tunnel vision as I compress that energy down into my *daantihh*. Embodied memory takes over, my face twists into a snarl, and I explode into a flurry of combat moves. I no longer hear the drumming as

specific rhythms, but rather feel it as an insistent, pulsing wave of sound pushing me forwards. I punch, kick, jump, spin, and coil, punctuating the ends of combinations with ferocious yells. The imaginary opponents who are receiving this onslaught are shredded by my eagle claws and smashed by my strikes.

Un-distracted by the beats, I assert my own combative rhythm, which flirts with entrainment to the drum at several points, only to swerve out of phase again. Noah pushes me relentlessly onwards with his drumming, sometimes changing his variations to emphasize my combinations, and we drive hard towards the end of the form. At the penultimate combo, I'm facing the back of the stage where two Hong Luck banners are draped under the restaurant's dragon and phoenix wall-sculptures. I don't even see them. Finally, I lunge into a 180-degree hook punch that turns me back towards the audience for a finishing blow. I violently unleash it with a feral bellow that erupts from deep within me and my fifty-five seconds of kung fu are done. The furore of performance now dissipated, I can see more than a few raised eyebrows in the audience. As I roll my fists back to my waist for the third and final time, Noah repeats the rhythmic cadence and we end in sync: *chek-dong-chit*. I give one more Shaolin bow and exit the stage to the sound of applause.

I will now discuss ways that the body-of-ideas inscribed through training is manifested in kung fu performance. In sparring class I saw how remaining asynchronous to an opponent's defence is integral to landing successful strikes. When I asked Hong Luck's sparring coach, Adrian, if martial arts demos with music have a benefit for training this type of timing, he did not hesitate in agreeing. In his estimation, traditional kung fu's panoply of practices are all in some way related to fighting, although they vary in how directly one may be able to apply them in a physical confrontation. He also suggested that being self-reflexive about the training was important for making connections between one area and another. The *martial entrainment* schema is key in both sparring and kung fu demos with music. One must be aware of their opponent's rhythm, or that of the drum, but not entrain to it, which I can attest presents some difficulties in both situations. An adversary will modulate their defence in order to entrain

to one's attack and the regularity of drumming exerts a powerful pull towards synchronization. In either case, avoiding entrainment requires a foreground and background type of focus so as to be able to recognize the opposing rhythm, but also maintain independent timing. The manifestation of this looks like asynchronicity, but on another level actually uses a certain degree of entrainment in order to avoid it on a larger scale. To paraphrase a popular Christian idiom, one must be in the rhythm, but not of the rhythm.¹¹ Drummers, on the other hand, do not concern themselves with keeping their beat asynchronous to the movement. Their goal is to accompany and motivate the performer, while providing a martial mood or atmosphere for the performance. The onus is on the person demonstrating kung fu to manifest the rhythm of combat.

There is room for interpretation of choreographed forms, and thus there are exceptions to the general pattern I have described. Some senior members take a more performance-oriented approach that is not quite as combative as mine. This involves exaggerated platform graces such as higher kicks, larger hook punches, and additional gestures or postures that look nice, but are not as applicable to fighting. One long-time member who favours this style, however, told me that there are limits to how far one can go with personal flair. He warned me that it must remain grounded in fighting application or else showy kung fu can lose its status as a martial art. In his view, a bit of synchronization to the beat at points of emphasis and some non-combative flourishes look good, but that if taken too far, demos could become a dance and would therefore be wrong. This advanced view of timing and intention in kung fu demonstrations with music

¹¹ In some Christian circles, the slogan “be in the world, but not of the world” is used to encourage being spiritual in everyday life—even when doing mundane things or interacting with non-believers.

goes beyond the usual advice given to beginners (i.e., simply do not follow the drum). Over time I have observed many performances—from both novices and seniors alike—that lacked in combative feeling because people failed to avoid entrainment and ended up doing their form at a steady pace that was more or less in time with the music. While these were not necessarily total failures, the dance-like approach of following the beat remains antithetical to the ideal of Hong Luck's combat-oriented performance practice.

More rarely, some of the forms actually require dramatic synchronization within them. General Kwan's Halberd (將關大刀), for example, has sections where the drummer changes the beat to accent the movement. These dramatic episodes are interspersed within the choreographed fighting skills and include: riding a "horse," surveying a "battlefield" while stroking a long "beard," and sharpening the halberd on the ground before plucking a "hair" from the performer's own head to test the edge. The drummer must dramatize these actions, which is done by playing a rhythm that lines up with the movement. In these sections of the demo, both musicians and martial artist make an effort to entrain to each other, although the leader is the person doing kung fu. This dramaturgical approach is reminiscent of the way percussionists accompany the martial acrobatic arts found in Chinese opera (Yao 1990 and 2001). Nonetheless, these brief moments of entrainment are enveloped by the more general practice of Hong Luck kung fu demos with percussion accompaniment, which is to remain asynchronous to the music. Other exceptions are the opening and closing bows of a choreographed form. Some drummers prefer to use a continuous roll for these sections and only play a rhythmic cadence for the endings, but others may use speed and volume to swell their rolling in

time with the action of the introductory sequence. On average, asynchronicity accounts for between sixty and ninety percent of a successful Hong Luck demo, depending on the form, the performer, and the drummer.

2) Lion Dance

Being under the lion head requires a different relationship to the drum rhythms than for kung fu demos. As is common in dance styles around the world, lion dance is synchronized with the beat. This is not to say that every movement must coincide with a drum hit, but rather that the tempo, feel, direction, and sequence of the dance is determined by the music. The martial arts context of the training environment lends another meaning to this, namely one that is beholden to the percussion ensemble's origins as instruments of war. The particular exigencies of performing with a mask that covers the entire upper torso of the dancer contribute to the importance of the *entrainment* schema and the drummer's role in guiding the lion. The music orients the dancer in a sonic space. I suggest that the situation be understood as akin to a general giving signals to troops on an ancient battlefield (as per Sun Tzu in trans. Cleary 2003:124–125). Armoured soldiers mired in the havoc of a fray would have been nearly as blind to their surroundings as a dancer under the lion head, and they too would have relied on drum signals for orientation.

The following description depicts my experience doing the final performance of the evening at Hong Luck's fifty-third anniversary:

I'm standing on the stage of Dim Sum King waiting to start. Despite the honour of getting to be under one of the two lion heads for the eating ritual, I'm almost ready to drop from

exhaustion. Almost. I already did a five-hour lion dance parade in the afternoon and two kung fu demos earlier in the banquet, so I dig deep and steel myself for one more performance.

Noah is going to do the other head and we are standing next to each other with the lions on the ground to our respective right-hand sides. He gives a loud shout to bring the two tail-dancers and myself to attention. David starts playing a continuous roll while we do a very short kung fu bow before getting under the heads. I'm doubly honoured tonight because I'm using a special, black and red, Guan Yu lion that only comes out once a year at the banquet. It's larger and more ornate than the ones we usually use, but it's also heavier. Once I slip it over top of me, however, I hardly notice the added bulk. Lion heads have come to feel like an extension of my own body.

As we start the routine and I try to sink into my usual deep stance, my hips seize up and send shooting pain through my glutes, quads, and hamstring... I wince and grit my teeth, but am forced to stand taller than I should. Maybe they'll loosen up... David continues rolling on the drum as he waits for cues from us in the first section of the dance, which is one of the few parts where the lions lead the instruments. From behind the mask, I can hardly see my surroundings except through a couple of slits where the moveable eyeballs are attached to the bamboo frame and also through the opening for the mouth. In spite of the impaired sight lines, Noah and I look under the heads at each other's feet in order to sync our move from horse stance into a crane stance and we finish together on a dampened drum accent from David. This is repeated two more times before we start following the drum, which is much more comfortable. Next David plays the longer version of the lion bow rhythm and we do three steps forward while rolling the heads in a broad circle ending at the floor, and then shuffle back to our starting position with the masks kept low to the ground. As I bow, I make sure to use smooth, measured, and complete movements that embody the extra respect this musical signal calls for.

With a crack on the rim, David starts the dance proper and launches into a head-up rhythm. Again I try to get down in my horse stance and fail as I'm blocked with pain in my hips. Luckily, we don't stay there for long as a *saam sing* rhythm comes to my rescue. This is followed by a side-to-side shuffle, which David calls for with a straight stream of heavy quarter notes—suddenly, however, he pulls out one of Frank's old-school variations that we've been talking about putting back into the routine! I've heard it before, but never danced to it... just as I'm about to lose my place in the choreography, I can almost hear Master Jin's voice in my head telling me the lion dance has four elements and I suddenly become aware of the vocables. They've been there the whole time—somewhere between or behind the drumming and movement—and I switch my focus to latch onto them. When I get to the crossover step that needs to finish on exactly the right drumbeat, I'm pleased to find that everything lines up.

Sweat is dripping into my eyes, but at least my muscle cramps are subsiding now that I've warmed back up. We finish the routine and David plays a walking beat, but slows

the tempo and lowers his volume slightly. I start looking around for the greens that I will pluck. With limited vision and the rule of staying under the lion head while performing, searching for food is a mini-dance unto itself. I can't find the greens at first, but finally spy the restaurant staff getting them ready, so I prowl about the stage a bit more and trust that David will cue us when the veggies arrive.

Finally David starts playing louder again as a dignitary makes his way towards us with the lettuce dangling from a string tied to a stick. Instead of going directly after the food, however, Noah and I start a lion fight. Much to the crowd's delight, we kick, bite, and push each other for a bit until he backs down, as we'd planned before the performance. We're brother lions, but when there's food involved the aggression comes out and I'm a little overzealous with my final roundhouse kick... oops! I then cautiously approach the greens as the drumbeats switch from leading to following the lion. This is the highlight of the routine, so I take my time with eating and David accompanies me with continuous rolls interspersed with volume swells and accents strokes followed by accelerations back to rolling. I take a snap at the food, sniff the VIP, and finally do my signature double, jumping front-kick towards the lettuce before deciding it is safe to eat.

After plucking the greens, I quickly remove the red packet and put it in between my teeth; tear the veggies into pieces and press them against the lion head's closed lower jaw; and tilt the head back to let David know I'm ready to switch back to following him for the swallowing and spitting beats. At the end of the sequence, I open the lion mouth and catapult the lettuce pieces onto the table in front of centre stage. David then cues the finale with extra fast and loud beats. I'm a happy lion after eating and not only shake the head vigorously in the air, but also sink into my deepest stance, shifting it back and forth to put extra motion into the celebration. What little energy I had left is already spent and there is nothing keeping me going but drumbeats, honour, and willpower. Nonetheless, I somehow finish strong, do three bows, and it's over. Let's eat!

As the previous description shows, lion dancers' situational awareness is spatial and aural, but the visual aspect is limited. They cannot rely on vision while under the head, and thus hearing becomes a more important sense. Dancers count on the drummer for not only the rhythms that animate their movement, but also cues about when to perform certain context-dependent actions. While the drumbeats provide energetic motivation for both kung fu and lion dance, martial artists are inwardly focused during

demos in order to avoid following the drum, and dancers are much more attuned to the rhythms in order to entrain to them.

Synchronization to the beat is doubly important when there is more than one lion. Hong Luck shows its traditional martial body-of-ideas here because there could be five lions on stage and all of them would be in sync with both the music and each other. In Hong Kong, I observed several performances by top-level lion dance troupes that use a more modern and acrobatic style. In these cases, the lead lion initiated the transitions between sections of choreography, which would have been fine if it was a solo performance. There were three or more lions, however, and the result was sloppy as the drum followed the lead lion, but then the other lions followed the drum. With these varying delays in response time, the performance looked unsynchronized, although they compensated with flashy jumps and tricks. From my perspective—as inculcated through my formation as a lion dancer—these performances lacked the important martial meaning that is entrained synchronization. The approach of using the drum to synchronize movement, as it was used with ancient military percussion and troop signals, is alive and well at Hong Luck.

3) Drumming

By 2014 I had played the drum in public performances of both lion dance and kung fu demos, but as a junior drummer I have had relatively more opportunities to provide accompaniment during classes and dress rehearsals at Hong Luck. My training as a musician has served me in good stead during my apprenticeship. It has helped me to think

about Hong Luck's music in a way that opens up paths of understanding that, while not part of the traditional curriculum, can contribute to an expanded appreciation of the rhythms and their functions. This is not unlike the hermeneutic arc described by Rice (1994:72), which can bridge the insider/outsider dichotomy and makes it possible to add something new to the discussion.

Before getting into description and interpretation of Hong Luck's drumming, I will present an ethnographic vignette of what it was like playing the drum for the closing ceremony of the 2014 Chinatown Festival. Dundas Street West was closed to traffic for two full blocks east of Spadina Avenue and throngs of people were strolling along it to check out the vendors, information tents, food stalls, and entertainment. Over the weekend, Hong Luck and NLSF had done multiple lion dance parades together in the festival area, and we were finally doing the last one.

It's fun to do a casual lion dance parade where we're just mingling with the crowd, not performing rituals and bowing. There's no need to organize choreography and the instruments are basically jamming out on walking, side-to-side, and head-up beats. We don't even use many *saam sings* because their final rhythmic cadence breaks up the flow. We have enough people to rotate all the positions so no one gets too tired, but I'm playing the drum as we approach the main stage, where the leader of NLSF motions for us to wait. He makes a gesture to me that isn't one of our usual lion dance signals, so I shrug and continue playing, but lower my volume, tempo, and variations down to a holding pattern while I wait to see what happens.

The festival organizers start making speeches in both Mandarin and Cantonese for the closing ceremony of the festival, which I split my attention to listen to. This is a tricky balance because when I play too quiet the other instrumentalists can't hear me and lose the beat, but when I play too loud I can't hear the speeches. Meanwhile the lions are still horsing around by the edge of the stage and mingling with passersby. When the organizers thank Hong Luck and NLSF, I momentarily increase my volume and play three short bows that are matched by the two people under the lion heads. The MC then tells the crowd we will be regaled with a song, so I play a rhythmic cadence that halts our percussion music. During the a cappella, someone comes over to tell me that we have

been waiting there because our lions will be going on stage to do a performance after the singers are done.

I take a quick look to see who I'll be performing with. There are two Hong Luck members under the lions and two older Hong Luck affiliates (kung fu masters in their own rights) playing gong and cymbals, all of whom are familiar with the lion dance rhythms I would play. Nonetheless, we hadn't discussed this beforehand and don't have a routine planned out, so I make a mental note to be extra careful about using clear cues, providing smooth transitions, and playing standard beats in order to make sure everyone can follow.

The leader of NLSF motions at me to keep it short and I start out strong with a head-up beat as the two lions quickly take their positions on the stage. The sounds of our percussion echo off the walls of the buildings lining the street and fill the air, but I'm struggling to balance the necessary speed and power against my own energy reserves at the end of a parade and the limits of my skill level. I give three loud rim clicks to signal bows for the start of our freestyle routine, and then I go back to the head-up beat before letting loose a powerful kung fu yell at the end of a rhythmic cadence to help cue a *saam sing*. The gong player, cymbalist, and lion dancers are following well and our energy is high. I play some walking beats followed by a heartbeat holding pattern to let everyone know we are moving on. When I think that the lions are waiting for my cue and hear the other instruments drop their volume in anticipation, I launch into a side-to-side beat. One lion is a bit slow to catch on, but both lions nail the crossover step at the end of it, which leads naturally back to the walking beat. I switch to playing basic rhythms on "autopilot" as I scan the area to see if anyone has food for the lions. After determining that there will be no eating I decide to play one more variation and finish. Again I yell to cue a *saam sing*, but this time I plan on adding a sniff-the-tail rhythm to the end of it. When I see that both lion dancers are doing a knee-up *saam sing*, rather than a plain one, I abandon the tail sniff, and play a clean-the-beard rhythm that better complements their movement pattern. There is a brief pause after the rhythmic cadence where I interject three more rim clicks to let everyone know we aren't continuing with the routine, and then I play three last bows to end the performance.

A Hong Luck drummer's field of awareness encompasses more than that of the other performers. As the preceding sketch shows, I had to simultaneously be vigilant towards a number of contextual factors: the performance space, the audience/patrons, non-performing team members, the lion dancers, and the other instrumentalists, in addition to remaining cognizant of the choreography and rhythms. In the heat of

performance, I felt the sound of my drumming being boosted by the added volume, sustain, frequencies, and timbres of the gong and cymbals in order to completely fill the sonic space—even an outdoor one like Dundas Street West. Within the area defined by our musical sound, I was in control, but it still required a constant series of adjustments to keep everyone entrained to my beat. There is a delicate balance to playing fast and loud enough to both lead and encourage while also constantly making micro adjustments to timing that are reactive to the other performers and help everyone stay in the groove together.

Drummers use a multi-sensory approach that encompasses visual and auditory awareness, endosomatic perception of their own playing technique, sensorimotor mirroring of lion dancers' physical movement, and group entrainment dynamics, all of which are embedded in the flow of time. In the expanded now-moment of musical experience (Husserl 1964 [1928]), retention keeps what has already passed connected to what is happening, while protention attaches what will happen next. This phenomenon is what allows both listeners and performers to perceive music as continuous, as opposed to a series of disjointed moments of sound. A Hong Luck drummer, as the leader of the ensemble, controls the group's progression through a choreographed routine or determines an appropriate sequence for a freestyle performance. All members of the group have the same exposure to what has already happened, but the drummer's leading edge of protention is necessarily further into the future than the rest of the group. In the Chinatown Festival closing ceremony described above, for example, I was the only person who actually knew what the next rhythm would be. While the other members of

the group probably made educated guesses about what I would play, they still had to confirm and react when they heard it. As a lion dancer, there have been several times when I have forgotten parts of hastily choreographed routines and relied heavily on the drum to guide me. I have also occasionally done performances where the drummer played something that was not part of the choreography, either by error or by choice, and I had no choice but to follow along. The leadership role of the drummer must nonetheless be tempered by sensitivity to unforeseen events that could change the direction of a performance, such as the agency of patrons or lion dancers, which adds an element of contingency to protention.

The onus is on the drummer to make or break a performance, which can be especially challenging when there is a group of people performing lion dance who do not usually work together and/or have a wide range of different experience levels. The leader of NLSF once explained to me that strong drumming could save a weak lion dance, but that poor drumming can ruin a good lion dance. This does not mean just bashing away as loudly as possible and brazenly showing off one's skill, but rather playing in a way that makes the most of the ensemble members' differing abilities and pushes them to a level that they could not achieve without solid leadership. Now that I have more experience behind the drum, I have a greater appreciation for the value of Noah's straightforward style. It may not be as flashy as David's, but it is inclusive and easier for everybody to follow, which I try to emulate in my own playing. That being said, I prefer performing the lion dance with David as the drummer because his greater speed and power provides more energy. Even in set choreography, the rhythms are not over-determined and there is

room for variation, so I value the way David mixes things up and presents challenges for me as a lion dancer. His rhythmic virtuosity gives me more to work with in my movement. Since David's drum lessons with Master Jin, he appears to be more cognizant of the need to work within the abilities of the rest of his team. Nonetheless, he still likes to use his advanced technical ability to push the boundaries of performance in a way that Noah may not be able to.

When a team of Hong Luck members works together regularly, especially when they are more skilled and/or experienced, the now-moment of performance can be more expansive. In such situations the entrainment between drummer, gong player, cymbalists, head lion dancer(s), and tail lion dancer(s) is both tighter and more effortless. At that point the dancers and supporting instruments are not just reacting to the drummer. Instead, their awareness expands to the point that rhythmic cues and cadences encompass a longer time of protention and they are thus more prepared for the next beat, even when performing a freestyle routine. The result is an entrained togetherness manifested as seamless synchronization. It is in these situations that there is more room to actualize the emotional content of a lion dance that Master Jin emphasized. When everyone is attuned to the structural foundation outlined by vocables, lion movement and drumming have more freedom to express emotion with variations, embellishments, and spontaneity. A poor tail dancer can stifle the head dancer's movement because the mask is physically connected to it, just as weak lion dancers and/or support instruments hamper the drummer if they fail to connect to the music. For example, David enjoys being creative on the drum and easily gets bored when he has to play closer to the basic version. His best beats only

get to come out when the rest of the group is in the groove and are intensifying the energy of David's drumming by adding their own.

A drummer's awareness must sometimes focus on the music itself, but the movement is still part of the rhythm even when playing the drum without the lion. Hong Luck members refer to the different types of beats in their repertoire according to the choreography that goes with them, and I have followed that convention in my writing (e.g., bow, head-up, *saam sing*, etc.). The link between music and movement is so strong that a purely musical arrangement would be done by dancing it out. In the spring of 2014, David, Noah, and I were working on an award application that would feature a recording of percussion rhythms without lion dancing. Our idea was to make an arrangement of the traditional routine that would preserve all the different beats, but eliminate unnecessary repetition. My seniors told me they were having trouble conceiving of the sequence and flow of the music without either dancing themselves or seeing someone dance it. The musical arrangement was thus discussed in terms of movement and worked out through lion dance, although the eventual performance and recording featured the percussion ensemble on its own. Similarly, freestyle drumming, such as one might find before a parade or gig when the group *opens the drum* (開鼓), follows the general pattern of a lion dance including beginning and ending with a bow rhythm. These examples show how an important part of the meaning of Hong Luck's drumming is found directly in its relationship to movement; the drum rhythms embody lion dancing even when the lion is not performing.

Looking closer at the experience of Hong Luck's music, there are important aspects of style that are internalized through training, but are not the primary focus of awareness during performance. A basic, but important, example is the lack of musical metre in the sense of a pattern of recurring strong and weak beats. When my cohort and I started learning to play the drum, we all unconsciously imposed a hierarchy of accents that would be characteristic of a 4/4 time signature, which was not surprising because of Hong Luck's use of duple subdivision and our backgrounds in 4/4 dominated Western music. Our misconception was particularly obvious in sections like the head-up or side-to-side that feature a string of eighth-notes or quarter-notes respectively. It took a while before I realized that the beats in these sections should be of equal strength, except for an emphasis on the last one. I did not come to this one my own, but rather through listening to my seniors and receiving corrections from them. David worked with us to make the beats more even. The leader of NLSF told me that the drumming is goal directed and drives towards the end of a phrase, which was reiterated to me by Master Joe Kwong of the New Asia Kung Fu Society in Hong Kong when he explicitly told me to emphasize the last beat in a phrase rather than the first one.

Another problem with trying to feel this type of music as having a time signature is that the phrase lengths are so variable. The traditional lion dance routine calls for fluctuations of the side-to-side rhythm, for example, that could be seven, nine, or eleven beats long.¹² For lion dancers who eventually become drummers, this is linked to the number of steps in those sections of choreography, which eventually forms the basis of

¹² Lion dancers' counting usually refers to the number of drum strokes but does not include rests or longer notes i.e., a side-to-side beat with seven drum strokes covers eight beats worth of time.

experiencing musical phrase lengths as variable and therefore open to variation. The transcription below (Figure 22) shows three different lengths of the side-to-side beat. All of them have a brief pickup and then a stream of quarter-notes, which is the most simple version of this pattern.

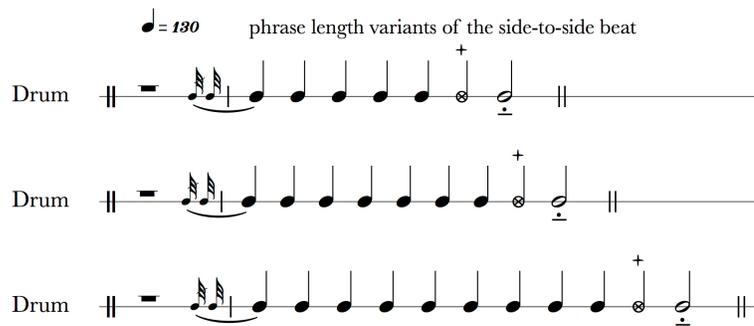


Figure 22: side-to-side phrase length transcription

The underlying musical structure of variable phrase lengths marked by an emphasis on the last beat is more obvious in straight-forward sections like the repeating, even quarter-notes of a side-to-side, but is equally present in other places. As previously mentioned, the walking beat is amenable to variations and presents an opportunity for creating semi-improvised versions on the fly by combining, recombining, and/or altering patterns. A prime example of this comes during lion dance parades when walking is the default pattern and can be tedious for everybody involved if the drummer keeps repeating the same thing. The general structure of this drum pattern is loosely antiphonal; it is made up of cycles that alternate between a simple, root pattern and variations. A short, basic pattern like the heartbeat (only two beats) would be played one or more times, answered by a pair or trio of slightly longer variations (four beats each), and then return to the foundation rhythm to start another cycle. There is a wide variety of typical variations to choose from, which can further be elaborated by using rolls to fill in or replace beats,

substituting drum strokes with mutes or rim clicks, and even spontaneously creating new rhythms that fit into the existing mould. To really mix things up, however, requires the ability to also rephrase the variations.

When I am drumming, I experience extension of the phrase as keeping the beat "up," whereas a "down" beat would feel like the end of the phrase. The feeling of being up is one that maintains a certain level of activity and energy, while also the impression of continuous forward movement. By withholding the emphasis that marks the final beat, I open the door to being able to link rhythms together, repeat patterns, and even draw in partial references to non-walking beats. A more advanced drummer like David seems to be able to extend his variations almost indefinitely, which he fills in with more elaborate rolls, mutes, and rim clicks. This is tricky because these rhythms can have accents, syncopations, and pauses that function as participatory discrepancies and create the feel or groove (Keil 1987), without necessarily having the structural significance of a final beat. Furthermore, the emphasis that signals finality is not really an accent, but rather a weight that brings the phrase down to a close.

As I reflected on my experience it became evident that it was not the sound that defined these phrases, but rather the brief silence that followed them and the momentary release of tension it provided. Nonetheless, not all rests have the same effect because a mute in the middle of a phrase does not indicate finality. Phrasing in walking beat extensions, and elsewhere in lion dance drumming, relies on the ability to not only maintain the energy of a passage and emphasize the last beat, but also to finalize the phrase with an emphatic pause. David once struggled to explain this to me in class as not

stopping, but rather leaving a space that is somehow active in its inactivity and is neither too short nor too long. This did not make much sense to me until I started performing with other people more regularly, rather than just practising the drum on my own. As experienced, one punctuates rhythm patterns with an emphasis on the last beat, but turns them into phrases by “playing” silence after the final sound.

Conclusion

At the start of this chapter, I recounted Noah's belief that the most appreciative audiences for Hong Luck's music are kung fu and/or lion dance practitioners, as well as people with a lifetime of experience with these practices. I then considered how embodiment could provide a framework for understanding the meaning of this type of percussion music. In writing about African music, John Chernoff suggested, "Movement is the key to 'hearing' the music" (1997:22), and I argue that this is also the case with Hong Luck's percussion. My discussion of this proceeded along two intertwined lines of inquiry: uncovering practitioners' experience with, through, or by means of the body in order to give non-practitioners a ground for an ideomotor understanding; and the various ways an embodied *entrainment* image schema provides the basis of metaphorical meanings and inference patterns.

I began my discussion by positioning Hong Luck's percussion instruments, and the style of music that is played on them, as fundamentally martial. Then I analyzed the body-of-ideas surrounding the rhythm of combat, which is engrained in the combative applications that are trained in sparring class and the choreographed forms that are drilled

in advanced kung fu class. This included "hearing" fighting skills as music, in an adaptation of the post-structuralist tendency to "read" meaningful action as text and/or discourse. I also engaged with Master Jin's fourfold approach to understanding lion dance that gathers all aspects of it together in order to present its meaning in action: underlying vocables, lion dance movement, drum rhythms, and emotional content.

The last section delved deeper into the experience of performing kung fu, lion dance, and drumming. I used longer, first-person, ethnographic vignettes to reveal the scope of a performer's awareness and the entrainment relationships between sound and movement. More specifically, I showed how martial arts demos maintain a narrow focus that allows an asynchronous relationship to music to evoke the rhythm of combat while still drawing on the motivation provided by the vigorous percussion; I explained how lion dancers are tuned into the drumming and rely on it to not only entrain the timing of their movement, but also to give them signals that guide and orient them like troops on a battlefield and helps compensate for their vision being impaired by the mask; and I finished up by discussing how drummers maintain a multi-sensory awareness of both the performance context and fellow performers in order to orchestrate the proceedings, while being responsive to unforeseen changes. I closed my interpretation with considerations of where performers fit into the now-moment of musical time and the experience of phrasing in Hong Luck's drumming.

In this chapter I have relied extensively on my own perspective as a practitioner of Hong Luck's kung fu, lion dance, and percussion music in order to present and interpret how these arts are given in experience. In Chinese culture it is considered quite

rude to boast and even accepting compliments can be seen as impolite. In the conclusion of a chapter where I have written at length about my own experience, I therefore feel it necessary to efface any mastery that may be implied. Master Jin is not one for heaping praise on his students, which is typical of traditional Chinese pedagogy. I have been more than pleased to receive the occasional *not too bad* (麻麻地) from him and once he even told me I was *good* (也可以).¹³ It was an honour when he and the other elders nominated me to be one of the lion dance team leaders and published my name in Chinese alongside the other Hong Luck officials in a local Chinese newspaper. In Figure 23 at the end of this chapter one can find my name (麥圭歌連) in the fifteenth section from the right, under the heading *Auspicious Lion Directors* (瑞獅主任). I was equally honoured when Master Jin asked me to help him teach the advanced kung fu class and Noah started trusting me to teach lion dance class without his supervision. Master Jin once told me that my skills were at seventy, eighty, or sometimes even ninety percent, but that he wanted me at one hundred percent. He then admitted this was impossible, had a good chuckle at how demanding he was being, and finished by gravely informing me that I needed to practice more. I write all this to show that my kung fu, lion dance, and drumming abilities have been approved by both seniors and elders at the club, while also freely admitting that I am not yet an adept.

I still have much room for growth at Hong Luck, particularly as a drummer.

Although it is a slow process, I am grateful for having learned to drum in the traditional

¹³ Master Jin gave me these compliments in both Chinese and English. Although the translations are not quite equivalent, I have used them because that is what he said. Notably, the English version is more effusive.

way (i.e., by starting with kung fu and then lion dance), because it means I have an embodied understanding of the beats. In contrast, at the 2014 Canadian Black Belt Hall of Fame induction ceremony and banquet, the leader of the Guelph Jing Mo Kung Fu Club, Robin Young, told me he was teaching lion dance drumming to a person who was not a lion dancer. This student was a professional percussionist and was apparently able to pick up the rhythms with remarkable speed. Robin found, however, that his pupil continued to have trouble with the characteristic phrasing patterns and appeared to be relying on rhythm concepts grounded in time signatures. This resulted in difficulties for the group because, without the characteristic nuances of phrase and groove, they were always reacting to the drumming; the other performers were having trouble understanding the drummer's sonic cues or predicting what would come next. Playing the right rhythms at the correct time—but without the right feeling—is not enough to give an acceptable performance, which Robin was forced to explain as being because, "the lion doesn't like it." I followed up three months later but was informed that the situation was slow to improve, so it remains to be seen if this student will be able to embody the movement in his drumming, without first learning to lion dance. In the end, I suspect he may choose—or be convinced by his teacher—that becoming a lion dancer will be necessary to improve his drumming.

This chapter has provided an interpretation of the embodied meanings of Hong Luck's drumming. The interdisciplinary nature of kung fu as a blurred genre, and the transmission process of becoming a drummer, mean that movement is always present in the music—even when the instruments play on their own (i.e., without accompanying a

demonstration or ritual). Performers and non-performing practitioners experience the music with, by means of, and through the body-of-ideas engrained by training in martial arts and lion dance. Their perception of the drumming is both functional and visceral; the drum rhythms frame, structure, and organize performance while also energizing the performers. Informed audiences, on the other hand, have an ideomotor experience of Hong Luck's music, rather than a practitioner's sensorimotor response. Both can understand the relationship of music to movement, and can thus hear the movement in the music. Following Mark Johnson's (1987, 1997) ideas about meaning and embodied metaphor, I have determined that the *entrainment* schema is key when discussing Hong Luck's drumming. More specifically, I contend that the *martial entrainment* schema provides a primary interpretive tool for performances of kung fu and lion dance: martial artists' struggle to remain asynchronous from the music is characteristic of the rhythm of combat, lion dancers' reliance on drum cues brings a martial quality to their ritual, and drummers' multifaceted role in performance positions them as generals who motivate, give signals, and impose the club's sonic will on the performance space. In the next, and final, chapter, I will summarize my findings and provide an integrated view of the multivalent meanings of Hong Luck's blurred genre. I will also consider the club's future and the challenges it faces going into its sixth decade.

加拿大康樂武館職員表 2014-2015

- 元老**：周練，陳振，伍梓培，甄元亨，劉錫文，吳宏。
- 會長**：李景輝。
- 副會長**：黃一飛，葛欣歌，溫錦光，趙卓明，陳黃佩英。
- 書記**：李金錫，陳友仁。
- 英文書記**：劉錫文，彼得。
- 財政**：吳玉慈。
- 執行委員**：周練，陳振，伍梓培，李金錫，李景輝，黃一飛，葛欣歌，溫錦光，華迪祖，周仁義。
- 公關**：溫錦光，朱偉邦，黃石明，李耀發，李文德，陳仕強。
- 宣傳**：顧青青，黃河東，陳如柏。
- 康樂**：梅煥文，陳暢彬，趙東強，柳嘉偉。
- 催收**：亞利，阮文華，楚列丁，周仁義。
- 婦女部**：陳黃佩英，吳玉慈，彭美莉，李素珠。
- 總教練**：陳振師傅。
- 教練**：華迪祖師傅，周仁義師傅，葛欣歌師傅，溫錦光，庫瑪，阿德里安，楚列丁，丁尼，王志強，柳嘉偉，大偉。
- 瑞獅主任**：吳宏，鄭漢，譚偉，顧靜宇，亞路，黃景新，柳嘉偉，麥主歌連。
- 總幹事**：吳惠強，張忠英，陳忠賢，陳卓生，林源深。
- 青年部**：馬博恩，李文，陳健庭，陳達龍，陳德龍，曹志強，梁衛旋，謝強。
- 總監督**：周練，伍培。
- 總顧問**：林羨，麥富潤，李家增，李華，譚輝，余輝，黃耀，陳相智，黃新均，沈家祥。
- 名譽會長**：郭有果，張瑞端，朱新琮，黃金薏，李相鑿，黃仕南。
- 名譽顧問**：伍伯良，鄭勝壽，李陳彩鳳，雷民盼。
- 武術顧問**：嚴杜師傅，姚崇英師傅，陳華師傅，周武師傅，劉勁錚師傅，高華征師傅，彭正庭師傅。
- 法律顧問**：陳炳丁律師，伍偉立律師。
- 網站經理**：Ray Frederick。

Figure 23: Hong Luck Kung Fu Club officers list 2014-2015

Chapter 6 Conclusion

Introduction

After six years of fieldwork at the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club, my research for this dissertation was complete. In many ways, however, my work with Hong Luck's practices has only just begun. As per the fiftieth anniversary commemorative booklet produced by the club, a decade is considered to be a kung fu "generation." Despite already being a junior teacher for kung fu, lion dance, and percussion music, I still have a way to go before I reach that temporal marker. That being said, there is no final goal, so ten years per generation should be taken as a convenient number for organizing the membership and a general indication of how long it is likely to take before one could be considered a senior instructor—being recognized as a master would take much longer.¹ When I say that my work is only beginning, I mean more than just needing further training; I now find myself implicated in the chain of transmission. In November 2013, filmmaker Diana Dai shot a Hong Luck segment for her documentary on Toronto's Chinatown.² When she interviewed Master Jin Chan, she asked him about his thoughts and hopes for the club's future. He replied, "I hope they will teach what I taught them" (我希望佢地會教我教咗佢地嘅嘢). She pressed him to elaborate, perhaps not realizing that Hong Luck's head-instructor and co-founder was succinctly referring to the club's entire half-century legacy of martial arts, lion dance, and percussion music, including the

¹ Many martial arts use a series of coloured belts as a visual ranking system that culminates in a black belt being awarded to those who reach the senior instructor level. This practice began with judo, but has spread to many other styles. It has not been widely used, however, in traditional Chinese martial arts.

² *Crossing Chinatown* <http://www.dianadai.com/9.html>

repertoire of several styles of kung fu. Master Jin reiterated, "if they teach what I taught them, that's enough" (如果佢地教我教咗佢地嘅嘢, 就得啦).

My fieldwork was done at a transitional time in Hong Luck's history when the future of the club had come into question for several reasons. Foremost among these was co-founder and former head instructor Master Paul Chan's death in 2012, but changing social interest in—and valuation of—traditional martial arts also loomed large. The time is therefore ripe to disseminate information about the importance of this club for not only members and patrons, but also the local and transnational communities that it is connected to. The embodied social, cultural, combative, musical, and ritualistic dispositions that comprise a kung fu habitus are transmitted both within Hong Luck and without, as many senior members have started their own clubs, and there is an ongoing tradition of exchange with other practitioners, masters, and associations. The body-of-ideas inculcated through training is also proudly displayed in public performances, which are presented to people of widely varying ability to interpret them. My research has led me to a multifaceted understanding of Chinese identity as embodied in Hong Luck's blurred genre, magnified by the exigencies of diaspora, and manifested in performance, which I will now summarize. In this conclusion, I will first review the goals and findings of my research. Next I will discuss my core arguments about identity and embodied knowledge, with attention to how the transmission process structures the meaning of rhythm and movement in eventual performance. Finally, I will consider Hong Luck's future.

Overview of Research Objectives and Findings

In the introductory chapter, I discussed the myriad types of activities encompassed by the term *martial art* and positioned Hong Luck's various practices as a single, blurred genre (cf., Downey 2002, further to Geertz 1983). While some styles of martial art are clearly focused on only one thing (combatives, self-defence, competition, performance, ritual, fitness, and/or spirituality), my fieldwork encompassed the whole gamut. The importance of rhythm—both musical and martial—for Hong Luck's practices cannot be dismissed, but the amount of words devoted to it in this dissertation outstrips what is typically said about it at the club. As I was told when I first asked about doing research on this percussion tradition, the transmission process for music involves a clearly defined pathway of learning that is grounded in kung fu and built with lion dance; the drumming is learned, but not exactly taught. The rhythm of combat that animates both performances and applications of kung fu is similarly embedded in the training without either being a separate part of the curriculum or regularly explained. My approach to participant-observation and performance ethnography has thus been structured by Hong Luck's discipleship model, but reflexively and interpretively framed by music. The multifaceted nature of kung fu as a blurred genre has led me to the application of a mixed theoretical toolkit including semiotics, phenomenology, practice theory, and embodiment.

As the title of this dissertation suggests, my overarching investigation has been concerned with the ways rhythm and movement construct, negotiate, and challenge meaning. I have argued that the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club's transmission process inculcates values, ideas, and beliefs that help to (re)construct Chinese identity in diaspora

through corporeal acculturation or enculturation; the dispositions thus engrained come together to form a kung fu habitus that is highly specific to the club and its history of resisting oppression in Canada, but is also deeply embedded in Chinese culture. Furthermore, I have shown how Hong Luck performances display the embodied, Chinese, martial ethos that is a product of the transmission process and thus serve to (re)produce Chinese identity for participants, audiences, and the local community. I have also argued for a musical approach to combat skills that draws on the experience of rhythm and the entrainment thereof. Early on in my fieldwork, Master Paul made the club's twin agenda of culture and combat explicit to me. Nonetheless it took years of learning, practising, and performing before I began to grasp the import of his lesson. In other words, it took a long-term investment of sweat equity to build up a credible example of Hong Luck's Chinese martial habitus.

Kung fu has a long history of secrecy, which in Hong Luck's case goes back to the seditious activities of Qing dynasty rebels and the precarious situation of early Chinese Canadians. Practitioners from the old days had a vested interest in limiting what outsiders knew about them. While kung fu (including lion dance) is now taught and practised more openly, the legacy of a reticent attitude toward revealing some kinds of information remains important. This has had an impact on not only my research methods, but also the emphases in my writing—and what I left out. In order to complete this project, I needed to become a full-fledged member of the club, which was achieved by long-term participation in all facets of the group's activities. This approach involved

being a keen student, proving myself as a performer, and keeping field-notes in a journal after classes, parades, banquets, and performances.

My fieldwork made me privy to some things that I was cautioned to not put into my dissertation. Foremost among these was that I was prohibited from transcribing the beats of the complete traditional lion dance routine or notating a compilation of typical variations for any particular type of rhythm. Further to this injunction, I was barred from including video examples in this dissertation of either Hong Luck's performances or training.³ The veil of secrecy also extended to some of Hong Luck's activities as a tong, and several key people asked to remain anonymous, both of which I respected by maintaining a degree of vagueness about some things and using pseudonyms where necessary. Finally, the body-experience lineage (Brown 2014) of kung fu privileges nonverbal forms of transmission. In the old days, this was a question of protecting written knowledge from being stolen (widespread illiteracy may also have been a factor) and preventing people from being able to learn by eavesdropping. It also reflects the physical nature of the practices. As a result, my fieldwork has been guided by my consultants towards aspects of kung fu, lion dance, and percussion that are often unspoken—or at least sparingly discussed. Through intense training, extensive performance, and observant participation, I have received significant embodied knowledge from the members of Hong Luck. While the gradual and physical nature of the transmission process has resulted in this dissertation containing relatively few direct quotes, paraphrases, or comments from my consultants, I submit that the richness of the fieldwork data stemming

³ Some videos posted by other people may be found on YouTube by searching for “Hong Luck kung fu”: https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=hong+luck+kung+fu

from my experience is the result of sharing Hong Luck's body of knowledge. Any deficiencies, however, are my own.

My research framework can be broken down into three main paths of inquiry. The first angle looked at identity on a number of different levels, including ways of being Chinese that cross ethnic and national boundaries as well as the stylistic characteristics of both the club and individual practitioners. Secondly, I investigated the rhythm of combat as it is manifested in fighting technique—both in sparring and in performance. This also led me to consider the martial qualities of the music, which included not only cultural categorization, but also historical and contemporary function. The third line of inquiry focused on the experience of Hong Luck's music for audiences and performers. While the percussion music was sometimes heard without being an accompaniment for lion dance or kung fu, its enduring association with movement required careful consideration.

Chapter 2 provided background information and context for my fieldwork, including both stories and histories. I used the example of General Kwan (Duara 1988), whose statue sits in a place of honour at the back of Hong Luck's training hall, as a guiding metaphor for the superscription of meaning onto kung fu and lion dance. The historical General Kwan (a.k.a. Guan Yu) has been adapted over the generations to go from being a famous warrior to a tutelary deity, with layers of signification added by various religious traditions, literature, and folklore. Any given interpretation of his persona writes over other incarnations, but also relies on them to show palimpsest-like traces that increase his potency. Kung fu and lion dance are much the same way, which is

why I included a range of different approaches to them, without trying to resolve a single "correct" interpretation.

Hong Luck's members, and their styles of kung fu and lion dance, are part of an enduring tradition of resilience. The history of the Chinese in Canada began in the mid-1800s and the difficult legacy of their first century in this country has had a formative influence on the social structure of their neighbourhoods, also known as *Chinatowns* (唐人街). The early years were characterized by exclusion resulting from institutional and inter-personal racism, which gave rise to ethnic Chinese enclaves centred on mutual aid associations called *tongs* (堂). Established in 1961, the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club is one of those tong associations and remains well connected in the Chinatown network. Hong Luck was formed at the tail end of the discrimination era when self-defence was a key priority for its members and their community. Over time the group's mandate has moved towards a focus on preserving and promoting Chinese culture, but still retains the indelible imprint of a violent foundation.

The kung fu practised at Hong Luck has long been a tool of resistance, with origins going back to nineteenth-century, anti-Qing dynasty rebels in Southern China. This has not, however, been a question of large-scale warfare because modern firepower had already obviated hand-to-hand combat on the battlefield when Choi Lee Fut, and later Do Pi, were founded. Instead, martial arts have been a form of *self-strengthening* (自強) that not only allows personal or community defence, but also embody the heroic ethos of the culture through performance. Hong Luck's kung fu further superscribes contemporary practice on top of an origin myth linking them to the legendary Five Elders

of the Southern Shaolin Temple, thus benefiting from a spiritual aura, mark of authority, and the weight of folklore. Lion dancing also has mythical origins that account for the lack of any such natural feline being native to China, which complements its historiographical lineage going back to Tang dynasty court performances. The lion dance was an important part of kung fu by the Qing dynasty, when rebels used it to disguise their martial arts training as well as gather funds for their seditious activities. The symbolic features of the performance had a double meaning during those times because the plucking-the-greens sequence could be interpreted as having homonyms for vegetable/fortune or green/Qing dynasty, so the ritual action signified spreading wealth while destroying the oppressive rulers. The three traditional colour schemes of lion masks tied the dance, kung fu, and tong associations back to General Kwan by symbolizing him and his two sworn brothers, who are known in Chinese culture (among other things) for their oaths of loyalty to each other.

Chapter 3 looked at Hong Luck's lion dance performances as the club's most important public activity and considered their multivalent potential for signification. Seen as ritual, lion dancing traipses along the continuum of efficacy and entertainment (Schechner 1974), being simultaneously an effort to influence preternatural powers (Turner 1973) and a social construction of identity (cf., Cooley 2006). The interpretation depends on performer, audience, and context so the meaning is typically multiple and often negotiated—in other words, the significance of lion dance is emergent. In working through the semiotic layers, I turned towards performance ethnography that privileged the lived experience of iconic signs of similarity and indexical signs of relationship, rather

than the symbolic signs of convention found in Chapter 2 (Turino 2008). This was balanced by thick description in order to give a detailed impression of the goings on.

Much of this chapter focused on lion dance parades because Chinese New Year is the most important festival on the Chinatown calendar, but I also looked at some examples of individual performances. The New Years processions have largely been the same during my fieldwork, which thus allowed a general summary of the events as well as highlighted the significance of certain aspects when there have been transgressions. The group gathers at Hong Luck in the morning and then spends the afternoon going up and down the streets of Chinatown doing ritual performances for patrons. These lion dances are quite short and represent a distillation of the most fundamental components of a routine. Between performances, the walking beat sonically connects the parade by keeping the drumming continuous. It also presents an opportunity for the musicians to stretch out with variations. There is a limit, however, to how far drummers can go with improvisation and/or inclusion of different types of beats. Elders and seniors enforce Hong Luck's musical identity by discouraging playing that departs too much from convention.

While the rhythms embody the club's identity in their iconic adherence to established mores, the lion head is quite literally the face of the club. This was made abundantly clear as tension when Hong Luck crossed paths with the lion dancers from the Chinese Freemasons during a New Years parade. Regular lion dance parades are also integral to indexically constructing the identity of the Chinatown neighbourhood; where there are Chinese lions there are Chinese people. This is obvious from the "Welcome to

Chinatown” banners that line the streets and feature the image of a black and red lion costume, but the sound of the gong and drum ensemble also plays an important role by filling the space with an index of Chinese identity and thus laying claim to it. Patrons who hire lion dances for their events, however, are not always well versed in the culture and sometimes eschew the percussion music. This has occasionally caused difficulties for Hong Luck’s conservative approach and required negotiation. Other areas of tension have been gender and ethnicity. Non-Chinese lion performers no longer appear to cause the friction they did earlier in Hong Luck’s history, but gender remains a contested area, as some patrons do not want females involved in the lion dance ritual.

The fourth chapter turned from public performance toward the semi-private practice that occurs within the training hall. Starting from what my consultants told me regarding drumming being learned but not taught, I investigated how drummers study their craft through other practices. I drew on Bourdieu's concept of habitus (1977) and the way its practical logic economically applies the same dispositions to a variety of activities. More specifically, I looked at what teachable concepts and skills were transferable from kung fu and lion dance to drumming.

My training at Hong Luck began with horse stance, just as it does for everyone who studies there. That posture is the physical foundation for all of the club's practices. The pain and boredom of holding a deep squat for extended periods of time is a necessary part of training that builds students' self-discipline and tests their dedication. Early on in my fieldwork, I was fortunate to have Master Paul explain to me that a key goal is to perform kung fu in a Chinese way, which requires not only a strong, centred stance, but

also flowing movement that abruptly gathers its energy at the end. Hong Luck's beginner classes build up students' horse stance while teaching basic techniques and choreographed forms. These are typically done in time with the instructor's verbal counting, which develops the synchronization abilities that are required for admittance to lion dance class.

When students begin lion dancing, they do so without the mask or accompaniment from the musical instruments. At first the teacher speaks the rhythms as vocables, which helps novices learn both music and movement at the same time. Eventually they begin to play the musical instruments, starting by simply keeping time on the cymbals while their teacher or a senior student plays the drum. Through lion dancing, vocables, and playing accompaniment on the other instruments, students are prepared to start drumming. Relatively little time is devoted to playing the drum in class, however, so to make progress requires practising whenever the opportunity arises. While solo rehearsal outside the club is encouraged, it is perhaps more important that prospective drummers play at the club. Over time, all Hong Luck members need to become part of the ties of mutual indebtedness (*guanxi*) that organize Chinese society. This takes the form of helping to maintain the physical building, teach classes, and/or do performances. By actively participating in the club's social structure, students put themselves in a position to collect jade when they throw out tiles, which is especially important for would-be drummers. Without a formal curriculum for teaching the drum, people benefit from the comments, corrections, and tips given to them when they play in front of their seniors—but only if they have good *guanxi*.

Chapter 5 was about the experience of Hong Luck's music and its meaning. It was grounded in embodiment theory, but preceded from a phenomenological perspective. The main theoretical tool I used was Mark Johnson's idea of embodied image schemata and metaphor as the foundation of meaning cognition. This was attached to kung fu and lion dance with the *entrainment* schema, or the way one rhythmic system becomes synchronized to another. I approached Hong Luck's music from the perspective of a performer in order to show what practitioners perceive, but I also looked to explain what experts apprehend with, by means of, or through in order to give non-practitioners ideas to work from. These two angles could be called *sensorimotor* and *ideomotor* respectively (Reybrouck 2001), which refers to whether the experiencing person is sensing the action or thinking it.

When considering the meaning of Hong Luck's music, an important issue is whether it is even music at all. Based on the opinions of my consultants, Chinese musical aesthetics, and historical sources, I determined that this type of gong and drum ensemble is heard as inherently martial and only nominally musical. It is thus conceived of as more closely related to kung fu than to music, which means that it is intended to excite the spirit and organize movement. Martial arts demonstrations draw more heavily on the former function and lion dancing on both; choreographed kung fu forms are performed with percussion accompaniment but do not synchronize with the beats, while the lion dance ritual follows cues, patterns, timing, and energy provided by the drummer. The rhythm of combat is not the same as musical or dance rhythm, but both of them rely on the *entrainment* schema. Sparring classes provided an opportunity to explore the

rhythmic aspect of fighting, which highlighted the synchronicity of successful defence and, vice versa, the asynchronicity of effective attack. Master Jin Chan emphasized how synchronization is essential for the meaning of lion dance performance and underwrites the fourfold interaction of vocables, movement, drumming, and emotion. Hong Luck fighters and performers thus make sense of their practices through entrainment, which also provides an interpretive tool for informed audiences.

Finally, I discussed the experience of performing kung fu, lion dance, and drumming. This proceeded along a continuum of awareness toward music, audience, and fellow performers. Martial arts demonstrations have the narrowest focus. When doing kung fu with percussion music accompaniment, Hong Luck members are expected to not follow the drum in order to manifest a combative relationship to the musical rhythms. I have found that ignoring the drumming, however, is not helpful and that I must remain aware enough of it that I can avoid entrainment. Performance practice also entails a short visual focus as one follows one's own hands, feet, and/or weapon(s) while pushing the audience into the background. Lion dance is even more visually limited because of the mask, but lion dancers maintain a keen auditory awareness of the drum. Harkening back to the ancient military use of the gong and drum as signalling devices on the battlefield, lion dancers rely on the music to structure their movement. They are also aware of the patrons who feed them and with whom they interact. Drummers maintain the broadest focus, which requires them to watch performers and patrons while also keeping a groove going with the gong and cymbals. As the leader of the group, the drummer sets the tempo, gives cues, and determines the lion dance structure. He or she must therefore also

have a longer field of protention than the other performers who are following their lead. Drummers drive the energy of performance. For both asynchronous kung fu demos and synchronized lion dances, the lead musician needs to be sensitive to the abilities and skill level of both the performer(s) on stage and the other musicians. That being said, Hong Luck's style is fast and aggressive, so the drummer also pushes the other performers to give a more exciting performance.

Rhythm, Movement, and Meaning

Rhythm—broadly defined—is at the heart of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club from the cycle of annual events to the schedule of weekly training and from the percussion music played for lion dance rituals to the patterns of (a)synchronicity in sparring (cf., Blue 2014; Miyamoto 1982 [1645]). Drumming is the club's heartbeat. Much as the drummers have their own individual flair based on an interpretation of the group's collective repertoire, Hong Luck has a distinctive musical identity. It is grounded in *Futsan* gong and drum music, but presents a unique blend of the drumming from several different styles of kung fu. As described in Chapter 2, Choi Lee Fut and Do Pi are syncretic systems that draw on a cross-section of the major families of Southern Chinese, Shaolin-descended martial arts. They are practised together at Hong Luck and, after more than fifty years of history, the music and kung fu of these styles have become commingled. The club's singularity is thus superscribed on a rich lineage that fans out like a family tree and connects it to a broader Chinese martial identity, which itself embodies the heroic

display ethos of the culture (Zarrilli 2001). Like a pumping heartbeat, Hong Luck's drumming circulates this heritage every time the group performs.

The club's embodiment of identity has five pillars: respect, centre, balance, flow, and resistance. At Hong Luck, the first of these is a Confucian virtue called *ritual propriety* (禮), but is referred to colloquially as *respect*. Despite the ancient Chinese philosopher Confucius (孔子) being known as *the teacher of ten-thousand generations* (萬世師表), his name is hardly mentioned at Hong Luck. His principle of ritual propriety, however, has broad implications for not only rites and ceremonies, but also etiquette and courtesy. It encompasses the many different types and occasions for bowing—in training or performance—whether done physically by kung fu practitioners and lion dancers or sonically by musicians. Respect also means regularly lighting incense on the club's altar. The implications go further, especially for lion dancers and musicians who represent the club when interacting with the Chinese community. The various protocols of the lion dance are a type of respect, but performers learn to continue to be respectful even when they remove the lion mask and put down the instruments; this includes using two hands to give or receive things from patrons, elders, and seniors as well as using Chinese table manners when having the customary post-gig meal. Hong Luck members thus embody ritual propriety as respect in multiple ways.

The second pillar is being centred, whose primary manifestation is the horse stance. This deep, wide, and stable posture is the foundational position for kung fu, lion dance, and drumming. I discussed learning to physically and mentally sink oneself into the *daantihn*, which in Chinese medicine is the centre of the body. This process of

centring reflects a path of being-in-the-world that embodies both the Buddhist idea of non-duality between body and mind as well as the Chinese worldview that positions China as the Middle Kingdom.

The formal aspects of a horse stance, and the cultural formations it links to, are only part of the meaning. Harris Berger has explored a phenomenon that he calls *stance* as "the affective, stylistic, or valual qualities with which a person engages with an element of her experience" (2009:xiv). He adapts Husserl's dictum that consciousness is always consciousness of something by suggesting that people are not simply conscious of things, but rather are always grappling with their relationship to elements of existence. For Berger, the qualities of that engagement determine the bulk of its meaning. Novice Hong Luck students, for example, tend to have a *stance on* training that blends determination with avoidance as they struggle to maintain a low horse stance while the pain forces them to stand up and/or adjust their limbs. They are told it is important, but rarely understand just how essential it is, and so they also contend with trust in their teachers, the club, and the transmission process. Once Hong Luck members start performing, they take a *performative stance* on the horse stance. It becomes their power position. This too has individual variations as one person might grapple with martial being-in-the world through stability, which they do by staying low and wide with heavy steps. Another practitioner, however, could engage with the idea of flexibility and use quick footwork with a lighter horse stance. On the other hand, performers can also fail to get into their horse stance from exhaustion, physical limitations, or laziness, thus grappling in various ways with their deficiency in this essential posture. The audience too

has a *stance on* the performance—even when they are hearing it. Their valuation of kung fu or lion dance performers' horse stances is always affected by the music. A drummer's horse stance is therefore heard more than it is seen because it is a *stance on* influence, energy, and strength, which audiences grapple with in relation to the martial and ritual elements of performance.

Balance is the third pillar, whose expression is conceived of as the interplay of yin and yang. The source of this theory lies in Taoism, which is a major influence on Chinese culture. The concept of yin yang is linked to martial arts through another origin myth. The second largest source of kung fu styles in Chinese folklore is found in the *Wutang Mountains* (武當山). As with the legends surrounding the Shaolin temple, some scholars are critical of this story (e.g., Lorge 2012), but some versions of Hong Luck's logo have featured not only the yin yang symbol (a.k.a. *grand ultimate diagram* 太極圖), but also the Chinese characters for both Shaolin and Wutang. In Figure 24 below, these are actually written inside the two halves of the yin yang, with Wutang on the left and Shaolin on the right.



Figure 24: Hong Luck logo #2

The idea is that existence is about opposite forces that are in constant interconnected, interdependent, and complementary being. Hong Luck's kung fu embodies this meaning through motion in many ways. Loose, flowing strikes are balanced with a firm, stable stance. When one hand is hard, extended, and/or attacking, the other is usually soft, contracted, and/or defending. Combinations tend to whirl in concentric swirls around the centred stance and often make yin yang-like patterns in the air. The music too embodies this with the complementary opposites of a low-pitched membranophone and high-pitched metalophones providing a balanced ensemble sound. Perhaps most importantly, the efficacy of the lion dance ritual relies on the concept of yin and yang. The hot, noisy, invigorating, and positive quality (i.e., yang) of the performance disperses excess cold, quiet, debilitating, and negative chi energy (i.e., yin) and thereby promotes synergistic balance.

Flow is the fourth pillar of Hong Luck's movement and meaning. It is related to the smooth brushstrokes of *calligraphy* (書法), where writing Chinese characters is taken to the level of an art form. These gestures flow fluidly through changes of speed and pressure before concentrating the force into the final moment. This flowing movement is found in not only calligraphy, but also Chinese martial arts and dance. In kung fu demonstrations, concentration of force is often exaggerated for drama's sake, while in sparring it is used as a tool to generate powerful strikes. The same type of impact is used when playing the drum in order to generate loudness without sacrificing speed or rhythmic flow. Musically, this gesture is embodied in phrase structures that emphasize the last beat. Whether in continuous playing like the walking beat or in rhythmic cadences such as the end of a *saam sing*, the music flows until the energy is gathered to punctuate the final stroke. In calligraphy, dance, kung fu, and drumming, the intensification at the end of a stroke, combination, or phrase can vary in strength and does not necessarily entail an exaggerated accent. This gathering is a closure that releases its force and is as much a question of intention as it is of pressure.

The fifth and final pillar is resistance. The connection of Choi Lee Fut to anti-Qing dynasty rebels is important to the idea of kung fu as a means of resisting oppression. Lion dance and kung fu demonstrations showed—and still show—audiences a strong body and indomitable spirit, which is reinforced by the vigorous martial percussion. The uniquely Chinese character of the movement and music embodies a heroic cultural ideal, and the effectiveness of this meaning is enhanced by real fighting skills. In Imperial China, people used martial arts to protect their families and property

from bandits, corrupt Qing officials, and encroaching foreign powers; in Canada, Hong Luck's founders did the same against racial violence. Resistance, however, is about more than fighting back. In the face of injustice—whether in nineteenth-century Guangdong province or twentieth-century Toronto—kung fu and lion dance have the potential to inspire pride and hope, which foster cultural resilience. In the twenty-first century, Hong Luck continues to preserve and promote Chinese martial arts, which is a mission that draws on all five pillars to uphold tradition, construct identity, and resist subordination.

My main argument about the nature of the Chinese martial habitus that is built through training and expressed in both combat and performance is augmented by a methodological intervention. This was the result of my interdisciplinary approach to studying Hong Luck's percussion, which was necessitated by the transmission process. That is to say, my experience at the club pushed me to think about my fieldwork in different ways than I might have if I had attempted to focus more narrowly on the drumming. My innovation was using music to analyze combat skills. Musical theory and notation provide an extensive, established and coherent set of tools for the study of rhythm, which I have shown can be applied to martial arts. This dissertation has taken some important first steps in this area, but there is much more that could be done. For example, videos of combat sport competitions could be analyzed by using a digital audio workstation (DAW) to attach sounds to an athlete's movement in much the same way as sound effects are added to kung fu movies.⁴ This would allow analysis of a competitor's timing, which would be useful in both pedagogy and strategy. For teaching and learning,

⁴ Digital audio software programs like ProTools, Cubase, and Logic all allow the user to work with video at a fine level of detail for synchronizing sound effects and music.

such a project could reveal significant aspects of a champion's attack and defence rhythms that would be worthy of emulation. For strategy, competitors could benefit from having an overview of the rhythmic profile of an upcoming opponent in order to develop a plan to beat them.

Studying cultural practices in a diasporic situation presents both opportunities and challenges for the ethnographer. Having the luxury of time is one of the best things about doing fieldwork in one's own backyard, which in my case allowed me to learn Hong Luck's drumming according to the painstaking traditional transmission process. I was also fortunate that multicultural Toronto has one of the largest Chinese populations in North America, and so the local Chinatown provided a vibrant socio-cultural context for my research. Had I not gone to Hong Kong, however, my fieldwork might have remained incomplete. Spending time overseas was important for solidifying my Cantonese language skills, which came to be very useful when communicating with Hong Luck elders upon my return. Moreover, it gave me something to compare my diasporic research with.

Hong Luck's identity is worked out through martial arts and lion dance in relation to a history of discrimination, marginalization, and racism. The Chinese in Canada were treated as an inferior "Other" and not only the Hong Luck elders, but also many of the senior members had to strengthen themselves through kung fu against victimization. I attribute the intensity of the training hall to people having literally fought for their lives, which brought an undercurrent of ruthless violence to Hong Luck that was attenuated in the groups I trained with in Hong Kong.

In her book *Writing Diaspora*, Rey Chow wrote that, “those who live in Hong Kong realize the opportunistic role they need to play in order, not to ‘preserve,’ but to negotiate their ‘cultural identity’; for them opportunity is molded in danger and danger is a form of opportunity” (1993:25). She was referring to the cultural dangers faced by Chinese people in Hong Kong under British (now PRC) rule and the opportunities offered by rethinking dominant conceptualizations, hegemony, and even ethnic solidarity. This sort of negotiation has also been an issue for Chinese Canadians, but Hong Luck offers an insight into approaches to such dangers that are as much physical as they are intellectual, social, or cultural. More generally, working out Asian diasporic identity through drumming-as-resistance is also found in the discourses of loudness, vigour, control, and strength in North American taiko (Wong 2004).

In addition to serving as a resource for other scholars working on martial arts, this dissertation draws attention to two aspects of researching systems of fighting skills when they feature an integrated musical component. Firstly, studying music and martial arts is inherently interdisciplinary. Bi-musicality would thus ideally be complemented by long-term, intensive physical practice in order for participant-observation to include both sound and movement. Secondly, the relationship of music and martial arts in action is a fertile area of investigation. It is not only ethnomusicology, but also ethnochoreology, dance anthropology, and choreomusicology that are relevant to this juncture of sound and movement. More broadly, music and martial arts echoes recent interest in music and sport (Buchanan 2002; Cooley 2014). Furthermore, even when there is no music involved, I have shown how the rhythmic qualities of combative movement open it up to

musical analysis. This provides an opportunity for music scholars to contribute theoretical tools that could be used in other spheres of academe (e.g., sport studies) as well as the practical realms of combat and self-defence. As this dissertation has demonstrated, the martial arts provide an area of research for scholars in several of fields of study and an opportunity for crossing disciplinary boundaries in some interesting ways.

Coda: The Silent Flute

Over the course of this dissertation I have mentioned a number of factors that have put the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club on shifting ground. China has risen to prominence as a global power and Chinese Canadians are now an accepted part of Canada's multicultural mosaic, so the need for martial heroes and tong associations is not what it once was. Furthermore, the bright lights of grand spectacles—in both competition and performance—are increasingly attracting public interest in martial arts. The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) is growing rapidly in popularity among both spectators and practitioners, as is the acrobatic style of competition lion dance. In kung fu movies, the 1970s were a golden age for onscreen martial arts skills, which was epitomized by Bruce Lee. That decade is fondly remembered by Hong Luck members for the kung fu craze that filled the training hall past capacity with eager students. The kung fu film genre is no longer as prominent as it once was, and many contemporary martial arts movies have moved towards less realism: computer-generated imagery, death defying stunts, and/or comedy (e.g., *Kung Fu Hustle* 2004). These various external factors have resulted

in fewer new students and lion dance gigs for Hong Luck, which in turn has put a financial strain on the club.

The fiftieth anniversary in 2011 and Master Paul Chan's death in 2012 were milestones that prompted discussions about Hong Luck's future. These two events attracted many senior members who were no longer regularly active at the club, but who enriched the conversations with their experiences from decades gone by. During the year of the fiftieth anniversary, people were generally respectful and complimentary, which was in keeping with the nature of the celebration. Despite all due respect for Hong Luck having reached a half-century, several returning senior members hinted at disappointment that the club was not what they remembered it to be. In November 2013, an active senior member, who had remained at the club for over thirty years, summarized the situation more explicitly with a lion metaphor, "We don't roar anymore. It's just a whisper... just a meow." Notably, Hong Luck alumni who have successfully started their own clubs—and still "roar"—have all departed from the traditions of their teachers.⁵ These departures include: focusing on kickboxing, bringing in other styles of martial arts, mixing kung fu with fitness training, and incorporating competition-style lion dancing.

In the wake of Master Paul's death, several leaders of these offshoot clubs tried to suggest changes to Hong Luck that would "improve" the curriculum, which both the elders and the seniors who have remained with the club soundly rejected. Instead, co-founding Master Jin Chan stepped up as head instructor and has reinforced Hong Luck's

⁵ Martial arts schools in the Greater Toronto Area started by Hong Luck alumni include: Northern Leg Southern Fist, JV Martial Arts Studio, Bamboo Kung Fu, Sammy Cheng Toronto Lion Dance Association, Twin Dragon Kung Fu and Kickboxing Club, and Body by Dex. Of these, NLSF has remained the closest to tradition, but has still incorporated some of the crowd-pleasing aspects of competition-oriented lion dance and kung fu.

mandate as a bastion of traditional kung fu and lion dance. On his watch, there has even been a reactionary shift at the club towards the older, village style of Choi Lee Fut that Master Jin learned in Taishan in the 1930s, rather than the more standardized variety that Master Paul was promoting near the end of his life. With an aging head instructor already in his 80s, Hong Luck's future will depend on who is next in line. At the time of writing, there is no named successor, although there are some potential candidates. In order to continue with the club's founding principles, the next head instructor will need to be a well-rounded kung fu and lion dance master with not only the backing of other Hong Luck members, but also the support of the local community.

I will conclude this dissertation with an analogy that summarizes my reading of the past, present, and future of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. Behind the counter that is near the club's entrance lies a locked cabinet containing (among other things) a selection of weapons. One of these is a steel flute (see Figure 25 below), which I had heard about, but did not actually see until I had been training for several years. As a musician, I was very interested in this musical-instrument-turned-weapon, and I asked many people about it. Unfortunately, no one seemed to know either the martial or musical techniques associated with it, including Master Jin. When I finally did get my hands on it, I was disappointed to find that it was shaped like a *dizi* (Chinese transverse flute, 笛子), but was not capable of playing a scale because the hollow tube was open on both ends. One senior member suggested that I might learn a choreographed form for it from a master outside Hong Luck and another reminded me that I could mimic one of the kung fu flute

forms on YouTube, both of which I decided against.⁶ Given the richness of the club's extant traditions, I did not feel it was necessary to import a replacement; I was already busy enough with the curriculum and did not really need to be learning extra forms. I was also hesitant about attempting to bring other styles or lineages of kung fu into Hong Luck through a replacement steel flute form because it could have been considered disrespectful to the elders. The potential for impropriety was increased by my relatively junior status at the club. Ultimately, I would rather Hong Luck's steel flute remain silent—as both a weapon and a musical instrument—than gild the lily. This situation is an apt analogy for the club as a whole.



Figure 25: the silent flute

⁶ e.g., <http://youtu.be/7rHMh3yh9Ww>

With over fifty years of activity and the input from several kung fu masters, Hong Luck already has an exceedingly rich legacy. In fact, it would be nearly impossible for anyone to learn and remember the club's whole repertoire of martial arts forms—while also being good at them.⁷ This is exacerbated by today's members having many more options for activities, hobbies, and entertainment than people did when Hong Luck was founded; contemporary students train less than their predecessors did. With the preservation-oriented mandate of the club, it is unlikely that anyone at Hong Luck would recommend forgetting a form. Nonetheless, it seems inevitable that some parts of the tradition will be lost over time (like the steel flute), and perhaps that is not necessarily a bad thing. The limits of memory, oral transmission, and time devoted to practice naturally allow some choreographed forms to disappear, which ultimately makes the curriculum more manageable. For example, as much as Master Jin has stated that he wants his students to teach what he taught them, he also admits that he has not taught everything he ever learned because he has forgotten some of it over time.

It appears that Hong Luck is on the verge of becoming its own style of kung fu—as a blurred genre—and that recognizing this may be the club's best chance of having a strong future. This would require honing in on the core of the curriculum in order to refine, polish, and sharpen it into a syllabus of choreographed forms that embodies the various strands of the club's lineage. I have observed that this has already happened with basics, sparring, lion dance, and drumming; there is enough repertoire to be challenging,

⁷ Typically, Hong Luck members learn between five and twenty choreographed martial arts forms, but specialize in only one or two at a time, which they practise more intensively to bring up to a performance-ready level. After someone demonstrates the same form for enough years, they are accorded a sort of stewardship of it by the club.

useful, and interesting, but it is still compact enough to allow excellence—with enough time and effort dedicated to training, of course. Most importantly, those aspects of the curriculum are integrated, rather than being divided along stylistic lines. Following that precedent, Hong Luck neither needs to maintain the mindboggling amount of choreographed kung fu forms that have been deposited over time, nor bring in new ones. That would run the very real risk of spreading practice time too thin. Perhaps Hong Luck already is its own style and all that remains to be done is to recognize it. This is certainly better than a Sisyphus-like struggle to preserve incomplete portions of the various styles, and variations of those styles, that have been taught at the club over the last half-century.

At the centre of Hong Luck's success is their transmission process, which builds up strength, self-defence skills, and performance abilities in a way that embodies a distinctly Chinese manner of being-in-the-world. At this point in the club's history, there is no need to change for the sake of change itself or to add anything new. Like a marble sculpture where the artist removes material to create their masterpiece, working with what is already there would best reveal the beauty of the Hong Luck Kung Fu Club. In other words, I suggest that promoting and preserving traditional Chinese martial arts requires keeping the source connected to the stream, but also keeping the water flowing to make sure that the rhythm and movement keep their meaning. This means not just preserving, but also improving on the received transmission in order to take it to another level. Whether or not this happens will be up to the next generation of practitioners.

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