

## What is Kiu Sau (Bridge Arms)?

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The term Kiu Sau is the main focus of nearly all Southern styles of Kung Fu. When translated Kiu Sau mean 'Bridging the Arms', i.e whenever the opponent's arms make contact with ours can be categorised under Bridging. With that in mind the main focus of training would be the control of the opponent's arms.

So why the focus on controlling the 'bridge' when in many cases a fight can be won without doing so?

To answer this question we need to look back to the era when the kung fu style was conceived. Inevitably most combat was fought using hand weapons of some sort. With that in mind and the high price of loosing it is quite easy to understand Kung Fu's historic pre-occupation with the 'Bridge'.

This explains why some kung fu techniques require the engagement of two arms or double arms in defending against a single strike. Of course it would not be tactically efficient using two arms to deal with a single empty hand attack, but if that single strike involved a hand weapon then it makes more obvious sense.

Whether a fighting system was based on weapons or not would inevitably shape the concepts used in bridging and control. And when we take the development of Kiu Sau one step further to Chi Sau then the difference can be clearly seen.

Chi Sau systems that utilises contact points at the wrist and forearms would indeed favour combat with hand weapons. Hence these styles make's efficient use of various angulations and the straight line applications. In essence the weapons can be seen as an extension of the arms.

On the other hand Chi Sau conceived for the empty hand favours contact with the palms allowing control in the form of grabs and holds. Here the predominate characteristics is the use of more circular movements with locks and holds. The empty hand is obviously not as lethal as a blade with some styles even choosing to condition their bodies to deliberately take blows.

This in part has been why the majority of Kung Fu systems has taken some unfair criticism of late as their performance against the more effective modern styles of empty handed combat hasn't lived up to popular belief. But if the majority of today's opponents were against hand weapons then Kung Fu would still be at the forefront of effective combat technology.

Most Kung Fu systems we see today was conceived centuries ago against a much different opponent so it stands to reason that Kung fu needs to evolve if it is to effectively compete against the challenges of today's modern opponent.

