

## **A History of TaeKwonDo**

by Isaac Myers (2016)

Throughout the years, TaeKwonDo has evolved in many different ways. TaeKwonDo means "way of the fist and foot" or "the art of punching and kicking". Its roots date back to over 2,300 years ago evolving into the two main TaeKwonDo organizations currently active. They are the International TaeKwonDo Federation (ITF) and the World TaeKwonDo Federation (WTF).

### **The Three Kingdoms of Korea (300 B.C. - 676 A.D.)**

Around 300 B.C., the peninsula that we now know as Korea was three separate kingdoms. The first and the smallest of the three was Silla (57 B.C. - 936 A.D.). The second and by far the largest in both population and landmass was Koguryo (37 B.C. - 668 A.D.). The final kingdom was Paekje (18 B.C. - 600 A.D.). There was a great war for territory raging between the three kingdoms. This war lasted until Silla conquered Koguryo and Paekje and unified the three kingdoms in 676 A.D.

### **The HwaRang**

The 24<sup>th</sup> king of Silla, Chin Heung, ordered a group of young men to be trained in the ways of the bow and arrow, sword, spear, and SooBak. SooBak was a primitive form of foot fighting, using some hand techniques. The king called these individuals the HwaRang, meaning "Flowering Knight." He also ordered a Buddhist monk and scholar, Won Kang, to train the HwaRang in the Buddhist religion and the art of Korean culture. Won Kang developed a code of conduct for the HwaRang. The code of conduct included five basic rules. The rules were be loyal to your king, be obedient to your parents, have honor and faith among friends, have perseverance in battle, and never take a life without just cause. The HwaRang were elite soldiers and were outstanding war strategists. Due to their military excellence, The Hwa Rang eventually helped Silla unify the three kingdoms, formed the country of Koryo, and started the Koryo Dynasty (918 A.D.-1392 A.D.).

### **The Koryo Dynasty (918 A.D.- 1392 A.D.)**

The Koryo Dynasty was not officially started by Chin Heung, but by King Taejo. Koryo was later given the modern name of "Korea". During the Koryo Dynasty, martial arts grew immensely popular among citizens and were required to be practiced in the military. SooBak changed its name to SooBakGi because of the new techniques and mental discipline that were added to the style. A new style emerged called Tae Kyon. Tae Kyon was focused more around fighting than discipline. The king of the Koryo Dynasty started to hold Tae Kyon and SooBakGi competitions. The winners would be awarded a high military rank and would teach unarmed martial arts to soldiers. Because the learning of martial arts was mandatory in the military, soldiers spread this art over Asia on their travels. Over the years, many Chinese civilians traveled to Koryo and succeeded in converting a large portion of Koryo people from Buddhism to Confucianism. This change reflected the Chinese influence over the people of Korea and brought about the Yi Dynasty (1392 A.D. - 1910 A.D.).

## **The Yi Dynasty (1392 A.D. - 1910 A.D.)**

The country of Koryo changed its name to Yi-Shi-Choson. The government wanted to maintain the tradition of a primarily Buddhist culture and society. However, many citizens preferred to practice Confucianism. Because of this difference, the military started to lose control of the citizenry and the people started to lose interest in Korean based martial arts. However, a contribution was made to the preservation of SooBakGi, Tae Kyon, and weapons fighting when King Jeong Jo ordered a scholar and writer, Lee Duk Mu to write a manual on all of the techniques in these fighting styles. During the Yi dynasty, the military successfully fought off several Japanese invasions. Through a series of treaties beginning in 1876, the Japanese took over more economic and political control of Yi-Shi-Choson. By August 2, 1910, Japan had complete control of Yi-Shi-Choson and ended the Yi Dynasty.

## **Japanese Control (1920 - 1945 A.D.)**

Now that the Japanese had control over Korea, all Korean martial arts were banned. People practiced SooBakGi in private and changed its name to SooBakDo. The Japanese introduced their martial arts to schools and communities. Some of these martial arts included Kendo, Aikido, Judo, and Karate. Many people blended these martial arts with Korean ones and created hybrids. On August 15, 1945 Korea was liberated from Japanese control and was able to freely practice Korean martial arts. Five different martial arts schools, known as "kwan", emerged. They were Moo Duk, Jido, Changmu, Chungdo, and Songmu. Each kwan practiced different styles of Korean martial arts such as Kon Soo Do, Tang Soo Do, Soo Bak Do, Tae Kyon, and Kwon Pup.

## **The Unification of TaeKwonDo**

On March 22, 1966, the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) was founded by General Choi Hong Hi (November 9, 1918 - June 15, 2002). On May 28, 1973, the World TaeKwonDo Federation was founded by Dr. Un Yon Kim (December 8, 1959- ). Now, TaeKwonDo is being practiced in 190 different countries around the world. The WTF became an International Olympic Committee recognized sports federation in 1980. In 1988 and 1992, TaeKwonDo was a demonstration sport for the Summer Olympic Games. In 2000, TaeKwonDo became an official Olympic event. Today, many different styles are practiced by many different schools.

## **General Choi Hong Hi (1918-2002)**

General Choi Hong Hi was born on November 9, 1918 in Ha Dae, Myong Chun Kun District in what is now North Korea. He grew up in Japanese controlled Korea. During his childhood, Choi was aware of his father's anti-Japanese sentiments and this influenced his thoughts and choices. At age 12, Choi lead a walkout in his school in protest to racist Japanese police. This resulted in him being expelled from the Japanese controlled school system. This act began his long involvement in the Kwang Ju Students' Independent Movement. His father feared for his son's future and thought that if Choi could get an education in calligraphy then he could a get a good job engraving tombstones. Choi's father sent him away to study calligraphy with Han Il Dong. While with Han Il Dong, Choi also studied Tae Kyon. In 1937, Choi traveled to Kyoto, Japan to further his education. While in Kyoto, Choi wanted to learn boxing, but when a friend took him to a Karate demonstration, Choi started to practice Karate. For a year and a half, Choi studied English, mathematics, and Karate. As a result of failing an examination to enter the fourth grade of high school,

Choi moved to Tokyo. When Choi was promoted to second degree black belt in Karate, he and a friend taught Karate at the Tokyo YMCA.

Japan was forcing Korean citizens to fight in the Japanese army and Choi was drafted. Choi and thirty other soldiers tried to escape the military, but failed. He was found guilty of treason and sentenced to a seven year term in prison. His sentence was later changed to execution. Three days before his scheduled execution, Korea was freed from Japanese rule and Choi was able to walk out of the prison that very day.

When he got back to Korea, he joined the Students' Volunteer Group, a committee dedicated to enforcing law and order until an official Korean police force was established. When the leader of this committee, Mr. Yu, was assassinated, the committee split into two groups. One group believed in communism while the other group, lead by Choi, believed in democracy. As a result of this role, Choi met with U.S. Army Major Reas, who was the leader of the Korean Military Academy. Choi became good friends with Reas and became one of the one hundred and ten founding fathers of the Korean Army.

Choi was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant (later promoted through the ranks to two star general) in the Korean Army and was responsible for training soldiers. The very powerful and well organized local police forces beat and arrested soldiers for minor crimes. Choi wanted to teach a martial art to his soldiers so they could protect themselves but he felt conflicted about teaching them the Japanese martial art of Karate. Because he wanted to teach a Korean martial art, Choi decided to create his own. He refined this martial art for nine years.

Choi had created the name Taekwon-Do but did not want to proclaim this new name without support. He created an advisory committee of important people such as the Vice Speaker of the National Assembly, The Commander in Chief of the Army, and presidents of newspaper companies and others. This committee agreed on the name Taekwon-Do. Choi sent this name to President Rhee of Korea. Though President Rhee initially rejected the name he did eventually approve. The name Taekwon-Do spread through the military as well as community schools.

Choi established the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) in 1966. The ITF was the first international organization with a Korean president headquartered in Korea. The charter countries in the ITF were Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, West Germany, United States, Turkey, Italy, and Egypt. Choi left Korea in 1971 because he feared that if he stayed in Korea with Park Chung Hee in power, he would not be free to promote Taekwon-Do and he would be imprisoned because he did not support Park Chung Hee's policies. He fled to Canada. Choi chose Canada because it was considered to be fairly neutral politically, it was easy to travel to both European and South American countries from there, and there were well established Canadian Taekwon-Do schools. Choi saw the Korean government beginning to interfere with the ITF and in 1972, Choi moved the ITF headquarters to Canada.

Choi spent the rest of his life traveling the world, spreading and teaching Taekwon-Do regardless of political ideology, national boundaries, race, religion or creed. General Choi Hong Hi died of cancer on June 15, 2002 in Pyongyang, People's Democratic Republic of Korea. A traditional Buddhist ritual was held exactly one hundred days after his death.

## **Boise Community TaeKwonDo (1988 - )**

In 1988, Master Robert Sutter began teaching TaeKwonDo through the Boise School District. In 1992, he established Boise Community TaeKwonDo as an independent school. Currently, Boise Community TaeKwonDo is offered through Boise City Parks and Recreation as a joint program with the Boise School District. As an independent school, Boise Community TaeKwonDo does not belong to the ITF, but does practice the ITF-style. Master Sutter's goal in developing an independent school was to form an affordable, community-based TaeKwonDo school and have the freedom to add self-defense aspects. Head instructor, Master Robert Sutter, is 6<sup>th</sup> Dan TaeKwonDo and 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan HapKiDo. HapKiDo classes, as well as Goju Shorei Weapons classes, started being offered in 1996. HapKiDo and Goju Shorei Weapons are offered to advanced students for self-defense oriented skills. In total to date, Boise Community TaeKwonDo has had about ten thousand beginner students enroll. Currently one hundred and fourteen 1<sup>st</sup> Dan black belts, forty-five 2<sup>nd</sup> degree black belts, eighteen 3<sup>rd</sup> degree black belts, and four 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belts have been awarded to students. Classes are offered at eleven different locations around the Treasure Valley and are taught by volunteer instructors who are advanced students.

Boise Community TaeKwonDo practices and teaches the Five Tenets of TaeKwonDo which are courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control, and indomitable spirit. Boise Community TaeKwonDo offers traditional, non-sport oriented TaeKwonDo as the primary training course which includes strictly non-contact sparring, forms, step-fighting, and board breaking. The primary focus of Boise Community TaeKwonDo training is self-defense. Board-breaking is a required part of promotion tests for upper-belts. When a board is broken, the student can feel what it is like to apply proper techniques and practice power and efficiency. Step-fighting is a choreographed pattern performed by two students to demonstrate basic offensive and defensive skills. Boise Community TaeKwonDo practices the ITF patterns also know as the Blue Cottage or Chang Hon forms. Forms are a choreographed set of blocks and attacks performed in a precise manner against an imaginary opponent. General Choi (1972) writes, ". . . pattern practice enables the student to go through many fundamental movements in series, to develop sparring techniques, improve flexibility of movements, master body shifting, build muscles and breath control, develop fluid and smooth motions, and gain rhythmical movements."

## **The Interpretation of the Patterns** (from *Taekwon-Do, Choi, H. H., 1972, pp. 351-352*)

CHON-JI: means literally the "Heaven and Earth." It is, in the Orient, interpreted as the creation of the world or the beginning of human history, therefore, it is the initial pattern played by the beginner. This pattern consists of two similar parts-one to represent the Heaven and the other the Earth.

DAN-GUN: is named after the holy Dan-Gun, the legendary founder of Korea in the year of 2333 B.C.

DO-SAN: is the pseudonym of the patriot Ahn Ch'ang-Ho (1876-1938) who devoted his entire life to furthering the education of Korea and its independent movement.

WON-HYO: was the noted monk who introduced Buddhism to the Silla Dynasty in the year 686 A.D.

YUL-GOK: is the pseudonym of a great philosopher and scholar Yi I (1536-1584 A.D.) nicknamed the "Confucius of Korea". The 38 movements of this pattern refer to his birthplace on 38° latitude and the diagram ( $\pm$ ) represents "scholar."

JOONG-GUN: is named after the patriot An Joong-Gun, who assassinated Hiro-Bumi Ito, the first Japanese governor-general of Korea, known as the man who played the leading part of the Korea-Japan merger. There are 32 movements in this "Pattern" to represent Mr. An's age when he was executed at Lui-Shung prison (1910).

TOI-GYE: is the penname of the noted scholar Yi Hwang (16th century A.D.), an authority on neo-Confucianism. The 37 movements of the pattern refer to his birthplace on 37° latitude, the diagram ( $\pm$ ) represents "scholar."

HWA-RANG: is named after Hwa-Rang youth group which originated in the Silla Dynasty about 1350 years ago. This group eventually became the actual driving force for the unification of the three Kingdoms of Korea. The 29 movements refer to the 29th Infantry Division, where Taekwon-Do developed into maturity.

CHOONG-MOO: was the given name to the great Admiral Yi Sun-Sin of the Yi Dynasty. He was reputed to have invented the first armoured battleship (kobukson) which was the precursor of the present day Submarine in 1592 A.D. The reason why this pattern ends up with left hand attack is to symbolize his regrettable death having no chance to show his unrestrained potentiality checked by the forced reservation of his loyalty to the king.

KWANG-GAE: is picked after the famous Gwang-Gae-T'o-Wang, the 19th King of the Koguryo Dynasty, who regained all the lost territories including the greater part of Manchuria. The diagram ( $\pm$ ) represents the expansion and recovery of lost territory. The 39 movements refer to his reign for 39 years.

PO-EUN: is the pseudonym of a loyal subject Chong Mong-Chu (1400 A.D.) who was a famous poet and whose poem "I would not serve a second master though I might be crucified a hundred times" is known to every Korean. He was also a pioneer in the field of physics. The diagram (-) represents his unerring loyalty to the king and country towards the end of the Koryo Dynasty.

GE-BAEK: is named after Ge-Baek, a great general in the Baek Je Dynasty (660 A.D.). The diagram (I) represents his severe and strict military discipline.

EUI-AM: is the pseudonym of Son Byong Hi, leader of the Korean independence movement on March 1, 1919. The 45 movements relate to his age when he changed the name of Dong Hak (Oriental Culture) to Chondo Kyo (Heavenly Way Religion) in 1905. The diagram (I) represents his indomitable spirit displayed while dedicating himself to the prosperity of his nation.

CHOONG-JANG: is the pseudonym given to General Kim Duk Ryang who lived during the Yi Dynasty, fifteenth century. This pattern ends with a left-hand attack to symbolize the tragedy of his death at 27 in prison before he was able to reach full maturity.

KO-DANG: is the pseudonym of the patriot Cho Man Sik who dedicated his life to the independence movement and education of his people. The 39 movements signify his times of imprisonment and his birthplace on the 39th parallel.

SAM-IL: denotes the historical date of the independence movement of Korea which began throughout the country on March 1, 1919. The 33 movements in the pattern stand for the 33 patriots who planned the movement.

YOO-SIN: is named after General Kim Yoo Sin, commanding general during the Silla Dynasty, who unified the three separate kingdoms of Korea. The 68 movements refer to the last two figures of 668 A.D., the year Korea was united.

CHOI-YONG: is named after General Choi Yong, Premier and Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces during the fourteenth century Koryo Dynasty. Choi Yong was greatly respected for his loyalty, patriotism, and humility. He was executed by his subordinate commanders headed by General Yi Sung Gae, who later became the first King of the Yi Dynasty.

YON-GAE: is named after a famous general during the Koguryo Dynasty, Yon Gae Somun. The 49 movements refer to the last two figures of 649 A.D., the year he forced the Dang Dynasty to quit Korea after destroying nearly 300,000 of their troops at Ansi Sung.

UL-JI: is named after general Ul-Ji Moon Dok who successfully defended Korea against a Chinese invasion force of nearly one million soldiers led by Yang Je in 612 A.D. Ul-Ji employing hit and run guerilla tactics, was able to decimate a large percentage of the force. The diagram represents his surname. The 42 movements represent the author's age when he designed the pattern.

MOON-MOO: honors the 30th King of the Silla Dynasty. His body was buried near Dae Wang Am (Great King's Rock). According to his will, the body was placed in the sea "Where my soul shall forever defend my land against the Japanese." It is said that the Sok Gul Am (Stone Cave) was built to guard his tomb. The Sok Gul Am is a fine example of the culture of the Silla Dynasty. The 61 movements in this pattern symbolize the last two figures of 661 A.D. when Moon Moo came to the throne.

SO-SAN: is the pseudonym of the great monk Choi Hyung Ung, 1520-1604, during the Yi Dynasty. The 72 movements refer to his age when he organized a corps of monk soldiers with the assistance of his pupil Samung Dang. The monk soldiers helped repulse the Japanese pirates who overran most of the Korean peninsula in 1592.

SE-JONG: is named after the greatest Korean king, Se-Jong, who invented the Korean alphabet in 1443 A.D., and was also a noted meteorologist. The diagram (ㅅ) represents the king, while the 24 movements refer to the 24 letters of the Korean alphabet.

TONG-IL: denotes the resolution of the unification of Korea which has been divided since 1945. The diagram (I) symbolizes the homogenous race.

## **Belt meanings**

White belt: signifies innocence

Yellow belt: signifies the sprouting of a plant and the laying of a foundation

Green belt: the plant grows continuously

Blue belt: the plant becomes a towering tree

Brown belt: the student expresses control, cautioning the opponent to stay away

Black belt: the opposite of white, the color represents imperviousness to darkness and fear

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