

The History and Development of Taekwon-Do

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Introduction

Taekwon-Do is an art of self defence training which focuses on the development of the whole body, it incorporates physical, mental and spiritual development. The origins of taekwon-do can be traced back to '*Taek Kyon*', a form of martial arts practiced by Koguryans around 50 BC. Murals painted on the walls of tombs provide evidence of the existence of martial arts in Korea during this period. Some claim that the paintings portray two men in fighting-stance, whilst others, interpret the paintings as two men who were simply dancing. The controversy surrounding interpretation of the paintings are numerous. However, literally evidence supports the existence of martial arts in Korea around 50 BC.

The development of martial arts in Korea has tended to follow the history and culture of Korea. Martial arts played an important role in ancient Korea, as well as during the Japanese invasion of Korea in the 20th century and its independence. Between the period 37 BC and 935 AD, the Korean peninsula was divided into three Kingdoms:

1. Koguryo Dynasty (37 BC – 668 AD)
2. Baek Je Dynasty (18 BC - 600 AD)
3. Silla Dynasty (57 BC – 935 AD)

According to Koguryo history, Sonbaes (strong warriors) was formed to protect hostile northern oppression. It is believed that Sonbaes practiced Taek Kyon. Taek Kyon eventually spread from the Koguryo Dynasty to the Silla Dynasty (57 BC - 935 AD). The Silla Dynasty having its own version of the Koguryo's Sonbae called HwaRang which practiced Taek Kyon as a part of their regular curriculum. The third king of the Silla Dynasty, Yoorie, held Soobakhee contests. The terms "subak" (hand technique) and "taekkon" (foot technique) appear together in the writings of the Silla dynasty. This suggests that both hand and foot techniques were used in Korean martial arts as they are used in modern Taekwon-do today. Evidence of this can be traced to the bronze statues of the warrior Kumgang, whose shape of fists depict the kind of fists used in taekwon-do today. The statue of Kumgang's also displays the use of legs and feet that are currently used in taekwon-do. In addition to Taek Kyon, HwaRang Do of Silla Dynasty is believed to have practiced other forms of martial arts including Soo Bakh-Do.

Martial arts were also an important part of the Baek Je Dynasty (18 BC - 600 AD). Baek Je was a tribe that detached itself from the Koguryo Dynasty. The Soo Sa system of Baek Je was comparable to the Sonbae of the Koguryo Kingdom and the Hwarang of the Silla Kingdom, which provided military protection for the Baek Je Kingdom.

Silla, the smallest of the three dynasties, unified all the kingdoms after winning the war against Baek Je in 660 AD and Koguryo in 668 AD. The HwaRang Do played an important role at this unification. During the time of peace, the HwaRang Do turned from a military organization to a group specialized in poetry and music. It was in 936 AD when the powerful warlord, Wang Kon, took over Silla and founded the Koryo Dynasty (935 – 1392 AD). The name Koryo was an abbreviation of Koguryo, from which the modern name Korea was derived.

During the Koryo Dynasty the sport Soo Bakh Do, which was then used as a military training method, became popular. However, during the Joseon-Dynasty which is also known as the Yi-Dynasty (1392 AD - 1910 AD), more emphasis was placed on literary arts than on the martial arts. King Taejo, founder of the Joseon-Dynasty, replaced Buddhism by Confucianism as the state religion. According to Confucianism, only the higher class should study poetry, read poems and play music. Martial arts were something for the common or even inferior, man. This new emphasis on literary provided Korea with Mooyae Doba Tongjee, the first martial arts textbook that was published in 1790. The Mooyae Doba Tongjee contains illustrations that portray each Subakki technique.

In 1910, Japan invaded Korea and dominated Korea until the end of World War II. During this time, the Japanese colonial government outlawed all folkloric games, including Subakki and Taek Kyon. The Korean language and the use of Korean family names were also outlawed. This led to the March First Movement, during which millions of Koreans conducted public, non-violent demonstrations for independence, but they had no foreign support, and Japan's domination was too secure. The oppression of the Korean people ended only through the defeat of Japan in World War II in 1945. However, Koreans secretly continued to practice Subakki and Taek Kyon.

During the Japanese occupation, many Koreans were exposed to Japanese versions of martial arts such as karate. As the Japanese moved deeper into the continent, karate was adopted and mixed with more traditional Korean martial arts such as Tae Kyon, as well as traditional Chinese martial arts.

Therefore, the modern day Taekwon-Do has evolved from a mixture of the traditional Korean martial arts such as Taek Kyon, karate from Japan and other traditional Chinese martial arts. In Korean, the term **Taekwon-Do** (also spelled **Taekwondo**, **Tae Kwon Do**, or **Taegwondo**) is derived from **hanja**, *Tae* meaning "to kick or destroy with the foot"; *Kwon* meaning "to punch with the fist"; and *Do* meaning "way" or "art". Hence, it is being loosely translated as "the art of hand and foot" or "the way of the foot and the fist." In essence Taekwon-Do is a martial art that combines combat techniques, self-defense, and philosophy.

Although reference in this essay is made to other forms of martial arts that led to the development of taekwon-do, the Chang-Hon style of Taekwon-Do was specifically developed by General Choi Hong Hi. The other forms of martial arts, such as, karate, Taek Kyon, other Chinese martial arts

were only used as references. The theories, terminology, techniques, methods, rules, uniform, and philosophical foundation of the Chang-Hon style were scientifically developed, systemized, and named by General Choi.

The Taekwon-Do Development Timeline

The purpose of the following timeline is to provide a brief outline of the development of Taekwon-Do with particular emphasis on the development of the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) and World Taekwondo Federation (WTF).

1945 The Liberation of Korea after Japanese Occupation

Five martial arts schools under the style name of Kong Soo Do or Tang Soo Do, called Kwans, were formed. The Kwans and their founders were:

- Chung Do Kwan (LEE, Won Kuk),
- Jidokwan (CHUN, Sang Sup),
- Chang Moo Kwan (YOON, Byung In),
- Moo Duk Kwan (Hwang Ki), and
- Song Moo Kwan (ROH, Byung Jick).

1953 After the Korean War

Four more Kwans formed. These Kwans and their founders were;

- **Oh Do Kwan** (Gym of My Way) (**CHOI, Hong Hi** & NAM, Tae Hi),
- Han Moo Kwan (LEE, Kyo Yun),
- Kang Duk Kwan (PARK, Chul Hee & Hong Jong Pyo) and
- Jung Do Kwan (LEE, Young Woo).

1955 Unification of Different Kwans, To Form "Taekwon-Do"

This unity was ordered by South Korea's President Syngman Rhee. The word "Taekwon-Do" did not exist before this period. It is widely accepted that General Choi was the first person to have suggested the name "Taekwon-Do". However, some literature claims that both Sun Duk Song and General Choi Hong Hi claim to have submitted the name.

1959 The Korean Taekwondo Association (KTA) Was Formed

This was an attempt to unify the many Kwans and apply one standardized system of Taekwon-Do. General CHOI, Hong Hi was named President in the same year.

1959 The First International Tour Of Taekwondo,

This tour to the Far East was lead by General CHOI, Hong Hi who was also accompanied with 19 prestigious Black Belts such as Nam Tae Hi, President of the Asia Taekwon-Do Federation; Colonel Ko Jae Chun, the 5th Chief of Taekwon-Do instructors in Vietnam; Colonel Baek Joon Gi, the 2nd Chief instructor in Vietnam; Brigadier Gen. Woo Jong Lim; Mr. Han Cha Kyo, the Head Instructor in Singapore and Mr. Cha Soo Young, presently an international instructor in Washington D.C.

Despite the unification efforts, the Kwans continued to teach their individual styles. The Korean government ordered a single organization be created and, on **September 16, 1961**, the Kwans agreed to unify under the name Korea Tae Soo Do Association.

1961 The Formation of the Korea Tae Soo Do Association

This association was a result of mutual agreement by the various Kwans as a means of achieving unification.

1962 The Korean Athletic Union Recognizes Taekwondo As A Sport

1964 The Korean Athletic Union Recognizes Taekwondo As A National Sport

1965 The Korea Tae Soo Do Association Changes Name

This association changed its name back to the Korean Taekwondo Association (KTA) when General Choi Hong Hi became its president in August 1965.

1966 The Formation of the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF)

General Choi Hong Hi establishes the ITF after a trip to North Korea in the same year causes upset in South Korea.

1966/7 The Korea Taekwondo Association Changes

The Kwans previously practiced the Pyong Ahn Hyung and related Hyung (Karate kata). During this period, they switched to the Palgwe and Yudanja (black belt) Poomsae.

1972 ITF Headquarters Moved To Toronto

General Choi Hong Hi moves to Canada and shifts the headquarters of the ITF from Korea.

1972 The Korea Taekwondo Association Central Dojang Opens.

A few months later, the name was changed to the Kukkiwon. Kukkiwon literally means "National Technique Center" and is the World Taekwondo Headquarters. At that time, 8 new Poomsae called Taegeuk replaced the Palgwe Poomsae.

1973 The World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) Was Formed

The nations involved in this formation were Korea, the USA, Uganda, Mexico, Austria, and the Republic of China. It was originally headed by Kim Un-Yong (later a member of the International Olympic Committee).

1973 The First (WTF) World Taekwondo Championship

This event was held at the Kukkiwon with participation of 35 delegates from around the world.

1974 The First (ITF) World TKD Championship

This event was held in Montreal.

1980 Recognition By The International Olympic Committee

The IOC recognizes the WTF and Taekwondo sparring as a demonstration sport.

1984 Taekwondo Was Admitted To the Asian Games as an Official Event

1988 Involvement in the Seoul Olympic Games

The WTF and Taekwondo is involved in the games as a demonstration sport.

1992 Barcelona Summer Olympic Games

The WTF and Taekwondo is involved in the games as a demonstration sport.

2000 Sydney Olympic Games

The WTF and Taekwondo is involved in the games as an official full medal Olympic event.

Even though the Kukkiwon curriculum of Taekwondo is broad, with research and practice of many aspects of the martial arts, only a newly created type of sparring called "Shihap-Kyorugi" was accepted by the WTF as a competition event in the World Championships. This new full-contact, non-stop sparring competition format used in this first and subsequent WTF events, led the WTF to successful acceptance into the Summer Olympic Games

The next section provides a basic comparison of the key differences between ITF and WTF. A table has been utilised to simplify presentation of information.

Table 1: A Comparison of Key Features of the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) and World Taekwondo Federation (WTF)

FEATURES	ITF	WTF
Name	Taekwon-Do	Taekwondo
Established	22 nd March 1966 by General Choi Hong Hi	28 th May 1973 by Member nations

Headquarters	Originally Canada but later moved to Austria. After the death of General Choi in 2002, ITF is now divided into three organisations (details see below)	South Korea
Style	Chang-Hon	WTF
Membership	Well spread in many countries	Well spread in many countries
Known as	The original or traditional form of taekwon-do	The Olympic style taekwondo or sports taekwondo
The Role	Each regional ITF maintains membership registrations and issues belt ranks.	The Kukkiwon maintains membership registrations and issues belt ranks. The WTF is a sport, tournament, and refereeing entity only.
Uniform	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White, may be zipped in the centre. • Black belts have a black stripe on the bottom of the jacket. • 4th dans and above have stripes down the sleeves and pants. • Generally shoes are not part of the uniform although foot protection is used in sparring. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White, V-neck uniform with various colours on the v-neck. • There appears to be some variation in the uniform with some having checked fabric. • WTF members may wear shoes.
Patterns	Tuls	Poomsae
Theory	Encompasses a body of knowledge that is required to be mastered before a student can progress to the next level.	
Patterns	Have 24 patterns (called <i>tuls</i>) which now use a sine wave motion.	Only recognizes Taeguk <i>poomsae</i> and does not use a sine wave motion.
Self defence	Features in ITF curriculum	Practiced but not emphasised
Breaking of boards	Features in ITF curriculum	Practices but not emphasised
Ranks	10 levels of student (<i>gup</i>) ranks and 9 levels of black belt (<i>dan</i>) ranks.	10 levels of student (<i>gup</i>) ranks and 10 levels of black belt (<i>dan</i>) ranks.

Assigning of titles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Dan - 3rd Dan: "Assistant Instructor" • 4th Dan - 6th Dan: "Instructor" • 7th Dan - 8th Dan: "Master" • 9th Dan: "Grand Master" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1st Dan - 2nd Dan: "Assistant Instructor" • 3rd Dan - 4th Dan: "Instructor" • 5th Dan - 7th Dan: "Master" • 8th Dan - 10th Dan: "Grand Master"
Competition Rules		
Entry	Restricted to members of affiliated schools/clubs	Open to all participants. School affiliation not an issue
Sparring Contact	Only touch contact is permitted with attacks at the back of the head, the back and below the belt prohibited.	Full contact is permitted with punches to the face prohibited.
Sparring Duration	non-stop two rounds of two minutes each, with a one-minute rest period between each round	non-stop three rounds of two minutes each, with a one-minute rest period between rounds
Ability to participate in the Olympics	Not able to participate irrespective of rank.	All ranks of registered 1st Dan and above.

Various attempts made to unify ITF and WTF has failed because the objectives of both ITF and WTF are quite different. ITF (traditional martial art) and WTF (sports geared martial art) have two different systems that have diverged from the same origin.

After the bereavement of General Choi in 2002, ITF has been further divided into three organisations:

1. ITF Vienna - NK led by Mr Chang Ung
2. ITF Vienna led by New President Mr Tran Trieu Quan (previously Mr Russell MacLellan)
3. ITF Canada led by the Generals son, Choi Jung Hwa

In addition, there other groups like Rayners Lane Academy & many other schools & associations, including the largest ITF group in the USA, the USTF led by Grandmaster Chuck Sherrif, who have chosen to go independent of all the ITF groups.

Conclusion

The Chang-Hon style of Taekwon-Do is well established in many countries around the world. The art is practiced in many different do-jang by many different cultures and age groups. It has become a way of life for many around the world.

As a result of the above analysis it is evident that the role of General Choi Hong Hi in Taekwon-Do has been instrumental to its development, international spread and growth. Although he was not the founder of the WTF his movement away from the KTA in 1965 and formation of ITF in 1966 did contribute to the formation of the WTF in 1973 by the KTA.

Whilst the origins of both ITF and WTF is shared it would appear from the above that the WTF have taken the sparring aspect of Taekwon-Do and specialised in making it an Olympic recognised sport. ITF on the other hand have continued to ensure members are comprehensively trained on all aspects of the art as intended by the Founder.

Irrespective of whether it is ITF and WTF, Taekwon-Do has something to offer for everyone seeking physical, mental and/or spiritual development. The key to choosing which to join lays with the individual and their preference.

The historical development of Taekwon-Do has highlighted the impact TKD leaders and political groups have had on bringing Taekwon-Do to its current status today. There is no doubt that these two factors will continue to significantly impact on the future development of Taekwon-Do internationally.

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