

Seven Forms Of Lightsaber Combat: A Discourse



By Craig Page

Foreword

- This work is dedicated to the men and women (and those who refuse to clarify) of the various Lightsaber, Jedi, and Star Wars Groups Out There. Especially New York and Long Island Jedi. Thank you for letting me in on the madness.

- Special Thanks go to Brandon Hughes and Mike Merin, who helped me in writing these articles and editing them down

Disclaimer

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Introduction

*"This is the weapon of a Jedi Knight. Not as random or as clumsy as a blaster, but an elegant weapon for a more civilized age."
-Obi-Wan Kenobi*

There is a certain appeal to Lightsabers. It is an all cutting weapon, no matter what part of the blade you touch it is going to cut something (at least, in the movies). The only people who can use these weapons effectively are those who are strong enough with The Force. It's an item of martial prowess; you are skilled enough to wield a weapon only a fraction of the Galaxy could use.

And that is what a lightsaber is, a weapon; it is an item designed to kill other people. It is usually designed to resemble a sword, although there are several different variations on it which I may very well go into during the duration of these articles. Like with real life weaponry, there are differing views and designs on how to use them effectively. This is compounded by the fact that the saber is defined mostly by its hilt, which is custom made by the person that is using it. So, it goes without saying that there are a few different philosophies on how to use a lightsaber.

In the Star Wars Universe, there are Seven Main Forms of Lightsaber Combat. Each one has its own philosophy, strengths, and weaknesses. Each one seemingly built to address or compliment the strengths and weaknesses of the ones before it. They are as follows:

Form I: Shii Cho, also known as the Determination Form. Roughly every Force User was taught this Form when first handed a lightsaber.

Form II: Makashi, also known as the Contention Form. It's design is based on Lightsaber vs. Lightsaber Combat.

Form III: Soresu, also known as the Resilience Form. Its design was based on pure Defense with either ranged or Melee attacks.

Form IV: Ataru, also known as the Aggression Form. Its design is based around high energy attacks and defenses.

Form V: Shien/Djem So, also known as the Perseverance Form. Their design is based on manipulating an opponent's attack.

Form VI: Niman, also known as The Moderation Form. Its design is a conglomeration of the preceding Forms.

Form VII: Juyo/Vaapad, also known as the Ferocity Form. Their design is based on Pure Attack, No Defense.

The purpose of these articles will be to examine each of the Seven Forms, to understand their philosophy, their history, and their context in terms that the Star Wars Canon has established them as. It is also an attempt to understand what their strengths and weaknesses are. I also will try and determine what aspects of real life martial arts or stage combat (as there is some overlap) comply with these concepts. Also I will attempt to draw examples to those in the Star Wars Universe as well as our own Community who employ a respective Form.

My main source of information will come from Wookieepedia, as it is a collection of other sources combined in one place. While many wish to emulate the movies, I do not believe that they are choreographed with the Forms exactly in mind. In my concluding article, I will go into further detail on the matter, but what we are seeing in lightsaber combat in film and the shows are Masters of several forms who are employing their own personal blend. While I will draw examples from the Films and TV Shows, my intentions are to discuss the forms in essence.

Many members of the community have tried to develop their interpretations of the Forms; many are good, others are good attempts. It is my hope that these articles will help in further development and help make our performances and our art all the more distinctive while paying homage to the Universe that we are all playing in.

While writing this paper *The Jedi Path: A Manual for Students of the Force*, written by Daniel Wallace, was released. *The Jedi Path* contains many enlightening information on several aspects of lightsaber use. It speaks on Marks of Contact, specific areas of attack. It also discusses the several varieties of lightsabers that existed. Finally, it mentions a rather popular topic in the Saber Community: Materials that are resistant to Lightsabers. We will go into these aspects in their own sections.

Marks of Contact

**"Every feint, every dodge, every block is a trap to the unwary."
- Tenet of Lightsaber Combat**

The Marks of Contact are areas of an opponent's body which were considered prime targets to end the duel. These areas ranged from the disabling, to the maiming, to the killing blows. The Jedi strongly stressed using these marks of contact with intent, and to not use the killing marks unless deemed absolutely necessary.

As with all martial arts. Different Forms favor different areas. There are also several examples throughout the movies. I will also mention the philosophical leanings of the Jedi and Sith in these regards as well as using them for the stage.

Shiim, a grazing blow on the body. Used more to disable. Count Dooku used Shiim on Obi-Wan during their first duel, immobilizing him and taking him out of the duel.

Shiak, This is using the tip of the blade to pierce the body. This was the premiere mark for Makashi users. Darth Maul used shiak on Qui-Gon Jinn on Naboo, killing him. The Jedi Order preferred this as a means of honorably killing an opponent.

These two Marks are considered the most fundamental in lightsaber combat. The lightsaber blade is weightless, making control more difficult, especially for non Force Sensitives. To be able to stop the edge of the blade, or direct the tip of the blade to precise points without making a mess should be considered a sign of control.

Sun Djem, targets the opponents weapon with the intent to disarm them. This can be done by cutting the weapon, thereby destroying it. Sun Djem can also be used by simply physically attacking the opponent. Any method that removes renders the opponent unarmed is considered under this mark. Sun Djem was a preferred mark for Shii Cho users. Makashi users were trained to protect against this mark.

Cho Mai, severing the opponents dominant hand. This is one of the most widely seen marks used in lightsaber combat. The most famous example being Vader cutting Luke's hand off during their duel on Bespin.

Cho Sun, severing the dominant arm. A modification on of Cho Mai, this was the removal of the opponents arm at the elbow.

Cho Mok, severing a non dominant limb. This is move was only suggested as a last ditch move in a duel.

Mou Kei, means "To Dismember". This is the severing of several limbs at once. It is a forbidden move by the Jedi. It was used on Vader by Obi-Wan Kenobi on Mustafar, cutting off his other arm and both of his legs. It is one of the prime reasons Vader was forced to wear his life support suit.

Sai Cha, severing the opponents head. While the Jedi Order frowned down upon killing, they found this to be an honorable end in a duel. Use by Mace Windu on Jango Fett on Geonosis and by Luke to the Phantom Vader during his training on Dagobah.

Sai Tok, slicing the body in half. Considered a Dark Side move for its barbarism. Nevertheless, it's main example is Obi-Wan using it against Darth Maul on Naboo, killing him.

Using these Marks in Stage Combat is interesting. A lot of them revolve around the practice of dismembering an opponent's body. That kinda limits the field of what can and can't be done. However, moves like *Shiim* (grazing cuts) and *Shiak* (stabs) are highly popular and easy to use.

Sun Djem is an interesting move, in that it requires removing the opponents weapon from them. One of the most common tricks is simply miming a force pull, and the opponents saber "flies" into your hands or onto the floor. One example I saw had one opponent with using a prop blaster shooting against a Jedi. The Jedi, Joga (A soresu user, mind you) blocks the shots and swipes across the saber. The gunman takes aim one more time, but the gun falls apart, cut in half by the saber. That is *Sun Djem*.

The Jedi Community uses a basic form of the Marks of Contact. The Alphabet System Revolves around attacking several key points, giving the *illusion* (KEY WORD) that contact is implied and intended. There are six marks: The head, the shoulders, the hips, and the groin, with thrusts to the body. Some members include strikes to the thighs as well, implying cuts to the femoral arteries.

The only way I can see using most of the Marks of Contact in Stage Combat, short of rigging falling body parts (A la Monty Python's Black Knight) is the way it is depicted in samurai films. Killing blows are generally implied, with some exceptions in the gorier movies. Cutting a limb, or severing the body, can be implied simply by where you strike. The audience will get that you have struck. Beheading can be done simply by angling the execution in a way that the person can tuck their head to their chest, obscuring it from the audiences view.

The Marks of Contact help us in understanding the roles of the Seven Forms, especially those of the first four. *Shiim* requires great control of the saber, to the point where one could just use the edge to graze a limb. Form I's goal was to teach this control. *Shiak* is the precision stab of a limb. Makashi focus is on precision work, and is noted for its stabs. These are the two fundamental Marks of Contact.

The other Forms are applications of the Marks, with Forms III and IV being the basis for the others. Form III is the defense of these Marks, only striking when an opening/Mark is available to end fight. Form IV was the rapid attacking of openings, hopefully in the attempt to catch the opponent before they could respond. The other three forms are composites, and mix and match the concepts of these four to suit it's needs.

I would like to mention at this point that there are several tactics that could be employed during Lightsaber Combat. These techniques were independent of the Seven Forms, but could clearly be in conjunction with them. They were used to give the advantage, and were not necessarily fight winners. In battle, there are no guarantees These are the more popular tactics.

Sokan: Use of the environment to your advantage. This can be using a flaw in the structure, like the supports of a building or the strength of the ice you stand on. It can also be simple as having the high ground. Can be used either with the saber, the Force or manually. The main way to counter is both simplistic and problematic: Eliminate the surroundings around you.

Trākata: One of the classic abilities of the lightsaber is its function as a hilt with an extending blade. This works both ways. By drawing in your blade mid-battle, you can confuse or unbalance your opponent long enough to take an opportunity. Similar in someways to the Samurai's Battou-Jutsu. Favored by the Jedi for its practicality.

Dun Möch: More psychological than physical. Dun Möch is the taunting of the opponent, goading them into anger and making them forget their tactics. Can backfire, and bolster the opponents efforts. The reverse is used by the Jedi to stop and redeem their dark side opponent.

Form Zero: Ironically, the first form of lightsaber combat mentioned is the most sensible Form Zero focuses on diffuse attacks using peaceful negotiations and The Force. The lightsaber is not used, making it more of a symbol than weapon. "The best blades are kept in their sheaths".

Form I: Shii Cho

"The beginning is a very delicate time..." - Frank Herbert

Shii Cho is the First Form. In Canon it is referred to as the Determination Form, or the Way of the Sarlaac. It focuses on simplistic, albeit relentless, tactics.

In Star Wars history, Shii Cho was developed as Force Users began to transition from regular swords to Lightsabers as means of melee combat (at this point, Lightsabers were bulky Siege weapons). As such, its foundations are the basics of all sword fighting, including strike zones, parries and blocks. It was a two handed form, relying on broad, sweeping motions. Masters of Shii Cho were noted as having a distinct, watery flow.

Every Jedi, and arguably every Sith (as there is overlap between the two schools) had to learn Shii Cho when they began training. In A New Hope, when Obi-Wan has Luke training on the Millennium Falcon with the Remote, that is a Shii Cho practice (it gets mirrored with the Youngling training in Episode II). It teaches body movement, where to strike, while getting used to the feeling of the weapon. At the end of the scene in A New Hope, where Luke is blindfolded, it also teaches what separates wielding a lightsaber from holding a blade: Trust in the Force.

Shii Cho was used for crowd control. Its wide, angular motions were ideal for dealing with groups as it was constantly moving forward, like a bulldozer. In this regard, the lightsaber still maintains its use as a Siege weapon. In terms of combat, it has very strong similarities with Niman, in that it covers most of its bases. However, in this regard, it is meant as a teaching tool.

Unfortunately, as Shii Cho is the first form, it is all one of the forms placed under the harsher criticism. As Lightsabers became in popular use Amongst other Force Using groups, duels were expected. While there are some duelists who used mainly Shii Cho, many found the form lacking in single combat, and therefore created Makashi in response.

Philosophically, Shii Cho follows the principle of "Keep it simple, stupid." Its movements are broad and deliberate, made dangerous in a constant, ever advancing barrage. In terms of modern warfare, Shii Cho can be likened to a shotgun blast: Powerful, can clear a space in a heartbeat, and completely devoid of any subtlety. It didn't have all the answers, but serves as a stable groundwork for potential work.

In terms of an actual, real life Martial Art analog, it is hard to pin this one down. It is already admitted to be based from the basics of swordplay. With few exceptions, all basic swordplay is relatively the same; it's only when you start learning the details of a specific school do you get the differences. It makes sense that Shii Cho would be a Double Handed form, as it's easier to learn Control of the blade with two hands before you start relying on only one.

I will say, that in studying aspects like the Marks of Contact, I find Shii Cho to lean towards *Kenjutsu* and *Iaijutsu*, sword styles that focus on using the *katana*, or some variation thereof (bokken, shinai, etc). In training, the sword positions must be exact, to the most extreme degree. Angles of the blade work, footing, body mechanics. All must be perfect to the millimeter. The training with a lightsaber, a weapon that can cut without a second thought, should be taught similarly. This makes sense, as the lightsaber was meant to be an homage to the mythical aspects of the katana just as the Jedi and Sith represented the dual aspects of the Samurai who wielded them.

Shii Cho is the beginning Form, and therefore is the first to introduce the Marks of Contact. *Sun Djem*, the disarming of an opponent by either destroying or otherwise removing the weapon from the opponent. Shii Cho was all about understanding and controlling the blade. Being able to use the *Shiim* to graze a limb instead of cutting it whole would seem to me to show mastery in controlling the blade.

In the Jedi Community, there is a Shii Cho Group Form. It was developed by Damon Honeycutt, also known by his Jedi handle of General Sun. He is a Grandmaster of Monkey Style Kung Fu and has taught several of the New York members. His 3 part form is inarguably the most widely accepted interpretation of any of the Seven Forms. It truly does serve as a learning tool: it teaches members to use their shoulders, elbows and wrist in concert with one another, and it teaches people how to use the saber fluidly and responsibly. Most members of the community are taught to use at least the first part of the form. Some however have mastered all three parts, and have incorporated many of its motions into their overall sword work.

Form II: Makashi

"Eloquence belongs to the Conqueror" - System of a Down

The Second Form of Lightsaber Combat is Makashi. In Canon, it is referred to as the Contention Form, or the Way of the Ysalamiri. This is an appropriate name, as the Ysalamiri in the Star Wars Universe have the ability to nullify the Force.

After Lightsabers became the norm in a Force-User's life, it was only a matter of time before they decided to turn the weapon on each other. This came around the same time as the arrival of Dark Jedi. Makashi was the answer. It uses precision cuts, thrusts, parries and feints, and it relied on a linear (back and forth) mode of footwork. Where Shii Cho was double handed, broad, blatant and relied on the whole arm and forward motion, Makashi is one handed, precise, subtle, and relied on wrist control and body movement which bordered on dancing.

The Main, and really only, example of Makashi in the Star Wars movies is in the form of Count Dooku, former Jedi Master and Sith Lord. He is the overall template for what Form II use is. He uses clean movements without the usual elaboration that is inherent in the fighting styles of his opponents. When someone attacks high, he blocks high. When they attack low, he blocks low. However, it should be noted that while Dooku is the Prime Example of Form II, not every move he does should be considered Makashi. As a rule, users of the Form were encouraged to take from the other forms to make up for disadvantages as well as to negate predictability.

Makashi is inarguably The Duelist's form. Like Shii Cho, it follows it principles of "Keep It Simple". It doesn't go for flash, and isn't one for flourishing in combat. It's quick, controlled motions however can be confused for flourishing. It protected the main body in rapid arcs and body motions. In forms where a person's physical attributes were key, this form is made more dangerous by the people using it. It required a person of Keen Intellect with a sense of timing to make this a truly monstrous form. There are many who believe that users of this form would be the clear victors of any duel against another form (such as Shii Cho). Makashi is not a game breaker, but it definitely has the advantage in this field.

However, Form II doesn't come without its own hang-ups. It was focused strongly on one opponent, and the more opponents that are on the field, the more difficult it could become. This can be fixed by modifying the form, but as seen in the fights with Dooku, he is often forced to eliminate one opponent before

he can make a dent. After the Battle of Russan, where the Sith were all but destroyed (with the exception of Two), the need for lightsaber combat passed. Blasters were now becoming the prominent weapon in the Galaxy and Form II was not developed to deal with ranged attacks. This weakness is addressed in Form III: Soresu.

Philosophically, Makashi is a very interesting Form. It tells you something about the way lightsaber duels were treated in the time. There were standardized salutes, and the entire form is built around the concept of one on one dueling. If this is the case (I have not read stories from the Old Republic era, so I don't know), then battles in the Old Republic could have been Champion Warfare, where one specific member held sway in battle, or the war was decided by several specific fighters. The main example of this is in the Iliad, and other iterations of the Trojan War.

Another key factor in this form was the Users themselves. This was a style that promoted modifications based on the personal limitations of the User. Many of the Form II users had a confidence that bordered on aristocratic arrogance, and some of the users are far past that border. This form was also a specialist form in the sense that it was meant for one thing only: taking on other Force Users. This makes Jedi who use them a special breed, and fits into the combative nature of Dark Jedi and Sith.

It makes sense that this form would come immediately after Shii Cho. Form I focused on controlling the blade, understanding the lightsabers movements and being able to move with it. Makashi is the refinement of that. Now that you know how to wield the blade, you can now refine that control. This is seen in the Marks of Contact *Shiim* and *Shiak* (Grazing and Stabbing, respectively). *Shiim* is a grazing motion, and requires knowing how to stop the blade and not maim. Control like that is what Shii Cho teaches. *Shiak* is being able to stab precisely anywhere on the body, which is perfectly in line with Makashi's blade work. You need to learn one to understand the other, and together, they were instrumental in mastering blade work.

From every single description, it is clear that Makashi is based on Fencing. Its focus on single handed attacks, back and forth motions, finesse, elegance, economy of motion and its preference in dueling, all lean towards this form of martial art. The main question that crops up in the community is which version of fencing would fit mostly? Is it Olympic Fencing (Foil, Epee, and Saber), with its controlled motions and linear

movements? Is it Recreationist Fencing (as seen in Renaissance Faires) with its more fluid, more naturally and gracefully combative approach? Is it something else entirely?

The answer I came up with is, well, "yes". If the basis of all saber use (Shii Cho) is from the amalgamated basics of sword use, then the basis of sword against sword combat should be the amalgamated basics of dueling forms. It has the structure of Olympic Fencing with its linear cadence, as well as a focus on attacking the body core while it keeps the combative nature of recreationist Fencing. Recreationist Fencing and Saber Fencing also take into account cutting. A lightsaber is a cutting weapon, it would be impractical to deny that use. Another good analogue is the use of the *jian* or Chinese Straight Sword. It is more flourishy than the fencing forms, but it's attacks still keep with the overall feel of Makashi.

A system that lends itself nicely to producing the effect of Fencing is the Letters system. The Letters focus on several specific points of the body: shoulder, hips, head, groin and thrusting areas in the body's core. The letters form a sort of attack pattern on each. Having learned this system from its strongest supporters in the community, I know that it is at the least a tool to learn quick movements that are precisely aimed at the target. There are no general area attacks; if you're to attack (Stage Combat attack, not real life attack) the shoulder then you will attack the shoulder, not the arm below it or the neck above it. This system was taught by a fencer and is used in many of the different branches of the community as well as several recreationist/Ren Faire groups.

There are quite a few fencers in the Saber Community, many of them are Masters and Teachers within the community. Chief among them are Justin Tausig (known by his Jedi handle Raphael), World Class Olympic Fencer; TJ Glenn (Master Martinez), veteran Fight Coordinator, writer, and Actor; Scot Ferra (Cyran Oghma), fencing and stage combat teacher (he gave us the Letter System), as well as Eskrimador; Alfie Supan (Ecaris), professional ballet dancer; Brian van Kuik (Taomoon) and Maria Nowak (Azure Dragon) who are the Founders of Long Island Jedi; and Daniel Reiser (Magnius) who teaches Historical Fencing and performs in Ren Faires.

Other fencers include Brandon Hughes (Glee/Spike); Joseph Shumaker (Zander); Dante Close (Dorren Nagal) and Irshad Mustafa (Darth Shaddious). All of these members can easily be put as Makashi users. There is currently no Complete Form/Kata for Makashi.

Form III: Soresu

"If you sit by the river long enough, you will see the body of your enemy float by" - Japanese Proverb

The Third Form of Lightsaber Combat is Soresu. In Canon, it is referred to as The Resilience Form and the way of the Mynock, a bat-like creature that can survive in the dark vacuum of space.

As the War between the Jedi and the Dark Side came to a close in the Days of the Old Republic, so too did the need for Lightsaber dueling. The Jedi's began to form into the Order we are so familiar with. The Jedi were Peacekeepers, Defenders of the Republic, Diffusers of Conflict. It was also during this time that Blasters became wide-spread throughout the Galaxy, to which Makashi and Shii Cho were not wholly adept in dealing with. It is here that Soresu, a wholly defensive Form, was born.

Soresu is a stark contrast of the previous two Forms. Where Shii Cho and Makashi relied on broad blade use and linear footwork, Soresu relied on keeping the blade close to the body and using broad footwork to move around the playing field. Any sweeping motions were kept short and never left the main core of the body, still protecting it as a shield. A Soresu user only attacks when it is necessary, and only when the opponent provides an opening.

However, it is not *wholly* passive. Remember, a lightsaber is an all cutting weapon. Yes, it can repel other laser based weaponry, but it can still **cut**. Soresu Users were equated to the Eye of a Storm. They were Calm at serene, while all around them was violence and movement. The same is true for people engaging a Soresu User. Moving towards a Soresu User is like flying into the Path of a Cyclone or Hurricane; it is nothing short of suicide or desperation.

Soresu is the predominant Form of Obi-Wan Kenobi. Kenobi is, inarguably, the consummate Jedi in the films. He is the one we look at in the Original Trilogy and go: "this is a Jedi". That he would use Soresu, which relies on patience and cunning rather than brute strength and violence, tells you something not only of the mindset of Kenobi, but of the Jedi at their core. It should be noted, however, that Kenobi was also a user of Form IV, Ataru, as well as being taught Shii Cho along with everyone else in the Jedi Order. This means that not everything you see him use in any of the films is wholly Soresu.

Soresu is the ultimate Defensive Form. Ranged attacks, Melee Attacks, Single or Multiple Opponents, Soresu could adapt

to all of these situations. Kenobi, a master of Soresu, was said to be able to block any strike and was able to move less than 20 strikes per second. The Form was good for small incursions. It was best utilized by people with high concentration of Focus, Patience and Observational skills.

While Soresu is the ultimate Defense, that is ultimately its weakness. Soresu can block a blade or blaster round better than any of the other Forms. However, that is all it does. Soresu relies on the chance that one's opponent(s) will grow tired and create an opening. There is no such thing as Initiative in wielding Soresu. If a Form III User finds themselves in a protracted battle against massive numbers, or against one highly aggressively overwhelming attacker, then they will become the ones most likely to tire and create openings for attack. Like everything that promotes Stasis and Safety, it runs the risk of Stagnation. It is not surprising that many of the remaining Forms were developed either as a contrast or to answer the weaknesses in Soresu.

Soresu marks another progression in Saber Combat. While Forms I and II helped teach Control and Precision, Form III now focuses on applying that to defense. Soresu protects the body, including the Marks of Contact. This defense continues until the user is able to "Diffuse" the situation. This often means that the target of few strikes that Soresu users wield focus on the Marks of Contact to stop the conflict.

Trying to find a good analogue for Soresu is problematic. I'm hard pressed to find a Martial Art that is purely defensive. It's my belief that, like Shii Cho and Makashi before it, that Soresu is an amalgamation of several different weapon defense principles. If I had to be forced to make a decision on any martial art or weapon use that matches Soresu, I would have to pick the Chinese Broadsword, or Dao. The blade work is fast, and kept close to the body. The User does several rapid flourishes for deflection. They attack sporadically. It also employs nonlinear footwork that is paramount in Soresu.

Another system that works well with the principles of Soresu is the Defense side of the Alphabet system used in Stage Combat. Where attacks in the Alphabet promote the precision and directness of Makashi, the defensive movements are static. They're flat, 180 degree blocks that block the vital portions of the body (head, groin, shoulders and hips). This allows for attacks to bounce off or ricochet, there are no deflections. Any attacks that come from this either come from the defender exploiting an opening in the attack.

Interestingly enough, a source for Blaster-oriented Soresu comes from another athletic endeavor. There are many in the community who find Tennis to be a close analogue to Soresu. Several of the groups have been known to use training exercises in block Nerf balls with their sabers. Having undergone some of these drills, I can say that it requires patience and focus—two main aspects of Soresu—are required to react and deflect the projectile accurately.

Soresu is the second of the Canon forms to have a corresponding Group Form in the Saber community. It was developed by Mike Zhang (Ebon Wing). Mike has been trained in several martial arts including Wushu, and has a degree in performance art. The group form of Soresu was developed from Mike's personal Kata, and several elements have been lessened for mass consumption. It is based on Dao movements with several static blocks.

As it is the most passive Form, it has the least number of dedicated users in the Saber Combat Community. However, alongside Mike Zhang, one of the founders of NY Jedi, there are a few members who use the Forms. Steve Cohen (as Joga Crosswind) uses Soresu as his base form and supplements with Ataru and Vaapad. Stephanie Lindquist (Lin-Tes Quin), head of Connecticut Jedi, also wields Soresu.

Form IV: Ataru

"Given enough time, any man may master the physical. With enough knowledge, any man may become wise. It is the true warrior who can master both...and surpass the result. " - Tien T'ai

The Fourth Form of Lightsaber Combat is Ataru. In Canon, it is referred to as The Aggression Form and the Way of the Hawk-Bat. The Hawk-Bat is a raptavian (reptile and bird hybrid) creature that is commonly found in urban areas and is notoriously aggressive as it was graceful, as such is Ataru.

Ataru was developed sometime after Soresu. Jedi were tasked with being peacekeepers throughout the galaxy. While many favored Form III to diffuse situations with as little bloodshed as possible, the Order realized that sometimes violence was the only answer. Such times included the rising conflicts with the Mandalorians, the fierce warrior culture that served to be just as much a threat to the Jedi as the Sith before them.

Ataru is marked as the second most kinetically active form, aside from Form VII. It relied on speed, acrobatics and power. It is also the form that most heavily relied on the Force to augment these attributes. This use of the Force allowed an even playing field for Force Sensitives with potential disadvantages in combat, such as size, lack of mobility and age. Its attacks are wide and fast from all angles while flowing into one another, creating continuity. It was the offensive version of its sister form: Soresu. Both relied on Speed, The Force, a nonlinear move set as well as mindset in its applications.

Form IV is the most predominant of the Forms in the movies. Nearly every major Jedi character we meet has had some experience in Ataru. This is the Form of Qui-Gon Jinn and Obi-Wan in Phantom Menace. After the duel with Darth Maul and the death of Qui Gon, Obi-Wan moved to Form III, however, the high energy of Ataru is still evident throughout the Clone Wars. Anakin studied Ataru, and employed it with his Form V in his early years, which he would later abandon with the loss of his limbs and his ability to augment them with the Force.

The most prolific user of the Form is Grand Master Yoda, all two feet of him. His version of Ataru requires high acrobatics and spinning to compensate for his short stature. However, the other major user is the aforementioned Jinn, who was over six foot tall. Qui Gon uses a variation on the Form that uses more physical attacks and less acrobatics. While many consider the Yoda version to be the "True" example of Ataru, the Qui Gon version shows that there is some variability in the

Form. The Ultimate point seems to be a complete and total use of one's body in the attack

Ataru is a barrage of energy. The form was particularly strong against a single opponent in wide spaces. It was effective in its ability to attack from any given angle and in its fast reaction time. This made it a highly adaptive form that could be utilized in multiple scenarios.

Unfortunately, the form had its fair share of weaknesses. It was not particularly good with multiple opponents and wasn't good with dealing with blasters. As stated, the Form required a large field of play, an Ataru user would be limited in their movements in confined spaces. Its other main weakness was that, like Soresu, one could not keep to Form indefinitely. Eventually, fatigue would set in. It is believed that these two factors are what ultimately lead to Qui-Gon's death at the Hands of Maul. Even Yoda, who is one of the most prolific Force Users on record, is seen tired after his duel with Dooku.

There is something that should be said with Ataru: While Soresu was considered to be the most commonly used of the seven Forms, Ataru is the one we most commonly see through one form or another. This may be because in the films, we are watching Jedi in aggressive situations that call on attacks. Also, it may be because dramatically, having the Jedi do nothing but defend would get dull after a while. This is in part due to the fact that the Forms were thought of during the prequels instead of before, and many of the Forms and stances were tagged as this or that. I will go into further discussion of this in a later section.

Within Saber Combat, Ataru marks the final basic step. Form I, II and III rely on Control, Precision and Defense respectively. Form IV focuses on attacking with great speed and agility. The idea is to end the conflict by striking a Mark of Contact before the opponent can accurately defend and respond. After this, the next three forms use the concepts of its four predecessors in ways to suit their philosophy.

In speaking of Martial Arts terms, Ataru is clearly a Hard Form. By this, we mean that it is high on offense. It focuses on striking the opponent in a barrage of attacks. With that in mind, there are a wide range of martial arts to consider. The first would be Chinese Martial Arts in General. In this I mean anything that goes under the blanket terms "Kung/Gung Fu" and "Wushu". I say this because both forms use the entire body in their motions, creating an almost dance-like tornado. Special

consideration goes to the use of the *Jian* and *Dao* used in Wushu, which requires fast movements and flourishes. Both *jian* and *Dao* were mentioned in Makashi and Soresu, respectively. What separates their use now as opposed in other cases is that acrobatics can be employed with them, matching Ataru's look and feel.

Other considerations include Karate, which is the quintessential Hard Form. Other styles that should be considered is Capoeira, which uses dance like moves to employ striking and even grappling, and Parkour, which uses body mechanics to adapt to obstacles. The ultimate point is using the body to its full potential while attacking.

In the Jedi Community, Ataru is easily one of the more popular Forms and there are many who employ it. Many either use a specific martial art or merely physical discipline in their tricks. Most of the users are Masters in the Community. They include Glenn DeVecchis (Jin-Ke), who studies and teaches Wushu; Omar Holmes (Tier), who developed an Ataru Kata based on *Jian* sword work; Richard Zak (Zak-Ri Dicoo) who uses gymnastics in his technique. Special mentions include John Loobie (Lybro) who uses Capoeira and Demetrius Felder (Verdant Vendetta) who uses Parkour in his techniques. Other members include Roy Kaiser (as Carst Nagana) and Mike Merin (Darth K'Sheen).

Form V: Shien/Djem So

"If someone ever tries to kill you, you try and kill them right back!" - Capt. Malcolm Reynolds

The Fifth Form of Lightsaber Combat is in fact Two Forms. Shien and Djem So. Both are considered part of the Perseverance Form, or the Way of The Krayt Dragon. The Krayt Dragon was a fierce and powerful reptile that was native to the Desert Planet of Tatooine. This has some significance as this is the Lightsaber Form most associated with The Skywalkers.

Shien was the first of the two to be developed and was created during the same time as Ataru. Form V was in direct response to Soresu as some Jedi felt that the Absolute Defense mentality of Soresu prolonged battle. Instead of deflecting blaster rounds with the blade for simple protection, Shien focused on redirecting the blaster round back to the attacker or attackers. Instead of waiting for an opening, Form V created the opening. Shien was a combination of Form II and Form III, also making it adept in melee combat. It's counterpart, Djem So, was developed later on. It focuses primarily on Saber Dueling. Like its twin, it focuses on redirecting and countering the opponents attack, but focuses more on brute strength and overpowering the opponent with broad, wide power strokes.

As stated before, Form V is the Form most associated with the Skywalkers. Anakin was an accomplished Master of Shien and Djem So, with his main focus being on Djem So. Anakin would use Form V as his base form while adding other Forms into the mix. Anakin is the only one on record of having used all Seven Forms at one point or another during his lifetime. At the beginning, he employed a more Ataru-centric of Djem So. As Vader, he employed Makashi and Juyo with his Djem So. His Son, Luke, instinctively mirrors his father's Form. On the flip side, both of Anakin's apprentices, Ahsoka Tano and Galen Marek (known by his codename: Starkiller), employed Shien, using the underhanded style. Anakin tries to break Ahsoka of the trait to favor the standard grip and Galen only uses underhanded as an opening attack, switching to standard immediately afterwards.

One question that needs to be addressed with Form V is this: What is the difference between Shien and Djem So? Yes, Shien is made for blasters and Djem So for Lightsabers, but there is more to it than that; Shien could be used as a melee form and Djem So could be used to block ranged attacks as well. So, where is the line drawn? Well, look at its parent Forms; Form V was developed by mixing Makashi and Soresu. As these articles have shown, these two forms seem opposed to each other

in every way possible. A combative form with linear movement and a defensive form that employs 360 degrees of mobility.

Shien clearly favors its Soresu roots: It values blocking blaster rounds. With this in mind, Shien must value speed and mobility to compensate for the rapidfire ranged weapons. Offensively, attacks would be quick, relying more on speed than power. This is seen in its potential at employing an underhanded approach, where underhand blocks are close to the body or rely on deflection followed by quick strokes. Due to the structure of the arm, Underhanded doesn't have the strength that someone employing Djem So would need. The attacks were sharp and precise and moved wherever an opening could be made before the attacker knew what hit him. It should be noted that Shien *could* be used as an underhanded style, not that Shien *was* an underhanded style.

Djem So favors it's Makashi side, however, it eschews the finesse and grace of Form II and relies on overpowering and manhandling the opponent. It shares the point/counterpoint mentality of Makashi, and can be employed either one handed or two. Djem So's goal is to ultimately remove the fight out of the fighter, with some of the attacks even focusing primarily on the opponent's blade itself. It also shares Makashi's linear movement, almost to the point of being detrimental.

The purpose of Form V is retaliation. If you are being attacked, you return the attack in kind. The mindset is to dominate your opponent, making their attack a part of your own. The Jedi were leery of this mentality, feeling it was far too aggressive for their tastes. This may have lead to a more controlled blending in the next Form, Niman.

Despite this being a marriage of two powerful Forms, Form V is not without its weaknesses. Where Shien was strong against multiple attacks, relying more on blaster fire and mobility to take care of opposition, it was not strong against a single opponent. Djem So's main weakness was its lack of mobility, as Djem So users did not cover much ground, and relied mostly on pressing the attack. This is probably why Anakin employed other, more mobile Forms, as a means of compensation.

There are several levels of trying to find an appropriate analogue (or analogues) for Form V. There are what the Form sounds like, what was used to develop it, and what we have to work with in our community. There is some overlap, but it covers a wide field.

The overall philosophy of Form V resembles that of a Soft Form of Martial Art. By Soft Form, I do not mean weak. I am instead referring to the martial arts reliance more on manipulating the opponent rather than destroying them. Let me give you an example: Karate is a Hard Form, as is Tae Kwon Do, Kung Fu and Wushu. These are all disciplines that rely on striking and taking the offensive to the opponent. Soft Forms are more passive, and rely on grappling and knowledge of body mechanics to remove an attacking opponent after he attacks. Several Soft Forms are JiuJitsu, Aikido, Tai Chi, Ba Gua, Systema, and a number of others. There is some overlap in the styles of course: Kung Fu uses the fluid movements of a Soft Form for Hard Form attacks.

I've seen several sword forms from the Shaolin Kung Fu discipline, and I would personally consider the discipline a perfect candidate for Shien. The moves are quick, agile and implement many blocks, parries and counterpoints. While I'm not sure if it could be implemented towards blocking blaster fire (the people I've seen do it probably could), it functions as a good analog to Shien as a melee combat art.

It's my belief that Djem So is a spiritual analogue to JiuJitsu. JiuJitsu is a martial art that focuses on responding to an attack and using power to manipulate, disarm, and create an opening in the attacker's defense to incapacitate them. This is the same criteria for Djem So, which requires power to manipulate and create an opening in the attacker. It also shares Djem So's weakness and does not employ any real mobility. However, JiuJitsu is an unarmed form of combat, and therefore has no equivalent in regards to swordwork. It should also be noted that JiuJitsu, like Shaolin Kung Fu, are both Martial Arts based on Buddhist teachings.

Another analogue for Djem So would be Longsword combat. Longswords were used primarily as hewing and slicing weapons. Longsword combat also employed catching and trapping the opponent's blade using the hilt or changing from the edge to flat of the blade. This brings me ultimately to the stage aspect of the Forms. Peter Diamond was the Stunt Coordinator and Fight Coordinator for the Original Trilogy. He is credited for being the one to develop the fighting style used in those films, which he had used elements of Kendo and Longsword in it. As Djem So is used in all of those fights, he is inarguably the creator of Djem So (Wookieepedia's article for him says as much, as well as creating Soresu).

As we're a community that is focused on Lightsaber vs. Lightsaber Combat, we are naturally inclined to focus on Djem So. There is a system we use that already suits the needs to employ Djem So: The Alphabet System. As Form V is a blending of Form's II and III, it makes sense that we would use a system that employs the precision of Makashi and the Defense of Soresu. The ultimate question is enhancing what we know.

For the attacks, one must make it appear that they are applying power into the strikes, though not actually doing it. Remember, we deal in the *illusion* of combat. This can be done simply by applying power and aiming it six inches away from the target, this gives the audience the perception you're hauling into your partner while giving your partner enough room to respond safely. As for Defense, it's a simple matter of changing the blocks from Static to Active. Instead of just blocking the attacking saber to your sides and above and below you, you have to address the blade directly, either through parries and blade manipulation, or by (as they did in the Original Trilogy) attack the blade itself.

There are currently Four main members of the Community who employ Form V in some form or another, three of whom are Masters. Damon Honeycutt (General Sun), Kung Fu Grandmaster and developer of Shii Cho; Brian van Kuik (Taomoon Nightstar) co-founder and headmaster of Long Island Jedi, wields a single handed variation of Djem So; Maria Nowak (Azure Dragon/Crimson Fynx), co-founder and headmistress of Long Jedi, also uses a single handed version of Djem So. The other user is Craig Page (Rave), who is a black belt in JiuJitsu. Another possible user is Jesse Barnick (J'ai A'rehal), a practitioner of several Martial Arts, including Systema. Tim McDonald (The Emerald Jedi/Darth Mageddon), an expert in Medieval Broadsword, could also be considered a Djem So user

It should also be noted that Long Island Jedi is taught by Brian and Maria, as well as additional instruction from a Master of Shaolin Kung Fu. This arguably makes them all Form V users in one way or another. There are currently two sword forms for Djem So: a (as of this article) non-documented form by Damon Honeycutt and one by Craig Page, using the philosophy of Jiu Jitsu and applying it to the ABC system.

Form VI: Niman

"Learn the principle, abide by the principle, and dissolve the principle. In short, enter a mold without being caged in it. Obey the principle without being bound by it. LEARN, MASTER AND ACHIEVE!!!" - Bruce Lee

The Sixth Form of Lightsaber Combat is Niman. It is known as the Moderation Form, The Diplomat's Form, or the Way of The Rancor. The Rancor was a predatory creature that was massive in size, with skin tough enough to resist blaster bolts, but with small limbs, making it a creature of balance. Its status as sentient and intelligent seems to be based on the specific breed, and sometimes one an individual basis.

Niman was originally a non-lightsaber sword form that utilized two swords. It was adopted by Dark Siders, and was later made its way to the Jedi and Sith. During this transition, Niman became translated to a single lightsaber form, while its original dual wielding version later became known as Jar'Kai. This article will discuss both.

Niman's main distinction is that it tries to combine the tactics and sword work of the older Forms. It blended these Forms down into a uniform style, like melting down base metals and making an alloy. As Niman covered all bases, it relied strongly on the preferences, intuition, improvisational skills and use of the Force from the wielder rather than rote and rhetoric of the other forms. While all five forms in Niman, Soresu's defensive nature is considered it's base form.

It would best be considered a more philosophical form, in that it relied more on the mentality of the user instead of the weapon in his hand. Users were described as being a Leaf riding the currents of the Force. They were calm and collected on the inside and reacted when necessary. It is this peace and serenity that should be noted, because this was not a combat form. By the End of The Old Republic, Niman had become the preferred Form of the Jedi, who were expected to be Diplomats, Ambassadors, and not combatants.

It was not, by any means, an easy form. Keep in mind, students had to learn at least four of the last five forms, understand them and their applications. Then they must learn the serene philosophy and discipline of Niman. This meant you essentially had to master several forms, then Master the concept of Niman. It was said that Niman would take Ten Years to Master. This form demanded mental discipline and commitment.

I often wonder why Niman came to be. My best guess is as follows: The other Five Forms had been around for Millenia. Like all disciplines, some preferred one over the other. Soon, people would begin to argue over which form was better, more deserving of being used by the Jedi overall. This sort of dispute has been going on for millenia in real life. Members of different martial schools challenge other schools simply because they feel their form is superior. I could see Niman as an answer, creating a form that permitted all of these forms at the discretion and imagination of the user, along with a strong philosophical background. In short, Niman's main tenet is most likely "Nothing is True, Everything is Permitted". Niman also marks a closing of the circle, in a ways. It is similar to the first Form: Shii-Cho in that they cover all bases. Both share a simplistic nature, but its main difference is that while Shii Cho moves simplistically and maintains a base attitude, Niman keeps it simple while taking all of the knowledge acquired from the other Forms with it.

This makes a certain sense when one considers the combination of Jar'Kai. Using one sword is difficult enough; using two requires a high level of mental discipline and a deep understanding of bladework. There were several different ways to employ two blades, but one had to be acutely aware of where each blade was at all times.

There is really no one in the films who is an exact example of Niman. Darth Maul was known to have used it, and Obi-Wan used several Niman stances. The main user of the Form is Cin Drallig, who was the Battlemaster of the Jedi Order. He was the pre-eminent Lightsaber Combat Instructor to all of the Jedi during the last days of the Old Republic. He knew all of the first Six Forms enough to teach them, and it would make sense that he would be a Master of the Form that employs most if not all of them (Some sources say he used Makashi in his Niman, leading to the aforementioned discrepancy). Cin Drallig is based on, and performed by, Nick Gillard, the stunt and fight coordinator for the Prequel Trilogies. Where Peter Diamond is credited as creating Forms III and V, Gillard is credited as developing the others. As for Jar'Kai, Anakin is seen using it in his initial duel with Dooku; He is using an Ataru variation, employing spins. However, since he did not have a familiar knowledge of the bladework, he was reduced to going back to single blade. The exemplar for Jar'Kai is Asajj Ventress, Dark Jedi during the Clone Wars. She used a Makashi inspired variation of Jar'Kai in service of her Teacher, Dooku.

Niman is a well balanced form, and doesn't have any specific weakness. If anything, it's weakness is that it doesn't have any dramatic strengths. This is seen in the battle of Geonosis in Episode II. Every single Niman user was killed in the heated fire fight, whereas users of other Forms applied their respective strengths to cut through the opposition. This has lead Form VI to being considered too demanding of a Form. It should be noted that many who used Niman followed the diplomat's path and not the path of a warrior, hence leading to a different mindset in combat, which was what Niman stressed. Niman should be likened more to a Self Defense Form rather than one for Open Combat. This view is supported by its base in Soresu. Jar'Kai had the advantage of having two weapons in battle, however the weakness was having to focus and control the location and action of both weapons.

Before his death, Martial Arts Legend Bruce Lee had developed a "Martial Concept" called Jeet Kune Do (Way of the Intercepting Fist). It was his belief that people became too hung up on patterns, forms and styles that they were missing the point entirely. He developed the Tao of Jeet Kune Do as his belief, telling people to learn from different Martial Arts, taking with them what worked for them and discarding what different. All the while, the practitioner should maintain a fluid form of thinking and awareness.

This is exactly the same thinking as Niman. The only exception is that Bruce Lee acknowledged that people had natural strengths and talents, and to employ that which enhanced and compensated for those. In Lee's case, he used elements of Fencing and Boxing on top of Wing Chun, the style he had started off with. These all focus on Lee's natural inclinations towards speed and reach. Niman seems to place everyone at the same keel, which perhaps lessens the extent.

For Jar'Kai, many sword styles have a variation that employ two swords. Dual Katana, Broadswords, knives, Rapier and Dagger, etc. In the Saber Community, Jar'Kai is most associated with Escrima, a Filipino martial art that focuses on dual wielding sticks (mostly bamboo or rattan) or knives. It was introduced to the community by Scott Ferra, known also as Cyrhan Ogma. He was also the one to introduce the Alphabet System to the community as well. Other dual wielding forms of note is Rapier and Dagger, using the Dagger (or in the case of sabers, a Shoto) as a defensive weapon while using the main saber as the attack. Another is the Florentine Style, otherwise known as Case of Rapiers, or just Case. It is the use of two Rapiers in Tandem,

and is in keeping in style with Asajj Ventress' Makashi inspired Jar'Kai.

One of the prime historical examples of using two swords together is Miyamoto Musashi. Musashi, considered the High Mark in the Samurai Ideal, spent his entire life studying the art of fighting. He perfected his art against opponents from various backgrounds, who used various forms of weaponry. Eventually, he came to develop Niten Ichi-ryu (*the school of the strategy of two heavens as one*). Musashi considered this form, which used a katana (longsword) and a wakizashi (short sword) as the ultimate form of sword use. This use of a long and short sword is not unlike the use of standard and shoto sabers.

There are few members of the community that use Niman. Alfie Supan (Ecaris), a ballet dancer and martial artist has developed a Niman Kata; Mike Merin (Darth K'Sheen) is currently in the process of developing a group form variation of Niman. Jar'Kai users include Scott Ferra (Cyran Oghma) stage combat instructor and Eskrimador; Maria Nowak (Azure Dragon/Crimson Fynx) co-founder of LI Jedi, who uses both Escrima and Sai based Lightsabers in some of her fights; Tony Ferradino (Arkimus), a member of LI Jed, is developing a saber form using a saber held standard in one hand and Assassin style (underhanded) in the other; Melissa Koval (Tindome Uruva) and her apprentice Scott Lind (as Narmo Telepsa) are also Jar'Kai users. Irshad Mustafa (Darth Shaddious) uses dual curved sabers in his use of Jar'Kai.

Form VII: Juyo/Vaapad

"Six there were for generations of Jedi. The seventh, is not well-known." -Yoda

Like Form V, Form VII is split into two parts, Juyo and Vaapad. They are known as the Ferocity Form and the Way of The Vornskr. The Vornskr was a vicious, predatory animal that was able to detect and hunt Force-Sensitive creatures. Their favorite prey was the Ysalamir, the animal Symbolizing Form II. This viciousness and focus on Force-Users is key in understanding Form VII.

The history of Juyo is hard to place. It first appeared about a millenia before the Rise of the Galactic Empire, around the time when the Jedi and Sith were in a state of Civil War amongst each other. Each move was a constant form of attack, and left no space for defense. Juyo attacks were bold and direct, moving in a series of seemingly unconnected movements. It was the most most kinetic form, requiring a constant state of movement. However, it was not as acrobatically inclined as Ataru. Its main strength came from the user relying on a well of emotion, almost to the point where they had to enjoy the combat.

This last aspect is why Juyo was eventually looked at with a cautious eye by the Jedi. Enjoying the battle, the thrill of the fight, lead to the Dark Side of the Force. Eventually, the Jedi Order restricted the teachings of Juyo, with only the highest ranked Masters being able to study it. Juyo was perfect philosophically for the Sith, whose main tenets were to give into desire and anger to relish in the combat. This has led many to believe that Juyo was for Sith only, while there were still some Jedi (though few) who used it. Despite what side used it, it was widely considered the most dangerous of the Forms.

Vaapad is the youngest of the Seven Forms, having been developed in the last few decades of the Old Republic. It was developed by Mace "BMF" Windu as a means of channeling his tendencies towards the Dark Side. It was developed alongside Lightsaber Combat instructor Sora Bulq. Aside from Mace and Sora, the only person to know Vaapad was Mace's Padawan, Depa Billaba. Unfortunately, both Sora and Depa fell to the Dark Side, making Mace the only Master of the Form. Mace had since restricted use of the Form, so much as halting a sparring match with a friend and demanding he never use those techniques again for fear he would slip to the Dark Side.

While Vaapad was every bit Mace's Form, Juyo was exemplified by Darth Maul. Maul was Emperor Palpatine/Darth

Sidious' first known apprentice, and a master of the saberstaff. In his fight with Obi-Wan and Qui-Gon Jin, he is moving with nearly reckless abandon. He is putting all of himself, not just his body and his mind, but his emotional being into every stroke. You can see in some close ups that he is enjoying this. His movements against Obi-Wan are sharp, going from one move to the next without hesitation and preamble, not giving the young padawan much time to react.

Form VII is, in many ways, similar to Niman as both required the practitioner to have mastered several of the other Forms. This took time, at least ten years if one is studying it the same way one did Niman. That meant that a Juyo/Vapaad User had to not only use these form, but understand them at their core, to know and acknowledge what each meant. They then had to learn the principle of Juyo, to give in to their emotions and impulses and to never give up the offensive. While Form VI focused on commitment to defense, Form VII relies on full commitment to the attack.

In a sense, Juyo is the culmination of Lightsaber Combat as a whole. Lightsaber Combat began with the simplistic style of Shii Cho and culminated in Niman, combining it and the five forms before it into a central focus and discipline. Niman was the closing of the Circle. Juyo and Vaapad are outside of that circle, relying on the user's emotional core and personal feelings above and beyond some doctrine. Form VII is, with no doubt in my mind, the Anarchist Form.

So the question becomes, what is the ultimate difference between Juyo and Vaapad? Ultimately, it boiled down to philosophy. Juyo relied on emotion-pure, unbridled emotion-fueling the fire of the attack; it was unrestrained inside the user while the outside remained calm. While Juyo was the Inferno, Vaapad attempts to channel that fire, giving more focus and control without succumbing to it. Think of a steam locomotive: all that fire, heat and coal burning hot and keeping the engine going, with only the conductor making sure it doesn't jump off the rails.

Form VII's strength lies within its unpredictability and in its tenacity. The opponent is not sure what move will be coming next, or from where. Like Niman, the movements were at the discretion, imagination and improvisation of the user, which meant the use of either form was only as good as the quick thinking of the person using it. Another concern was becoming too engulfed by the heat of the moment, and therefore losing sight and focus of their goal and/or their surroundings.

Finally, Form VII's reliance on pure attacks left it no defense. While this can be compensated for with creative attacks, it was a particular blind spot.

In finding a martial art for Form VII, I still am drawn to the teachings of Bruce Lee and Jeet Kune Do. Bruce Lee studied several different arts, many of which appealed to his strengths and his preferences as a fighter. He had made his martial art a personal thing, not bound by rote or dogma. He had become a fighter that reacted on reflex, to the point where he was intercepting the opponents attack before they could fully engage (hence "The Way Of The Intercepting Fist"). Another thing to look at is the now infamous training scene in Lee's Film *Enter The Dragon*, where he tells his student that fighting isn't just for show. One must use *emotional content* in their attack. Perhaps to the chagrin of the Sith, he snapped at his student when he employed anger in his attack.

Another Martial Art that matches the overall feel and vibe with Form VII is Kenpo. It relies on fast strikes, both offensively and defensively. As a Kenpo practitioner described it to me, "The idea isn't to just block the punch, it's to make it as uncomfortable as possible". The practitioner attacks the attackers arm, pushing it out of the way and leaving them open to follow up attacks. The attacks seem random, but it is only due to the rapid succession of blows going up the arm and to other vital or open spots.

There should be something said in terms of the movies. Juyo was based on the performance of Ray Park as Darth Maul in Episode I. Park is a champion Wushu user, and used several techniques in the fight. While I did say that Ataru employed some Wushu techniques, there is some ground for overlap. It can also be argued in Canon that Maul may have preferred using Ataru style techniques in his attacks.

In terms of Stage combat, the Jedi Community has the Numbers System. The Numbers System is a pattern of attacks. Unlike the Alphabet System, they focus more on rapid high and low attacks in a number of exchanges (hence the name). The distinctness of the numbers is that both characters fighting are attacking, the blades clashing in mid air. There's some discrepancy in its usage on stage, some preferring it above the others while others feel that it's flashy and takes away from the "story of combat", meaning that there is no clear image of who is the attacker or defender in the exchange. I feel that the numbers work as a bridge, a moment in the fight where the characters are evenly matched and are trying to find a chink in

the others defenses. I personally use it to transition from one major exchange to another, or while speaking lines. Regardless, it does match the fast and sharp approach of Form VII.

Not surprisingly, Form VII is a favorite among the community. Even less surprising is its popularity amongst Sith/Dark/Rogue characters. Notable Juyo users include Roy Kaiser (as Darth Malice), NY Jedi Master and Founding member of New Jedi Order; "T" Hannigan (Sith'ari Dra'Kaz), a ninjitsu practitioner who employs the form with a saberstaff. Other users include Brad Worrel (Ar'vage) another co-founding member of NJO, he wields a five foot long Claymore Saber; Melissa Koval (Tindome Uruva) developed a solo form based on Trispzest, which is flying Juyo (Tindome is a Bat-Humanoid and can fly); Other users include Chris Abrams (Xeo Xeniro); John Loobie (Jai'ko Lybro); and Mike Merin (Darth K'Sheen)'s staff work. Vaapad users include Flynn (Talek), founder of New York Jedi; Jess Mermelstein (Tarynn Fireside), stage combatant and director; and Steve Cohen (Joga Crosswind).

Lightsaber Variations

"This weapon is your life!" - Obi-Wan Kenobi

Lightsabers are weapons that were created personally by their wielders. They were tasked with seeking out components that "called out" to them with the Force. They were designed to match their users, and while some may resemble others, no two were ever alike. A lightsaber is a personal weapon, with the various people out there, surely there are more than one kind of lightsaber.

While Lightsabers are famously depicted as being hilts being deployed as swords, these are the standard variations of hilts. However, the design is relatively simplistic and could be employed in a various different forms. Some favored specific forms and some required rare materials to be used. There are also several non-canon weapons that were developed by the saber community that are unique to themselves. Here is a list of some of the more popular variations:

Curved Hilt Sabers: The Hilt is curved either at the emitter, pommel and/or the middle of the hilt. It's main focus is that the curvature allows for a shift in balance, allowing for differing angles of attack. It also accentuated the power in attacks. This makes it a good weapon for Form II and V, and as such it is referred to as a dueling saber. Most famous example is Count Dooku's saber.

Shoto: Also known as "the short saber". The hilt and blade are smaller than the standard saber. It is often used as a defensive, or "off-hand" weapon. It is also favored by Force Users of diminutive size.

In the fan groups, there is some discrepancy between what would make a good "Makashi Lightsaber". Due to the films, many people believe that it is the curved hilt. However, many of the fencers in the group, who are the most inclined towards Form II, say that it is the Shoto. The length of the hilt allows for tight control and aside from a lack of basket or handguard is the closest to an actual rapier hilt.

A curved hilt is considered a duelist's hilt in that it allows for different angles. It also makes moves like Sun Djem difficult to perform due to the design and way curved hilt had to be held, which is part of Makashi's techniques.

Guard Shoto: A variation of the Shoto. It is modeled after the Japanese *tonfa*, a short handled weapon with a perpendicular grip. The weapon is used underhanded, and is good for trapping,

slashing and stabbing, making it a good Form V weapon. Not as good in attacking. Required considerable skill and training.

Dual Phase: The Lightsaber is a weapon utilizing an extending blade. A Dual Phase Lightsaber extends the blade out further than the standard. Somewhat similar to the mythical extending staff of Sun Wukong in *Journey to the West*.

Light Club: The opposite of the Shoto, in that it is a massive hilt that is meant for Force Users of Massive Size.

Double-Bladed Saber: A staff-based hilt that produces two blades on either side. Widely regarded as a Sith weapon, especially as it is the weapon of Darth Maul. Covers 4 times the area as a regular saber. Utilizes broad, circular motions in attacking and defending. There is a variation where both ends are curved. The use of the curved staff requires intense focus, as moving the saber moves the balance point on the staff.

Saber Pike: A Staff-based hilt that has a smaller blade at the top. The staff is predominantly made of some lightsaber resistant material. Good on range, and seems to prefer *shiak* strikes. A variety of this is the Long Handle Saber, whose hilt was several times longer than a standard hilt, but not as long as a staff.

Light whip: a Lightsaber whose beam is not restricted in a static position and is capable of moving. Highly unpredictable, and was just as much a risk to the wielder as the opponent. One had to know how to use a regular whip before using a weapon. The most famous user was Lumiya, who used a lightwhip that also had cortosis strands, making it an energy and physical based weapon.

While the many in the Saber Community have kept to emulating the what Star Wars has given them in ways of variation, several members have developed other variations of the lightsaber.

Light Pu-Dao: Based on the traditional *Pu Dao* in Chinese Martial Arts. It's roughly a cross between a Saber Pike and a Long Handled lightsaber, with the blade being just longer than the handle. Glenn Devecchis (Jin Ke), and The Ankhou use Pu Dao Sabers.

Light Sai: Shoto-like weapons based on the traditional Japanese Sai. As a lightsaber, the blades are smaller, and the rest of the hilt (especially the prongs) are most likely made of some form of lightsaber resistant material. The only pair that exist

belong to Maria Nowak (as Crimson Fynx) and were designed and built by Chris Cox (General Ing Chao)

LightShield: Essentially a hand held Force Field built to reflect attacks. Built by Brian Van Kuik (Taomoon Nightstar) which uses a clear, circular riot shield wrapped in EL wire and using a pressure sensor to register hits, making the surface glow brighter.

Light Shivs: Shoto based sabers. the hilts are palm sized and the blades are almost equal in length. Used as a knife. Built by Juan Leiva (Yogen Himashi).

The reason for these variations lies in the uniform design of the saber. At its most basic, it is a cylindrical tube. The very nature of designing one as a personal touch bred different designs and touches on basic hilts, let alone different hilts altogether. This is one of the more popular aspects of the Saber Community.

Many in the community will normally buy their first sabers from Ultrasabers.com. This site makes basic hilts with no real adornments. This can be considered similar to a lightsaber hilt at its most basic form. It's up to the user to modify the exterior to suit their purposes, whether it be personal or performance.

My personal favorite is The Custom Saber Shop. You buy the pieces of the saber you have designed. The parts are shipped to you and you build it yourself. Short of machining the parts yourself, this is the closest to making your own, personal saber.

And finally, and by no means the least, we have the Sabers from Advanced Light Weaponry. These sabers are made from scratch out of steel, and are meant to last. They are designed by the instructions of the buyer, and no two will ever be exactly alike. These are functional pieces of art, a true expression of the person wielding it, which is what a lightsaber was.

Lightsaber Resistant Materials

The only things that can block a lightsaber blade is another lightsaber blade; some very, very rare materials; and...those handrails in Cloud City - Craig Page

It is a widely held belief that Lightsabers are capable of cutting through anything and anyone. This is wrong. There are in the Star Wars Universe some materials that cannot be easily cut, and in some cases are out right impervious to, lightsaber beams. As one can imagine, these materials would be highly sought after by all those who use Lightsabers or wished to level the playing field against Lightsaber users. They are as follows

Water: It should be noted that lightsaber blades could not function when immersed in water. Even in heavy rains, the blade will begin to sizzle. Sabers could be modified to overcome this obstacle though, and many aquatic based Jedi and Sith were instructed to do so.

Cortosis: By far, the most common of the lightsaber resistant materials. Purified Cortosis had the ability to short our lightsaber blades for a time. Cortosis Alloy had the ability to deflect blades. Note, the raw ore for Cortosis was Ionized, and was lethal to the holder.

Phrik: Metallic ore, it was popular in the creation of weapons such as electro staffs and vibro blades. It was also used at times in the construction of lightsabers like the Saber Pike and Guard Shotos. These weapons required the use of the "hilt" as part of the weapon and attack, so a LSM was preferred in it's construction

Armorweave: Reinforced cloth that gave limited resistance to blaster bolts and lightsabers.

Ultrachrome: Used from everything from ship hulls to personal shields and armor. Ultrachrome could deflect blasters, projectile weapons and Lightsaber Blades by diffusing the energy across it's superconductive surface. However, if enough energy is applied, the outer layer of the shield can melt and warp.

Mandalorian Iron: Known in the Mandalorian tongue as *Beskar*. By far the most powerful Lightsaber Resistant Material in the Galaxy. Combination of strong metal and exquisite metallurgy, Mandalorian Iron is folded to provide light weight protection. Breaking the armor, with a lightsaber in general, is close to impossible. It's manufacture has precedence in Real Life, as the making of Samurai Swords involves ore with above average iron

content and a forging technique that folds the metal down into several thousand layers.

Life-Forms: There are several life-forms whose bodies are so armored that they reflect lightsaber blades. Some of these creatures are sought for to make armor to fight against saber users, or are bred as protectors and guardians.

The Force: Using Force Techniques have been known to block a lightsaber, even the weightless blade. Also, swords and weaponry that have been infused with the Force can also be effective.

In the saber community, there is some discussion as to the use of LRM in our fights and stories. What is appropriate and what isn't. Lightsaber Resistance isn't really seen in the movies and the shows. Aside from the blast door Qui Gon tries cutting through in Episode I (and nearly melted) and the railings in Cloud City during Episode V. LRMs are Expanded Universe materials, they appear either in the various novels and comics or in the video games.

This brings Canon to the discussion. There are several layers of Canon for the Star Wars Universe, ranging from Non-Canon, to Canon-until-stated-otherwise, to G-Canon. G-Canon is all the materials that George Lucas has signed on and has used in the movies (and now, the Clone Wars TV Show). G-Canon trumps all of the other levels. As of the writing of this paper, none of the LRMs have been mentioned in the movies or the television series. Lucas believes that a lightsaber is an all cutting weapon.

An example of this is from the Clone Wars. During the second season, Obi-Wan is taking on a Mandalorian. The Mandalorian was originally going to use a vibrosword made of Beskar. George Lucas created a weapon called a Darksaber. A lightsaber with a black, flat blade that resembled a traditional katana.

This lack of information now puts us in an interesting position. While Lucas never says that LRMs don't exist, he has kept it squarely a part of the Expanded Universe. When performing, it should always be assumed that people have only seen the movies. There have been plenty of times, even when performing with friends and colleagues in the community, where someone will cry foul because a person should not be able to block a blade with their arms.

Personally, I take a wary stance on using LRMs on the stage, and use it primarily the way it's used in Star Wars: as a

literary device to give the otherwise powerful Jedi and Sith a challenge. Using it blatantly performance-wise may seem a cheat. However, there are some examples of it working right.

Dave Harold, a veteran in New York Jedi, plays the Sith Lord Darth Vicious. Vicious is an eight foot tall, Genetically Engineered Life Form (or GELF). His race was created to mine Phrik in deep space. After an accident that killed most of his people, he found the phrik had bonded with him on biological level. He became lightsaber resistant. This, with his size and animal like nature, made him perfect to be a Sith.

Now, on the whole, most audiences will *never* hear that background story. However, Dave plays this character like an unstoppable monster. Many liken Vicious to a version of DC Comics' Doomsday, with bones (or in Vicious' case, phrik) protruding out of his skin. He portrays himself as the unstoppable beast. Even if you don't know *why* he can, you can understand that this is a Monster, and therefore does not run on the same rules as everyone else.

Am I saying "Don't use Lightsaber Resistant Materials for performances"? No. I'm not. I'm merely saying that you should, as all things stage combat, be mindful of what you're doing and why. It has to be clear to the audience what is going on. Even if they don't understand the *why* and *how*, they need to know the *what*.

In Conclusion

"Remember... you are expressing the technique, not doing the technique" - Bruce Lee

There is a certain appeal to the lightsaber. It is a fictional weapon, yes, but there is something about its design that makes it so popular. Its design is simple. It can be used in a myriad number of ways and can be modified in several different forms while still maintaining its basic shape and function.

While it is simple, it is its very nature that makes it stand out: A beam of pure energy that can cut through (nearly) everything. This makes it a difficult weapon to use, making the ones who can use it a very rare breed. There is also something to be said about the symbology of the weapon. Obi-Wan states that the lightsaber was a weapon from a more elegant time. Every time it is employed, it symbolizes a higher ideal of how Sentient Beings were to handle violence: With Honor and Dignity, not with the randomness and casual callousness of ranged weapon.

The Forms are merely different expressions of this attitude. How best to use a weapon that can only be used by a special breed of people? Of course, with each person, there are different ideas, with different ideas come different ways of physically expressing the use of the weapon, hence, the Forms.

I also believe that there is a story being told by the Lightsaber Forms. That is the story of the Jedi before the Fall of the Old Republic. The Weapon begins as a siege weapon, but in the hands of a rag tag group of warrior priests, it becomes a personal weapon using their attunement to the Force and basic sword techniques (Shii Cho). Once they began to understand how to use the weapon, it became a matter of time before the various factions started using it on each other and perfecting their means of combat (Makashi).

Once the fighting stopped and the factions were thinned out, the Jedi (and the Sith) then had to contend with the vast majority of the Galaxy and their use of inelegant, yet highly effective blasters (Soresu and Ataru). Eventually, they began to think about how they employed the Forms, and decided to improve on the old concepts (Shien and Djem So). Finally, they began to move beyond the concept of Forms, and began to go by an ideal, and a Code (Niman). Some even went further, relying on pure emotion and impulse (Juyo and Vaapad). When it reached this point that went beyond the Jedi's philosophy, change was inevitable.

These forms are, like the weapon they were made for, wholly fictitious. They are based on constructs and ideas that at once seem familiar to us an audience, yet alien by virtue of the weapon used. As such, we wish to emulate what we see in the films; to tap into the beautiful violence that struck us and countless others with awe. This is the main goal of all of the Saber Groups out there. Performers; Actors; Dancers; Martial Artists; Theater Geeks; Geeks in General, Photographers; People who enjoy the Philosophy of the Star Wars Universe; or any combination therein, we are all here because we want to touch the level of understanding of what it was like to use this magnificent weapon.

Naturally, that leads to wanting to emulate what we see in the movies and the Forms. However, the question becomes: How do we do that? Many just feel that what they see in the movie are the Forms, no questions asked. However, let us look at this from a Martial Perspective: Here we are, watching a group of swordsmen, or swordsmen in training, many of them had studied several of the Forms and employed them together into one blended, personal form.

Let's look at the two main characters of the Prequels: Obi-Wan and Anakin. Obi-Wan, when we first see him, employs the acrobatic Ataru like his Master. After Qui-Gon's death, Obi-Wan takes on the more defensive Form of Soresu. This doesn't mean he has eschewed all of his Ataru, as he still maintains the fast flourishes he did in his youth. Anakin is the worst perpetrator in this regard. His main Form is Form V, however, he is on record in employing all the Forms at one point or another as supplements to the shortcomings of Djem So. You can see the Ataru of his Master and his Hero (Qui-Gon) seep in during his youth, but then when he become Vader, the more aggressive, combative Makashi and Juyo become more prevalent. Also keep in mind, that every Jedi (and arguably every Sith; the two were connected by their weapons) were taught Shii Cho from the very start.

Then you have the other Users who rely on Forms that prize adaptability and co-mingling with other Forms. Dooku's Form II made it a point of adapting to suit the user's needs. Maul's use of Form VI and VII all required mastery of several of the Forms, if not all of them, and the ability to decide when to use what where in split second decisions. The Greatest of them All was Sidious, who is estimated to have Master *all* Seven Forms.

So, it's sad to say, one cannot look to any specific character in the movies and say "This is that Form". In

developing these Forms, we have to work backwards: We need to look at the source material, the concept and the ideas of the Forms, and work our ways up. This means Wookieepedia and the various stories and novels for descriptions. When you have developed something, and you look at the movies and you can see the similarities (though not necessarily the exact same moves) then you have achieved something.

After looking back at this collection of papers, I should make some things clear when I say something like "Kata" or "Group Form". When I mean Kata, I am saying that it is an individual members expression of their sword work. We in the Community refer to them as Solo Forms. A Group Form, on the other hand, is meant to teach specific techniques to the group. The Shii Cho that Damon Honeycutt developed was a Group Form, meant as an instructional tool that showed the technique and core beliefs of what he felt was Form I. On the other hand, Mike Zhang's Soresu Group Form comes from his personal Kata or Solo Form. Several aspects were lessened for general consumption. The difference lies in what the purpose of the demonstration is: performance or instruction. The quote at the beginning of this section lays it out straight, in the end, you are expressing the technique, not doing it. A solo form is meant to express, a group form is meant to do and learn.

The one thing that I feel many do not consider in their development is the weaknesses and limitations of each Form. It is counterintuitive to build a Form with a weakness in mind. We all want to build a perfect Form. However, it is the imperfections that define a thing, not the perfections. These will stop from Forms bleeding into each other and creating one giant mess. Or, if we're very, very lucky, a version of Niman or Juyo.

There is one final thing to keep in mind; I said it earlier, these Forms are not real. They are concepts, philosophies, ideas all revolving around a weapon that is itself not real. Everyone who reads these descriptions on Wookieepedia, on some community board, or the ravings of this paper are going to see something different than someone else. We fill in new information with the information we already have, and build from there. The Forms that exist today are not written in stone, even the ones most of us agree upon. Your mileage may vary, your imagination is in the driver seat, and-above all else-enjoy the ride.

- Craig Page