

# **My reflections on the history of Taekwon-Do, my own history and the issues I see concerning this Martial Art up to 1979 (Part 1)**

## **Thesis by:**

Master Evan Davidson, 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, ITF New Zealand  
December 2012

### **Introduction:**

It is now over 40 years since I took up this amazing Martial Art of Taekwon-Do. I have trained in and have taught this martial art form, following the method or systems as developed and named by its founder, the late General Choi Hong Hi. (1918 – 2002)

Part 1 of this thesis will take the format of a timeline of events touching on the history of Martial arts in Korea to the inception of Taekwon-Do then through to when I first met the Founder, General Choi and up to around 1979. Of course what has been written regarding the history of Korean Martial Arts and Taekwon-Do is vast and varied, so there will be a number of assumptions made and it will be over to the reader to make their own assessment on events that I cover.

As indicated I will attempt to place my research into a *time-line* which hopefully will make things easier to follow and will also allow others who practise International Taekwon-Do to place themselves somewhere on the time line and to examine where and when they first came into contact with this Martial Art and how they have got to where they are today. NB: A Time-line summary and index is located at the end of this Thesis.

### **My first contact with Taekwon-Do:**

I reflect back to my early days when I started Taekwon-Do and saw a new and developing Martial Art that very few people in New Zealand would have known about at that time.

I first heard of and started learning Taekwon-Do in 1972, when I was based in Singapore with the New Zealand Army, at the HMS Terror Naval Barracks in Sembawang. From my knowledge, most, if not all Taekwon-Do Do Jangs or Clubs in Singapore at that time only knew of and practised the systems of the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF), whose president was the founder and who gave the Art its name, General Choi.

My initial Instructor was Mr R. Jeyaratnam 3<sup>rd</sup> Dan, a Tamil Indian, from the United Taekwon-Do Group in Chong Pang Village. My first two Gup grading's in Singapore were conducted in front of a Korean Examiner, a Mr Lee Jung Nam. Mr Lee, from my understanding, had been a soldier in the Republic of Korea Army and had recently come out of the military conflict in Vietnam to take a senior role as Korean Taekwon-Do adviser to the Singapore National Sports Organisation and the United Taekwon-Do Group. Being part of the Korean Military, Mr Lee would have practised the Art as promoted by the International Taekwon-Do Federation. Hence our learning of the Tul (Patterns) developed by General Choi. (See more on Lee Jung Nam later in this Thesis)

I soon became aware that there were changes or different practises within Taekwon-Do during mid to late 1973 when some of our local Singapore trained Black Belt members, including Mr Lee Jung Nam travelled over to South Korea to train at what we now know as the Kukkiwon, or home centre of Taekwondo. I also read articles from a local Singapore Martial Arts magazine 'Bushido' which indicated a 'tide of change' was happening within this martial art in Singapore and also in the international scene. (See further on this under WTF page 14)

One of the New Zealand Army soldiers, Mr Padre Tairea, from our Chong Pang Village Do Jang, who had reached his 1<sup>st</sup> Dan Black Belt, also travelled over to South Korea with Mr Lee and several others. When Mr Tairea returned a week or so later he informed me that they were doing Taekwon-Do different in South Korea and teaching different patterns. Mr Lee Jung Nam did not return to Singapore; however I was to meet up with him again a few years later back in New Zealand. (See page 15)

We continued training under the ITF system and I subsequently graded to my 1<sup>st</sup> Dan in September 1973. The Korean examiner at this grading was a Mr Lee Sung Soo. I note from my Singapore certificate shown that Mr Lee signed and stamped this as 'Taekwondo Examiner'. The Certificate was already pre-printed with the sign off as 'I.T.F. Examiner'.

My subsequent research on Lee Sung Soo took me to the following Web Site which now shows that he was not part of the ITF at the time:

<http://www.7tigers-jidokwan.com/q-m-sung-soo-lee/>



The following is an excerpt from his current profile: *Grandmaster Sung Soo Lee is the 9th Dan head master of Australia Hapkido Moohakkwan (affiliated with the Korea Hapkido Federation), and is also the 9th Dan head master of Taekwondo Jidokwan in Australia (affiliated with the World Taekwondo Federation). I note from his history. In 1968: Taekwondo Jidokwan Instructor Training. In 1972: Korea Taekwondo Association Instructor Training. Taekwondo Lecturer at Seoul National University. Selected as Singapore National Team coach by Korea Taekwondo Association for 2 year contract.*

I guess it was from around this time that there was strong political pressure on Singapore from the South Korean administration and the WTF which was to be the beginning of 'Taekwon-Do' change in that country. I returned to New Zealand in mid 1974 so any changes that did occur in Singapore did not affect me at all.

Back in New Zealand, Taekwon-Do was relatively unknown and I was soon able to assist a small number of instructors who were teaching General Choi's Taekwon-Do at the time. This was just prior to the opening of my own Do Jang in Miramar, Wellington in February of 1975. I had earlier made contact with Mr Norman Ng who was the 1<sup>st</sup> Instructor to introduce Taekwon-Do to New Zealand in 1970. It was from these small beginnings that the International Taekwon-Do Foundation of New Zealand Inc. developed and soon became well established.

**A central question for me at this time is; what was happening to 'Taekwon-Do'? i.e. the Taekwon-Do that had been developed and designed by General Choi?** To answer this question, I need to take a step back and try to delve a bit more into some of Korea's tumultuous past and to include some early history of the Martial Arts in Korea. I will then concentrate more specifically on the period from 1910 onwards.

## **Korean History pre 1910 -**

### **Pre - 57 B.C**

Evidence of inhabitants in Korea from as early as 4000 BC exists in Korea.

Legend has it that the man-god Tan Gun founded Korea 'Joseon' (meaning Land of the Morning Calm) Kingdom in 2333 BC. Almost no centralized communities existed from then until three kingdoms emerged in the 1st century BC.

### **57 B.C. - 668 A.D**

The Three Kingdoms of Silla, Koguryo, and Baekje had similar ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. Koguryo occupied the northern part of the peninsula from the Chinese border to the Han River, while Silla and Baekje dominated the southern regions. All three kingdoms were heavily influenced by China and Buddhism was introduced to Koguryo in 372. Various alliances were formed either with or against the Chinese until 660 when Silla allied with China to overthrow Baekje. Koguryo fell shortly afterwards in 668.

### **668 – 935 A.D**

The United Silla Kingdom period marked the start of Korea's cultural development. Buddhism expanded and fuelled the construction of numerous temples and art works. However, despite Chinese influences, Silla remained largely tribal in culture. Society divided into distinct classes with a large semi-slave population supporting an aristocratic minority. Warlords began amassing power bases to the north and eventually took over Silla and founded a new kingdom - Goryeo.

### **918 - 1392**

Korea's English name was derived during the Goryeo period. At this time the government codified the laws and introduced a civil service system. During this time Buddhism flourished and spread throughout the peninsula. Like other kingdoms before it, Koryo was also subject to internal strife and external threats, most notably from the Mongols who had taken over China. In 1231 the Mongols invaded Korea, forcing the royal family to flee to Kanghwa Island near Seoul. After 25 years of struggle, the royal family finally surrendered. The following 150 years saw continued Goryeo rule, but under the control of the Mongols. As the Mongols declined in power, so too did Goryeo. In 1392 a Korean general, Yi, Song-gye, was sent to China to campaign against the Ming rulers. Instead, he allied himself with the Chinese, returned to overthrow the Korean king, and setup his own dynasty. During this time, Korea also perfected the art of celadon pottery.

### **1392 – 1910**

The ruler of the Yi Dynasty (also known as the Joseon Dynasty) moved the capital to Hanyang-gun (today's Seoul) in 1394 and adopted Confucianism as the country's official religion. As a result, Buddhists lost much of their wealth and power. It was during this period that the Korean alphabet, Hangeul, was invented by King Sejong the Great. This period also had its share of external problems, suffering invasions by the Japanese (1592-1598) and the Manchus (1627-1636). With the arrival of Japanese and Western traders in the 19th century, the Korean rulers tried to prevent the opening of the country to foreign trade by closing the borders,

earning Korea its nickname of the Hermit Kingdom. Beginning in 1876, the Japanese forced a series of Western-style trade agreements on Korea, leading to Japan's eventual annexation of the country in 1910. Due to growing anti-Japanese sentiment, in 1897 King Kojong declared himself to be emperor of the Taehan Empire, an independent Korea. However, during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), Japanese forces moved onto the peninsula, despite Korean declarations of neutrality. The signing of the Japan-Korea Protection Treaty in 1905 gave Japan virtual control over Korea, and in 1910 a Korean royal proclamation announced the annexation by Japan.

**You can see from this early history, Korea was already a country that was continually divided and was often occupied by foreign invading countries.**

## **20<sup>th</sup> Century - Korea**

### **Korean History 1910 – 1953**

As mentioned above, Japan annexed Korea in 1910 and so became their colonial rulers for **35 years**. This was until the end of the Second World War. It is within this period that General Choi Hong Hi was born. He was born on 9<sup>th</sup> November 1918 in Ha-Ga-Myun Village, North Eastern Region of Korea. As a teenager he began his learning of the Martial Arts, which subsequently lead to his development of what he was to name 'Taekwon-Do'.

Under the colonial rule of the Japanese, traditional Korean Martial Art and other Korean cultural systems had been suppressed or were forbidden to be practised. The Japanese only allowed their particular systems to be practiced. ie Karate, Ju jitsu etc. However many traditional Korean Kwans or martial art schools managed to continue to train in their own particular system or style under the name of 'Korean Karate'. Of course the various systems of Japanese Karate would have been a big influence on the Koreans who were practising the martial arts in those days.

The following is an excerpt from:

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main\\_pop/kpct/kp\\_koreaimperialism.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/main_pop/kpct/kp_koreaimperialism.htm)

- Japanese colonial rule (1910-1945) was a deeply ambivalent experience for Koreans. On the one hand, Japanese colonialism was often quite harsh. For the first ten years Japan ruled directly through the military, and any Korean dissent was ruthlessly crushed. After a nationwide protest against Japanese colonialism that began on March 1, 1919, Japanese rule relaxed somewhat, allowing a limited degree of freedom of expression for Koreans.
- Despite the often oppressive and heavy-handed rule of the Japanese authorities, many recognizably modern aspects of Korean society emerged or grew considerably during the 35-year period of colonial rule. These included rapid urban growth, the expansion of commerce, and forms of mass culture such as radio and cinema, which became widespread for the first time. Industrial development also took place, partly encouraged by the Japanese colonial state, although primarily for the purposes of enriching Japan and fighting the wars in China and the Pacific rather than to benefit the Koreans themselves. Such uneven and distorted development left a mixed legacy for the peninsula after the colonial period ended.

- By the time of the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Korea was the second-most industrialized nation in Asia after Japan itself.
- But the wartime mobilization of 1937-45 had reintroduced harsh measures to Japanese colonial rule, as Koreans were forced to work in Japanese factories and were sent as soldiers to the front.
- In 1939, Koreans were even pressured by the colonial authorities to change their names to Japanese names, and more than 80per cent of the Koreans complied with the name-change ordinance.
- The Japanese surrender to the Allies on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1945, which ended World War II, led to a time of great confusion and turmoil in Korea.
- The country was divided into zones of occupation by the victorious Americans and Soviets, and various individuals and organizations across the political spectrum from Communists to the far Right claimed to speak for an independent Korean government. The Soviets and Americans failed to reach an agreement on a unified Korean government, and in 1948 two separate governments were established, each claiming to be the legitimate government of all Korea: the Republic of Korea in Seoul, in the American zone, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in Pyongyang, in the Soviet zone.

### **The Korean War (25 June 1950 – 27 July 1953)**

“This was a war between the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. **It was primarily the result of the political division of Korea under an agreement of the victorious Allies at the conclusion of the Pacific War at the end of World War II.** Following the surrender of the Empire of Japan in September 1945, American administrators divided the peninsula along the 38th parallel, with U.S. military forces occupying the southern half and Soviet military forces occupying the northern half.

The failure to hold free elections throughout the Korean Peninsula in 1948 deepened the division between the two sides; the North established a communist government, while the South established a capitalist one. The 38th parallel increasingly became a political border between the two Korean states. Although reunification negotiations continued in the months preceding the war, tension intensified. Cross-border skirmishes and raids at the 38th Parallel persisted. The situation escalated into open warfare when North Korean forces invaded South Korea on 25 June 1950.” [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean\\_War](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_War)

“After three years of bloody fighting some three million Koreans, one million Chinese, and 54,000 Americans were killed. The Korean War ended in a truce with Korea still divided into two mutually antagonistic states, separated by a heavily fortified “De-Militarized Zone” (DMZ). **Korea has remained divided ever since.”**

## **What martial art systems were being practised during the Japanese occupation period?**

Korean martial art systems went by the names of; Taek kyon, Soo bak-gi, Dang Soo, Kong Soo and no doubt many others as well. School's teaching these arts were and are generally referred to as Kwans and each Kwan developed their own methods and martial art system. The influence that the Japanese had given to the martial arts of Korea is the quick, linear movements, which characterize the various martial art systems of Japan. As previously mentioned the use of the words 'Korean Karate' was displayed by these Kwans, not only to practise the Japanese Karate systems but also as a disguise to maintain some of their Korean martial art influences.

## **The names of the Kwans that emerged in Korea following the surrender of Japan in the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, with a brief historical summary were:**

1. **Chung Do Kwan:** Founded by Lee Won Kuk. Lee Won Kuk began his career in martial arts in 1926 at the age of 19 after he moved to Japan to attend college. During his time at University he studied Shotokan Karate under its founder Gichin Funakoshi. Lee returned to Korea and began teaching karate in September 1944. His school was located in Seoul. Because of Lees close association to the Japanese he was not trusted by the Administration and his school was temporarily closed. He however formed a tight alliance with the Korean National Police that when his Chung Do Kwan reopened in April 1946, it became known as the National Police Do Jang. Of note: Many of the Korean Schools of martial arts closed their doors during the Korean War. The Chung Do Kwan was no exception; however it did reopen in 1953 with Lee Won Kuk's son Son Duk Sung taking command.

2. **Chosun Yun Moo Kwan – Ji do Kwan:** The evolution of Chosun Yun Moo Kwan began in 1931 when Lee Kyung Suk, a Korean who taught Judo, was allowed to establish the Kwan in Seoul. This school of Judo operated for several decades. At the end of World War II, Lee asked a friend Chun Sang Sup to set up a course of *kwon Bop* at his Kwan. Chun Sang Sup began his martial arts training in Judo in high school before moving to Japan where he was exposed to Shotokan Karate and it is believed he earned a black belt in this style. Chun Sang Sup enlisted the help of Yoon Byung In who was a 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt in Shotokan Karate. Yoon Byung In taught at the Chosun Yun Moo Kwan for about a year before breaking away to form his own school, known as the Chang Moo Kwan. (See below). Chun Sang Sup was kidnapped and imprisoned by the North Korean military during the Korean War. He was not heard from again. One of Chun's senior students, Yoon Kwe Byung, then took control and renamed the school 'Ji Do Kwan' – "Wisdom Way School". During the 1950's when the various Kwans of Korean martial arts began attempting to merge under one banner, Yoon Kwe Byung was against unification. Yoon wanted the Ji Do Kwan to remain free from organisational control, but other seniors disagreed and Yoon was eventually ousted, and Lee Chong Woo was elected the new president of the Ji Do Kwan. Lee forged the Ji Do Kwan into one of the leading martial arts schools of modern Korea. Lee went on to hold several pivotal positions with the Korean Taekwondo Association (KTA) and the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF). – See further information following under KTA & WTF.

3. **Moo Duk Kwan:** There are two distinct divisions of Moo Duk Kwan, both of which evolved from a single source in modern Korea. The first is commonly known as Tang Soo Do. The second is the Moo Duk Kwan division that used the term 'Taekwondo'. The founder of Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan was Hwang Kee. Hwang Kee was an expatriate of Korea during much of the Japanese occupation. His background details that he first secretly studied the Korean Arts of Soo Bak Do and Taek kyon in his homeland, before leaving Korea in 1936 to work for the Southern Manchuria railroad in China. It is said that he studied numerous systems of Chinese martial arts while living in China and also studied a system of Karate. Hwang formalised his system of self-defence in 1945 following his return to Korea. It was called Tang Soo Do Bu. The Korean term Tang Soo literally translates as "knife hand." The school flourished for many years, then like most schools on the Korean peninsula, closed in June 1950 at the onset of the Korean War.

In 1953 when the school reopened, Hwang Kee had changed the name of the system to moo duk kwan. He also changed the name of his organisation to the Korea Soo Bahk Do Association. By 1955 this organisation had ten gymnasiums. By 1965, the various kwans of the modern Korean martial arts were merging under the banner of 'Taekwondo'. Hwang Kee resisted this trend in order to maintain control over his organisation. As a result two of his advanced students, Im Young Tek and Hong Chong Soo – broke away from their teacher forming their own branch of moo duk kwan and becoming part of the Korea Taekwondo Association. Although the two moo duk kwans are relatively similar in style and structure, and most Korean moo duk kwan masters draw their lineage from Hwang Kee, the two moo duk kwans possess different forms and a somewhat different focus.

“Hwang Kee was one of the most important figures in the Korean martial art of Tang Soo Do. He was the founder of Soo Bahk Do and the school of Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan. He was born on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1914 and died on 14<sup>th</sup> July 2002.” [Wikipedia](#)

4. **Chang Moo Kwan:** The Chang Moo Kwan was founded at the YMCA in the Jong Ro area of Seoul in 1946 by Yoon Byung In. Previously whilst under Japanese occupation of Korea, Yoon is said to have studied a Chinese system of self-defence known as chuan fa. When he moved to Japan to attend university he studied karate under the direction of Toyama Kanken, the founder of Shūdōkan Karate. Following the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, Yoon returned to Korea and taught karate at the Chosun Yun Moo Kwan Kwon Bup Bu for about one year. After which he broke away and then opened the YMCA Chang Moo Kwan. In 1946 a Lee Nam Suk was named the first official instructor of the Chan Moo Kwan. The Founder Yoon Byung In went missing in action during the Korean War and it was Lee Nam Suk and Kim Soon Bae, another advanced student of Yoon's, who reopened the school at the YMCA following the end of the Korean War.

5. **Kang Duk Kwan:** As the second generation of the Chang Moo Kwan came into existence in 1953, Lee Nam Suk and Kim Soon Bae began to have conflicts with two other senior students: Hong Jung Pyo and Park Chul Hee. These two men left the school and formed the Kang Duk Kwan, in the nearby Shin Sul Dong district of Seoul in 1956.

6. **Song Moo Kwan:** The Song Moo Kwan was founded in Kae Sung City, Kyung Ki Province, Korea, by Ro Byung Jick on 11<sup>th</sup> March 1944. Like the Chung Do Kwan, this school was actually established prior to the end of Japanese occupation. Due to the repressive political conditions, the kwan was forced to close its doors a few months later. It was not until

2<sup>nd</sup> May 1946, that Ro could reopen his school in Dong Hung Dong, Kae Sung City. On the 25<sup>th</sup> June 1950, the Song Moo Kwan again closed its doors, due to the onset of the Korean War. The on 20<sup>th</sup> September 1953, the school was re-established in the Ah Hyung Dong, Mapo Gu district of Seoul. Ro's training in the martial arts began in 1936 in Japan. He studied Shotokan karate alongside Chung Do Kwan founder Lee Won Kuk, under the guidance of Shotokan's founder Gichin Funakoshi.

7. **Oh Do Kwan:** Founded by General Choi Hong Hi, along with Major Nam Tae Hi. Both General Choi and Major Nam were advanced military officers in the newly formed army of liberated Korea. Their classes were originally taught at the Korean Third Army Base, Yong Dae Ri. Choi Hong Hi was born into a prominent Korean family. He moved to Japan as a student to further his education. Whilst in Japan he studied Shotokan Karate reaching the rank of 2<sup>nd</sup> Degree Black Belt. When the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War broke out he was forced into service of the

Japanese Military. After the War and the defeat of Japan he became a pivotal figure in the newly formed Korean military. Nam Tae Hi became a student of the Chung Do Kwan immediately after Japans defeat. (See previous paragraph on Chung Do Kwan) Nam began teaching at the Korean Army Military Signal School in 1947 and the same period he met up with General Choi. This laid the foundation of the Oh Do Kwan. As the years progressed, in no small part due to General Choi's senior position in the Korean Military, the Oh Do Kwan and his martial art system became the main martial art taught to the Korean Army personnel. Many individuals who were inducted into the Korean Armed Forces already possessed a black belt of some sort, but under General Choi's influence the rank of black belt was only accepted and transferable from students of the Oh Do Kwan and Chung Do Kwan. The practitioners from the other Kwans had to be retrained and retested to be considered for official black belt status. This regulation was questioned by many practitioners of the modern Korean martial arts, but it was, nonetheless, the impetus that brought the various schools of the Korean martial arts together under one banner.

The following is a brief summary about General Choi's right hand man, **Major Nam Tae Hi:**

<http://wtaonline.net/Pioneers/GMNamTaeHi.aspx>

"Born in Seoul, South Korea in March 1929, Major Nam Tae Hi met General Choi on Cheju Island in 1953 and later joined the 29th Infantry Division of the South Korean military forces. Nam Tae Hi, then a captain in rank, was a senior member of the demonstration team which gave the seminal performance in 1954 before South Korean President Seung Man Rhee which led to the presidential decree that the martial art (then not yet officially known as Taekwon-Do) be a mandatory part of training for the military. Nam Tae Hi co-founded with General Choi Hong Hi the Oh Do Kwan, the training gym for the military where he had the role of Chief Instructor.

At the Chung Do Kwan (training gym for civilians), Nam Tae Hi taught Jhoon Rhee who was a first degree black belt. Jhoon Rhee was later recognised in the United States as the "Father of Taekwon-Do," in that country.

Major Nam Tae Hi served as one of the earliest ambassadors of Taekwon-Do when in March 1959 he travelled to Vietnam and Taiwan as member of the first Korean demonstration team to travel outside of Korea. In December 1962, Nam Tae Hi was assigned as Chief Instructor for



the Vietnamese Army and in Vietnam, he is known as the "Father of Taekwon-Do" in that country.

He developed the patterns known as Hwa-Rang, Choong-Moo, and UI-Ji. Major Nam Tae Hi served as a vice-president of the International Taekwon-Do Federation and a president of the Asian Taekwon-Do Federation. Nam Tae Hi moved to Chicago in 1972, opened a Do jang in 1973, and taught Taekwon-Do for twenty years. He now calls Los Angeles home where he lives with his wife".

### **The Unification of the Kwans.**

The attempt to unify the Korean Kwans to congregate under one banner began in the early 1950's. This happened when the leaders of the various schools first came together and tried to form a central governing body. However due to the outbreak of the Korean War these initial attempts did not prove to be successful.

During the period of war, several Kwan leaders formed an alliance and vowed to create a governing body so at the end of the war in 1953 the Kwan leaders, in the now new **Republic of South Korea**, joined forces and set about formalising an organisation.

This organisation was initially named the Korea Kong Soo Do Association. (*The term Kong Soo Do was adopted because this term was commonly used to describe kwon bop, "karate" in the Korean language.*) The focus of this organisation was to provide a standardised system of testing. As each Kwan leader had their particular system of teaching and testing, this proved to be problematic. Nonetheless, the first two tests were given at the central Do jang of the Chung Do Kwan. At this time, the rank of 4<sup>th</sup> Dan was the highest degree awarded by the Korea Kong Soo Do Association. This rank was given to the original Kwan founders and advanced teachers. There was immediate conflict among some of the founders. They were dissatisfied with the promotion standards within this organisation. Two of the leaders with dispute were Hwang Kee (Moo Duk Kwan) and Son Duk Sung (Chung Do Kwan).

Hwang Kee was the first to leave the organisation and about one month later Son Duk Sung removed his group. It was less than a year before the Korea Kong Soo Do Association began to disintegrate. In particular it was the Oh Do Kwan that eventually caused the Korea Kong Soo Do Association to fail, primarily because of the influence General Choi's Oh Do Kwan had with the Korean military and with the Korean Government. Without General Choi's support a successful central association was virtually impossible.

### **'Taekwon-Do' and the naming board:**

The six primary Kwans of South Korea – Chung Do Kwan, Oh Do Kwan, Song Moo Kwan, Chang Moo Kwan, Ji Do Kwan and Moo Duk Kwan – came together on 11<sup>th</sup> April 1955 where the name Taekwon-Do coined by General Choi was finally accepted as the title for the unified style of the Korean Martial Arts. I guess there could have been quite a lot of debate at this naming and some members present may not have been happy with this final outcome.

**Did the Styles unify?** My answer is to this is '**No**', they did not!

I will try to delve into the use of the word 'Taekwon-Do' as used by General Choi and his Oh Do Kwan and the term 'Taekwondo' as subsequently used to describe the martial arts as practised by the other South Korean Kwans. Note the difference in spelling.

The General had been using 'Taekwon-Do' to describe the Martial Art as was developed and taught by him through the military and his Oh Do Kwan for a number of years, even well before the leaders of the Kwans gathered to where the name was formally accepted. However the other Kwan leaders then adopted the name 'Taekwondo' as a representation of the Martial Art styles that they were teaching.

To quote General Choi from his autobiography – Taekwon-Do and I - : *“My trouble began soon after the formation of the South Korean Armed Forces. Despite fierce opposition from my colleagues, I succeeded in introducing Taekwon-Do as a compulsory course in the military curriculum. I was repaid with jealousy, slander and finally oppression. As a result my Army career came to an abrupt end. This was merely a prelude for what was to follow. The civilian gyms practising Dang Soo Do, Kong Soo Do (Korean Karate) saw Taekwon-Do as a possible threat. I cannot help but despair over the tainted image of Taekwon-Do recently created by practitioners of ‘sham Taekwon-Do’ who have nothing in common with the origin and art form except for a borrowed name.”*

This to me says it all. The other Kwan's that were not associated with General Choi's Oh Do Kwan, continued teaching their own martial art systems and techniques which were completely different to what General Choi had developed and named as Taekwon-Do. Additional problems within South Korea soon developed with political and government agencies having a significant influence as to where the Korean martial arts were heading.

Following the demise of the Korea Kong Soo Do Association, General Choi petitioned the Ministry of Education and the Korea Amateur Sports Association to found a new organisation. With the General's close ties to then Korean President Rhee Seung Man, the acceptance of this new organisation was virtually ensured. In **September 1959** the affiliated Kwans became formalised as the Korean Taekwon-Do Association (KTA). General Choi was elected as its President. Ro Byung Jick of Song Moo Kwan and Yoon Kwe Byung of the Ji Do Kwan elected vice presidents. Hwang Kee of Moo Duk Kwan was appointed as chief director, however his participation was short lived as he broke away from the group.

Also in **1959** as Taekwon-Do was spreading there was a need for a training manual so the General had to hurriedly publish a Taekwon-Do manual in the Korean language. Major Nam Tae-Hi assisted him in this and insisted on including techniques or moves taken from karate.

I guess the General had hoped that this manual could be used by all the other Kwans in South Korea to try and unify the Korean martial art but as he stated in his memoirs Vol 1, Pg 531. “Persuading the Directors of other practice halls who were adhering to karate techniques was even harder and my efforts were loathed, regardless of whether I was right or wrong.”

It was during this year **1959** that General Choi selected 16 Taekwon-Do Instructors to be in a demonstration team to travel to Taiwan and South Vietnam. These instructors were: Nam Tae Hi, Woo Jong Lim, Ko Jae Chun, Baek Joon Ki, Han Cha Kyo, Lee Ung Sam, Cha Soo Yong, Lee Hwa Sup, Kim Bok Man, Kwak Keun Sik, Yun Jun Kuel, Kim Man Ho, Kim Jun Taek, Lee Yong Kyun, Kim Bok Nom and Kim Tae Yong. (The Korean Martial Art of TaeKwon-Do & Early History by Coi Chang Keun 2007)

In **February 1960** General Choi travelled to the United States under his Military commitments attending the Modern Weapons Familiarisation Course. During his time in the US he was able to catch up with Jhoon Rhee, a Korean Instructor teaching Korean martial arts in America. Rhee was using the name Taekwon-Do but apparently teaching it in a Karate style. The General made necessary changes to Rhee's system and it was from this point that Jhoon Rhee was then referred to as the first Taekwon-Do instructor in America.

On **16<sup>th</sup> May 1961** South Korean president Sygman Rhee was overthrown by a military coup d'état. South Korea then entered a period of internal chaos and the Korea Taekwon-Do Association collapsed. It was a period of great internal disruption and military rule where the Kwans were forced to subsequently organise into one body by Governmental Decree.

A new group known as the Korea Tae Soo Do Association then formed and became the main governing body; however there was still a large amount of in-fighting. Many of the high ranking members did not like the fact that they were being told what to teach and how they must promote their students.

During this period and due to General Choi's previous close association with the ousted South Korean President Rhee, General Choi was prevented in playing an important role in this organisation. Even though Gen Choi had once held pivotal positions as commander of the Sixth Korean Army and director of intelligence, he was disliked by the new South Korean President, Park Chung Hee; of note General Choi had once been President Park's superior officer. General Choi was forced to resign from the Military and he was sent to Malaysia in the capacity of ambassador of South Korea.

## **1962 - 1965**

Whilst General Choi was Korean ambassador in Malaysia, Major Nam Tae-Hi had been posted to Vietnam with the Republic of Korea Army. Therefore Taekwon-Do from the Oh Do Kwan was being practised, not only in the Korean Army but by the South Vietnamese Military and American Soldiers.

Between 1962 and 1964, General Choi built up his Taekwon-Do's foundations starting in Malaysia and Singapore which was where he developed most of the patterns. In 1963 he had summoned Instructors Kim Bok Man and Woo Jae Lim to Malaysia to instruct people there.

As an ambassador he got to travel to other countries around the world. He travelled with some of his dedicated and senior Taekwon-Do Instructors and so was able to demonstrate and introduce his Martial Art of Taekwon-Do to these countries. The General's demonstration team consisted of Han Cha-Gyo, Park Jong-Soo, Kim Joong-Keun and Kwon Jae-Hwa and the 1965 tour to Europe took in the countries of Italy, West Germany, Turkey and Egypt. National Associations were subsequently set up in these countries visited by the General.

Later in 1965 General Choi returned to South Korea from Malaysia and soon after was elected president of the Korea Tae Soo Do Association. He subsequently called together a General Assembly and proposed to change the name of the organisation back to the Korea Taekwon-Do Association. The name change did occur, only winning by one vote. (Taekwondo Basics by Scott Shaw. TUTTLE PUBLISHING)

The first English version of the Generals manual was published in **August 1965** and this contains just 20 of General Choi's designed patterns. The manual also includes 9 Karate patterns of the Sho-rin and Sho-Rei Schools (Possibly of Shotokan origin).

## 1966

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1966 the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) was founded. The ITF was initially formed with nine (9) countries as its members: South Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, USA, Germany, Italy, Turkey and Egypt.

The ITF headquarters was set up in Seoul, South Korea with General Choi as the President and an executive as follows:

Honorary President; Kim Jong-Pil.

Honorary Vice Presidents; Kim Wang-Yong and Kim Yong-Tae. .

Vice Presidents; Lee Sahng-Hee, Ri Jo-Ha from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, and Noh Byung-Jik.

Secretary-General; Uhm Woon-Gyu.

Secretary; Lee Kye-Hoon

Treasurer; Lee Sung-Woo

Planner; Han Cha-Gyo

Chief of Technical Committee; Lee Jong-Woo (*Ref: Memoirs of General Choi Vol 2 pages 107-108*)

Just looking at the list above, it appears that General Choi created a number of senior positions within his ITF executive with the main reason, I believe, to enable government backing and support for this new International Organisation which was to be based in South Korea. I note there is no mention at this point of any other positions for representatives from the other overseas countries that initially formed the ITF.

It is interesting to note the résumé's of his executive is as follows:

1. Honorary President is Kim Jong-Pil (born January 7, 1926) is a South Korean politician and founder of the Korean Central Intelligence Agency (the KCIA, now the National Intelligence Service), who later served as Prime Minister twice, from 1971–1975 and from 1998–2000. (*Wikipedia*)

2. Sec General Uhm Woon-Gyu was a senior member of the Chung Do Kwan at the time and later became Grand Master of Chung Do Kwan and performed a major role in the formation of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF). (<http://rctkd.webs.com/historyofchungdokwan.htm>)

The General mentions in his autobiography that the International Federation had a difficult start in its financial situation due to being controlled by the Government regime of President Park Jung-Hee. Their office was only a small storage room, formally a coal store and with no furniture. This room had been acquired by the ITF Vice President Lee Sahng-Hee, who was a congressman of the government, and a close ally of Kim Jong-Pil. (The ITF Honorary President)

Around the end of **1966** there was talk and negotiations to merge or unify the three martial art controlling bodies in South Korea i.e. The Korea Taekwon-Do Association, the ITF and the Soo Bahk-Do Association. This of course did not eventuate.

## 1967 – 1969

Here was a period of genuine struggle for General Choi. He was trying to get proper recognition and financial support for Taekwon-Do and the ITF. He had no permanent building to develop his Instructors so he had to use the living room and garage at his own house for this purpose. It was here he trained the likes of Cho Hee-il and Park Jung-Tae amongst many others as International Instructors. These Instructors would spread the General's Taekwon-Do to other countries throughout the World.

The General also developed plans for a permanent Building to be a Taekwon-Do Centre, but due to power struggles amongst the 'Kwans' and political pressure especially from South Korea's President Park this had to be abandoned. The building built was named the 'Kukkiwon' and this subsequently became the headquarters of the WTF.

By the end of **1967** thirty (30) countries had become affiliated to the ITF and plans were being made to hold the 1<sup>st</sup> International Championship series in South Korea in mid-**1968**. However the KTA tried to undermine the plans and protested to stop any foreign competitors from entering the country. This protest was successful and the championship was subsequently aborted.

However this did not deter the General and in **October 1969** the first Asian Taekwon-Do Championship was held in Hong Kong. There were five countries involved. (Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Brunei).

Master Nam Tae-Hi was, at that time, the President of the Asian Taekwon-Do Federation.

## 1970 - 1979

Political pressures and infighting between the KTA and ITF eventually forced General Choi to make preparations for his self-exile from South Korea. He declared his farewell at a General Meeting in **August 1971** by saying: *"Dear members, as you are aware the ITF is an international organisation which is free from the interference or direction of the Korean Government, except that I, the President of the ITF, am a Korean. I did my best to honour Korea and to make Taekwon-Do organisations in Korea cooperate, but what I see is not progress but more complications. To keep my faith to the Korean people and the Korean flag, which I cannot give up, I will not attend this meeting anymore after this moment. Farewell."* **Ref:** Taekwon-Do and I – Vol 2 page 205.

The General had planned his exile from South Korea carefully and this coincided with the release of the 'English' version of his Taekwon-Do manual which was published in Hong Kong in **January 1972**. He had left South Korea on the **3<sup>rd</sup> of January 1972**; his aim being to preserve the future of the 'Taekwon-Do' system that he developed, established and named.

From his new location, based in Toronto, Canada, General Choi was able to travel throughout the rest of the world to maintain the teaching of his Taekwon-Do under the banner of the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF). He had with him one of his most dedicated Instructors, Park Jong Soo, who was also based in Toronto. General Choi travelled extensively

especially to Central and South America and more countries joined his ITF. The Bolivian Taekwon-Do Association was established in **February 1973**.

**During 1973** President Park Jung-Hee of South Korea made many attempts to get General Choi to return to his home country. In words from his Memoirs Vol 2, page 240: *“He sent many congressmen to me in efforts to persuade me to come back, saying if I did he would grant any of my wishes.”* Of course the General was not tempted and with his wife present in Canada he was subsequently granted permanent residency. He was able to refuse all the blandishments offered by President Park’s regime.

### **So what was then happening in South Korea at this time?**

From **1971** it was the intention of the South Korean President Park Jung-Hee, that Taekwondo would become a national sport of Korea, and so in **1973** the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) was established and inaugurated in South Korea as the National and Worldwide body for the Korean National Martial Art of Taekwondo. Grand Masters Uhm Woon Kyu and Kim Yong Ho have performed major roles in the formation of WTF.

*(<http://rctkd.webs.com/historyofchungdokwan.htm>)*

As mentioned earlier the spelling of the word ‘Taekwondo’ as used by the WTF is different from the spelling ‘Taekwon-Do’ used by General Choi and the ITF. I will delve more into this later in Thesis.

### **The World Taekwondo Federation (WTF)**

It was in **1973** when South Korea presented to the world a new organisation known as the **World Taekwondo Federation (WTF)**. The martial art style and systems practised by the WTF, bore no resemblance whatsoever to the Taekwon-Do as named by General Choi. From all accounts the WTF had greater political and financial clout and was through this able to easily become established throughout the world.

The formation of the WTF/KKW (Kukkiwon) came out of a meeting of the heads of the eight (8) major Kwans from South Korea at that time. The WTF currently serves as the World governing body on the world sport Taekwondo competitions and related technical research and development. The KKW serves as the World Headquarters for Taekwondo and is responsible for all DAN (Black Belt Holders) examinations, certifications and international registrations.

The Korea Tae Soo Do Association (1961) and the Korea Taekwondo Association (1965) preceded the World Taekwondo Federation (1973) and (1972). Dr. Un Yong Kim is currently President of the World Taekwondo Federation in Seoul, South Korea.

### **The 1<sup>st</sup> International Taekwon-Do World Champs**

With the ITF gaining strength and even though there was a lot of Political pressure from the South Korean Government and WTF, General Choi, on the **4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of July 1974** held the **1<sup>st</sup> ITF World Champs in Montreal, Canada** which involved competitors from 23 countries.

### **What of ‘North Korea’ and the Martial Arts in this part of divided Korea?**

I guess the type and systems of Martial Arts prior to **1980** were similar to those practised throughout Korea during the Japanese Occupation. Also being in the North and closer to the

Chinese border there was, no doubt, greater influence of the Chinese martial art systems on the North Korean people.

It was not until **1980** when General Choi led an ITF delegation to North Korea that his Taekwon-Do system under the ITF was introduced to the North Koreans and they then became part of the ITF

### **The establishment of International Taekwon-Do in New Zealand.**

With only a small number of ITF Taekwon-Do Do Jangs operating in Wellington in the early 1970's we were given the honour and opportunity to undertake demonstrations for the South Korean Embassy at various International Trade Events. The WTF had not been established at this time so the Embassy had requested our ITF Do Jangs to put on Taekwon-Do Demonstrations for them.

It was through this link to the Embassy that I and other Instructors were soon invited to meet with a Korean Instructor who had arrived from South Korea. This Instructor happened to be Mr Lee Jung Nam, the person who had graded me to my first two Gup grades in Singapore in 1972. At this meeting with Mr Lee, I was offered a level of 4<sup>th</sup> Dan Black Belt if I changed allegiance from the ITF to his WTF. To do this would mean learning new techniques and patterns. I was not convinced this was the right thing to do so I refused his offer. With Lee also claiming his skills in Hap Ki Do he was able to get sponsored to stay in the country. It was from this point on that the WTF gained a foot hold and got established in New Zealand.

In Oct **1975** I was then introduced to a Korean ITF Instructor who was resident in Sydney, Australia, Mr Young-Ku Yun (6<sup>th</sup> Dan). Mr Yun was President of the Australian Taekwon-Do Academy and also had a strong association to General Choi's International Taekwon-Do Federation. It was the first time that myself and a number of other New Zealand Instructors got to train under a Korean Instructor who new and practised the original ITF Taekwon-Do of General Choi.

It was decided then to affiliate our clubs/do Jangs to the Australian Taekwon-Do Academy under Mr Yun. This was the beginning of a long association with Mr Yun, who would travel regularly to New Zealand, from his base in Sydney, to conduct seminars and promotional grading.

In **May 1976**, Mr Yun brought General Choi across to New Zealand from Australia to have an initial meeting with some of our instructors. (See Photo; left to right: Mr YK Yun, Mr Willie Lim, Mr Harry Hemana, General Choi, myself, Mr Padre Tairea and Mr Chan Seng Chee) This was a major milestone for me as it was the 1<sup>st</sup> time I had met the General. The meeting was held at his hotel in Auckland and it was here he also personally gave a couple of brief Taekwon-Do lessons in the hallway of his hotel.



General Choi returned to New Zealand again in **January 1978** and attended the 1<sup>st</sup> South Pacific ITF Tournament held in Lower Hutt, Wellington. Participating countries were New Zealand, Australia and Fiji. The General also conducted seminars for our Instructors and whilst meeting with him in Wellington he asked that I help to establish a New Zealand National Organisation

which could affiliate direct to the ITF. It was also during this visit that Mr Yun was promoted to 7<sup>th</sup> Dan, Master Instructor by General Choi. We remained part of Master Yun's South Pacific TKD Federation but this was the fore runner to the establishment of our own New Zealand National Organisation, ITFNZ, in 1981.

As mentioned earlier it was in 1980 that the General made an historic trip to North Korea with an International Taekwon-Do Demonstration team. This would be the first time General Choi's Taekwon-Do would be seen in and later developed in that country. The decision to establish Taekwon-Do in North Korea would later see dramatic changes in the International Taekwon-Do Federation and to cause many factions.

So at this point in time (in 1979) we have two major bodies controlling this Korean developed martial art. Two Martial Art systems that is completely different in techniques and methods. Both using a name which is similar, but different in spelling.

On one side you have the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) and General Choi's system that he developed and named **'Taekwon-Do'**. In this spelling the Do is separate but linked to the word Taekwon with a hyphen. The General's idea here is that the 'Do' is a very important part of the Art which covers its philosophy, moral teachings and the improving mental focus of the human being. The emphasis here not just purely on the physical.

On the other side you have the World Taekwondo Federation system (WTF) that came out of a merger of the remaining South Korean Kwans and being named **'Taekwondo'**. The name was announced by the then President of South Korea, Park Chung Hee, declaring this martial art the National Sport of South Korea. The 'do' in this regard is merged with 'Taekwon'. So this to me indicates a lesser influence of moral culture and philosophy but with an equal if not greater emphasis on the physical and sporting aspect.

I end my thesis at this point and plan to look at the period from 1980 onwards in a separate Thesis, with a more in depth study on the current state of affairs effecting ITF Taekwon-Do.

Master Evan Davidson  
VII Dan  
President ITFNZ

## A Timeline Summary - Reference guide & Index

Date/Time	Subject	Page no
Pre 1910	Korean History pre 1910	2, 3
1910	Japan annexed Korea	4
9 Nov 1918	General Choi Hong Hi was born	4
1910 to 1945	The Martial Art Systems being practised in Korea	5, 6, 7, 8
15 Aug 1945	Japanese surrender to Allied forces after WW II	5
25 Jun 1950	The Korean War begins	5
27 Jul 1953	The Korean War ends (Two separated countries - North & South Korea established)	5
1953	Unification of the Kwans	9



11 April 1955	'Taekwon-Do' and the naming board	9
Sept 1959	Korean Taekwon-Do Association Formed (KTA) President Gen Choi	10
1959	Taekwon-Do introduced to Vietnam during war time – Nam Tae Hi	8
1959	1 <sup>st</sup> Training manual on Taekwon-Do published in Korean language	10
Feb 1960	Gen Choi travels to USA	10
16 May 1961	South Korean President, Sygman Rhee overthrown in coup d'état.	11
1962-64	Gen Choi – South Korean Ambassador to Malaysia. Taekwon-Do then introduced to Malaysia and Singapore	11
1963	Gen Choi has Kim Bok Man and Woo Jae-Lim to assist him in Instructing of Taekwon-Do	11
Aug 1965	1 <sup>st</sup> Training manual in English published.	11
22 March 1966	International Taekwon-Do Federation formed (9 Countries)	12
1967-69	Power struggles to control Taekwon-Do	12
1968	1 <sup>st</sup> International Championships aborted.	13
Oct 1969	1 <sup>st</sup> Asian Championships under ITF held in Hong Kong	13
1970	1 <sup>st</sup> International Taekwon-Do club established in New Zealand	15
Aug 1971	Gen Choi prepares for self-exile from South Korea	13
3 Jan 1972	Gen Choi departs from South Korea to Toronto, Canada.	13
1973	South Korean President Park Jung Hee tries to encourage Gen Choi to return to South Korea.	13
1973	Establishment of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF)	14
4 July 1974	1 <sup>st</sup> International Taekwon-Do World Champs, Montreal, CANADA	14
Oct 1975	Introduced to Korean ITF Instructor Mr Y.K.Yun.	15
May 1976	Gen Choi 1 <sup>st</sup> visit to New Zealand to meet Instructors.	15
Jan 1978	Gen Choi returns to New Zealand for seminar and to attend 1 <sup>st</sup> South Pacific Taekwon-Do Tournament (Australia, New Zealand & Fiji)	15

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