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Traditional Taekwondo

Core Techniques,
History, and Philosophy

Doug Cook

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The author wishes to assure the reader that the use of the personal pronouns "he or "she" do not imply the exclusion of any person.

In an effort to avoid confusion, the author has chosen to conform to the western custom of placing sir names last rather than first which is routine in Asia. The only exception is General Choi, Hong Hi since he is universally recognized by this iteration.

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Foreword

Over the centuries, it has become a tradition in the martial arts for students to carry forth the teachings of their master instructors from generation to generation. Although much has changed, partially due to the advent of combat sport coupled with the modern school owner's pursuit of commercial success at any cost, this custom continues unabated in all classical disciplines. Therefore, it is with great pleasure that I observe one of my own students perpetuating this principle by faithfully transmitting traditional taekwondo technique both physically and academically with forethought, integrity, and vision. Clearly, Master Doug Cook, the author of this work, has chosen to take the road less traveled; a path that requires courage since it places high demands on the students who train under him.

More than ever, martial arts schools abound that have forfeited ritual practice in favor of classes that feature aerobic-oriented exercise along with a hodgepodge of technique borrowed from various cultures. Contrary to this approach, Master Cook and his school, the Chosun Taekwondo Academy, continues to provide a pure and authentic form of taekwondo within the bounds of a curriculum rich in self-defense, forms, philosophy, meditation, and internal energy, or *Ki*, development exercises that holistically stimulate the mind, body, and spirit. I am deeply gratified to see that he has chosen this course since it dovetails perfectly with my personal method of instruction thus satisfying the time-honored tradition of succession.

Aside from the attention given to the physical and spiritual components of traditional taekwondo, Doug Cook, following in my footsteps, contributes academically to the martial arts community at large through his command of the written word. His previously published book titled *Taekwondo: Ancient Wisdom for the Modern Warrior* has become a standard in schools and universities across the nation and around the world. In this, his second book, he juxtaposes the philosophical content of his first work against the historical and technical information contained here. In the pages that follow, the reader will discover a section concentrating on the history of Korea, the homeland of taekwondo, which will add color and texture to their training. Moreover, the author offers a vivid description of the organizations and personalities that played a major role in the evolution of taekwondo during its formative years; a subject few have tackled since accurate information is so scarce. *Poom-Se*, the formal exercises that represent the essence of taekwondo, meditation, and *Ki* development exercises, too, are given the much-deserved editorial space they deserve. Then, adding to the historical and metaphysical aspects of the martial arts, this exciting work also depicts many practical self-defense strategies that escalate in

complexity and subsequently will prove beneficial to the novice and advanced black-belt holder alike. Taken in total, the two volumes comprise a body of knowledge essential to a comprehensive understanding of traditional taekwondo. With this in mind, I wholeheartedly recommend this book to all taekwondo practitioners and to those practicing related disciplines who wish to elevate their knowledge of self-defense, philosophy, and the history and culture of the traditional Korean martial art of taekwondo.

Grandmaster Richard Chun
9th Dan Black Belt
President
United States Taekwondo Association

MEMBER:
THE UNITED STATES TAEKWONDO ASS'N.
THE WORLD TAEKWONDO FEDERATION



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Richard Chun Taekwondo Center, Inc.

Dear Sabum Doug Cook,

It is with great delight that I write this letter of recommendation to celebrate the publication of your latest work, Traditional Taekwondo—Core Techniques, History, and Philosophy, by YMAA Publication Center of Boston. In view of the success of your first book, I am certain that martial artists worldwide, regardless of style, will benefit greatly from your supreme effort.

Clearly, the teaching of taekwondo in a traditional manner is currently at a premium, yet in your writing, you support it with pride. This is a joy to see and a relief knowing that which I have devoted my life to will be carried forward with dignity by one of my senior students.

It is worth mentioning that my colleagues, high-ranking masters all, have taken notice of your accomplishments, often commenting to me that you have become a recognized authority on the history and philosophy of the Korean national martial art of taekwondo. Therefore, please accept this correspondence with my congratulations and the heart felt gratitude of the taekwondo community at large. On behalf of the United States Taekwondo Association, I wish you and your taekwondo center good fortune now and in the future.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Chun", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Grand Master Richard Chun
9th dan black belt
President
USTA

Preface

Defining Traditional Taekwondo

Taekwondo, literally translated, can be defined as “foot, hand, Way” or “the Way of smashing with hands and feet.” Such descriptive nomenclature understandably implies a curriculum rich in self-defense. Too often, however, this is simply not the case. Given the current popularity of sports competition in the martial arts, many techniques of defensive value have been stripped away or forfeited altogether in favor of those certain to score in the ring. While the thirst for Olympic gold has clearly played a significant role in propelling taekwondo into the forefront, it should be remembered that the native Korean martial art contains over 3200 distinct techniques. These include a multitude of blocks, kicks, and strikes, in addition to a variety of leg sweeps, joint locks, and throws, truly qualifying it as a complete form of self-defense.

Consequently, in an effort to preserve the formal nature and defensive infrastructure of taekwondo as originally intended by a portion of its founders, a number of training institutes or *dojangs* now promote what is referred to as *traditional taekwondo*; an alternative style emphasizing a core philosophy rich in basic technique, *poom-se*, and authentic defensive strategy with little or no emphasis on competition, thus divorcing it somewhat from its sports-oriented mate.

Nevertheless, this classification may be construed as somewhat of a misnomer since, as we shall see, the history or “tradition” of taekwondo, as it exists today, is relatively short with much of it being devoted to its promotion as a world sport. Like it or not, the answer to this paradox lays in the fact that taekwondo owes much of its pedigree to foreign influences, some of which are rooted in Funikoshi’s Shotokan karate-do, Ushiba’s aikido, Kano’s Kodokan judo, and to a lesser degree, Chinese gungfu. This is no accident given the geopolitical climate that existed in Korea during the turbulent years of the early to mid 1900s. In fact, to the experienced eye, many of the martial applications illustrated in this book, having been handed down over the decades if not centuries, bear a striking resemblance to those fashioned by the founders listed above. Subsequently, in its evolutionary stage, prior to its promotion as an Olympic sport, taekwondo contained a complete palette of defensive techniques. With this in mind, the notion

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Taekwondo: “Foot, Hand, Way” in Hangul.

of taekwondo having a “traditional” component based on strong basic skills, forms or *poom-se*, and self-defense, predating the creation of organizations promoting its sports-oriented component, materializes.

Although this work will focus mainly on the defensive tactics of traditional taekwondo and the training elements that support them, it should be understood that these alone do not satisfy the conditions necessary to formalize taekwondo as a traditional martial art. As stated above, the practice of forms, coupled with the fundamentals and the philosophical underpinnings that comprise them, lay at the core of any traditional martial discipline. In recognition of this fact, traditional taekwondo *poom-se* training represents the essence of the art and is a direct reflection of its unique character and heritage. While it is true that many of the forms practiced by the taekwondoist mirror those of rival Asian martial arts, it only goes to prove that in the past diverse martial disciplines from the region drew from a common well in an effort to construct practical, combat proven formal exercises. Despite the fact that these exercises by now have largely been Korean-ized, they embody universal defensive movements that date back to antiquity further supporting the traditional nature of taekwondo.

Moreover, a traditional martial art should embrace an overriding philosophy governed by a set or moral principles that limit its use to situations of grave necessity. In addition, this philosophical doctrine, while enhancing the character of the martial artist, should reflect the cultural values extant in the discipline’s nation of origin. In the case of traditional taekwondo, these ethical guidelines date back to the seventh century when warriors of the Hwarang, an elite corps of young nobles, sought guidance from the Buddhist monk Wonkwang Popsa before entering battle. This moral compass, as we shall see, continues to be followed to this day by the practitioner of traditional taekwondo.

A Proven Combat Art

Yet, according to Kane and Wilder, even further evidence is required for a martial art to be branded *traditional*. In their book, *The Way of Kata*, the authors state that, “traditional study of martial systems presumes the ability to perform techniques in actual combat. Sport and conditioning applications are more or less fringe benefits associated with such study.” Using this condition as a yardstick to further measure the traditional value of taekwondo, we must establish that a militaristic legacy exists using the available evidence at hand.

History demonstrates that for centuries Korean warriors have stood ready to defend their nation at a moments notice. Rarely, until today, have we in the west

experienced such necessity for vigilance. While much of this warfare involved the use of bows, arrows, swords and firearms, there have been many occasions where empty-hand self-defense tactics contributed to victory. In 1592, fighting monks, keepers of martial arts skills that had all but vanished during the pro-Confucian Yi Dynasty, were recruited in an effort to resist a massive Japanese force lead by Toyotomi Hideyoshi intent on using the Korean peninsula as a stepping stone to China. Later, in the years following the conclusion of World War II and the Japanese Occupation, government officials approached Won Kuk Lee, founder of the Chung Do Kwan, requesting that he enlist the help of his students in quelling the civil disobedience created by roving bands of desperate citizens.

In 1953, another milestone was planted solidifying taekwondo as a legitimate form of self-defense when General Choi, Hong Hi created the 29th Infantry Division at the request of General Sun Yub Baek, chief of staff of the Korean Army. Symbolized by an insignia depicting a fist over the Korean peninsula, the “fist” or Il Keu Division distinguished itself by marrying regulation drills with martial arts training, marking it as a truly unique entity within the Korean military.

But the great wheel of progress in the development of a unified Korean martial art with a complete defensive strategy did not stop there. In 1962 perhaps one of the most significant events in validating taekwondo as an effective combat art occurred. President Go Din Diem of South Vietnam requested that the Korean government send representatives of their native martial art to instruct the Vietnamese military in taekwondo.

This initial group was lead by Major Tae Hee Nam of the Oh Do Kwan. As the war escalated, however, the number of instructors ultimately grew to 647. In an article published shortly before his death, General Choi stated that “The strength of taekwondo training in Korean soldiers had a psychological effect on the Viet Cong.” In fact, this training became so effective that the Viet Cong directed their troops to retreat rather than confront the taekwondo-trained soldiers. Even today, the black-uniformed White Tigers, a group within the elite Korean Army Black Beret unit, practices a new form of empty-hand combat art known as *tuck kong moo sool*.

Moreover, the Korean Army is not the only beneficiary of taekwondo martial applications. U. S. Army troops stationed in Korea have traditionally been exposed to native martial arts. Even today, American armed forces of the Army’s 2nd Infantry Division have adopted taekwondo, in conjunction with jujutsu, as their primary form of martial arts practice. Nicknamed, the Warrior Division, 14,000 soldiers celebrate the sunrise each day with a series of Korean self-defense tactics. Using *kihops* as their battle cry, these modern day warriors are not interested in merely sparring for the sport of it, but seek to increase confidence, perhaps the single most important ingredient of survival

on the battlefield, through the development of traditional taekwondo self-defense skills. Additional goals of the program include improving physical fitness, cultivating disciplined teamwork through the practice of the classical forms, and gaining a better understanding of Korea's rich cultural heritage. Just as in any civilian *dojang*, military personnel drill in the kicks, strikes, blocks, throws, and sweeps that lie at the core of traditional taekwondo. Implemented in January 2001, Warrior Taekwondo, as it has come to be called, is a resounding success with plans to expand the program to include all U.S. forces in Korea.

Contrary to the historical evidence at hand, critics who support the perception that taekwondo has evolved into nothing more than a popular combat sport continue to debate the fundamental defensive value of the art. Further compounding this issue, it is becoming increasingly difficult to locate an instructor faithful to the principles unique to traditional taekwondo. This dilemma is made all the more poignant in an article published by the late writer and martial arts instructor Jane Hallender titled, *Is Taekwondo a Sport or a Self-defense System?* Acutely aware of the differences, Hallender warns, "There is more to taekwondo than just tournament competition. From kicks, to hand strikes, to throws, to joint locks, taekwondo possesses an array of defensive measures designed to thwart virtually any kind of attack. The most difficult part will not be learning the self-defense techniques, but finding a taekwondo instructor who still teaches them."

Preserving Tradition

In spite of this, practitioners true to the defensive nature of taekwondo do exist; it is simply a matter of seeking them out. One prime example of an instructor possessing these skills is martial arts pioneer Grandmaster Richard Chun, 9th Dan and president of the United States Taekwondo Association (USTA), an organization whose mission is to "promote excellence in an ancient and evolving art". Assigning



Photo by John Jordan III

Grandmaster Richard Chun (right)
with Master Doug Cook.



Master Samuel Mizrah (left) with Chuck Norris and Master Cook during a demonstration at Madison Square Garden, New York.



Master Doug Cook with Grandmaster Gyoo Hyun Lee (right).

great attention to self-defense tactics, forms, and basic skills, Grandmaster Chun, in conjunction with his senior instructors Samuel Mizrahi and Pablo Alejandro, teach students that taekwondo is not merely a sport, but a way of life, a form of protection, and a path to self-fulfillment.

However, the list of instructors who have immigrated to America with the express purpose of advancing the traditional martial art of taekwondo does not stop there. Outstanding teachers such as Grandmaster Jhoon Rhee, Byung Min Kim, Yeon Hee Park, Daeshik Kim, Sijak Henry Cho, and Seon Duk Son have also contributed greatly to the refinement of Korean defensive strategy. But, in order to sample and appreciate the true flavor of traditional taekwondo self-defense tactics, it is sometimes necessary to visit their country of origin.

In the summer of 1995, 1999, and again in 2004, my school, the Chosun Taekwondo Academy, had the honor of accompanying Grandmaster Richard Chun and a group of other USTA members on a training and cultural tour of Korea. Aside from appreciating the rich, native heritage of the Korean people, we were given an



Master Doug Cook with Grandmaster Seung Hyeon Nam (right).



Master Doug Cook with Grandmaster Sang Hak Lee.

opportunity to train with some of the most noted instructors in the world. One such professional, apart from Grandmasters Gyoo Hyun Lee, founder of the World Taekwondo Instructor Academy and Seung Hyeon Nam of Kyung Won University, was Grandmaster Sang Hak Lee who was responsible for training the Korean Army Ranger Corps and National Police Agency in self-defense, and was head of a select team of martial artists sent to Vietnam to demonstrate the practicality of taekwondo.

In his instructional methodology, Grandmaster Lee, a tall trim gentleman with a ruddy complexion, moved effortlessly through the various traditional martial applications he chose to gift us with. In demonstration, he allowed his opponent's aggressive behavior to betray him through the redirection of punches, kicks, and grabs, thus manifesting the true defensive philosophy of traditional taekwondo. He did not speak much, choosing instead to perform each technique with the spirit one comes to expect from an experienced, Korean master. By the end of the afternoon, somewhat bruised and overwhelmed, we were given over twenty self-defense tactics to take home to America. Some of these appear here along side those of his aforementioned counterparts who continue their practice in this country.

Aside from providing the practitioner with a brief glimpse into the historical tradition, theory and philosophy of traditional taekwondo, coupled with the defensive strategy it supports, it is my intention to share these skills in detail with the reader using the technical section of this book as a guide.

Finally, the practice of traditional taekwondo is a highly fulfilling experience. If approached with sincerity, the rewards are great, physically, mentally and spiritually. However, I respectfully hope that martial artists of all disciplines will benefit from this work.

The Formative Years of Taekwondo

THE CRUCIBLE OF CREATION / THE KWANS

The turbulent years that spanned the first half of the twentieth century found many Korean martial artists whose lives were in jeopardy by virtue of their art, emigrating to Japan or China where they were assigned work or worse, conscripted to serve the very military machine that was actively crushing their homeland. Here in these foreign lands, Korean masters were not only permitted to practice the martial arts forbidden by imperial rule back home, but to earn advancement and teaching credentials as well. Pivotal figures such as General Choi, Hong Hi, Won Kuk Lee and Hwang Kee were beneficiaries of this dubious yet practical historical aberration. Borrowing from a variety of provincial styles, these pioneers and others would later return to Korea then under a different sort of domination albeit more benign, to launch or create martial arts and enduring organizations of their own with a distinctly Korean flavor yet colored by cultural impressions and methods accumulated abroad.

Compiling an accurate history of this period, when taekwondo, was in its formative stages, is difficult at best given the erratic nature of its documentation. Major occurrences were seldom committed to paper and when they were, risked destruction at the hands of opposing forces. To this day, aside from articles appearing on the worldwide web, in academic journals and in magazines, history and tradition continues to be transmitted by word of mouth and martial actions that date back to antiquity. At the center of this chronological confusion is the creation of the various martial art schools that evolved during the chaotic 1940s and 1950s. These schools came to be known as the *kwans* and the story of their similarities, differences, founders and politics, is pivotal to the birth of traditional taekwondo. It is a story that few know in totality and even fewer have researched sufficiently to document accurately. Unfortunately, the scope of this book will not permit an in-depth exploration of this topic since its focus is heavily weighted towards defensive strategy rather than a comprehensive history. However, because of the significance of this tale, an attempt will be made in the future to seek out those familiar with this period and,

through their personal experiences, piece together a cohesive picture of those times in written form. For now, a perfunctory investigation will have to suffice.

Most sources concur that at least five and possibly six *kwans* were created prior to and shortly following the collapse of Japanese rule. These included the Chung Do Kwan, Moo Duk Kwan, Yun Moo Kwan, Song Moo Kwan, Chang Moo Kwan and Kuk Moo Kwan. Others followed shortly after.

Table of the Original Kwans

Kwan Name	Established	Founder
Chung Do Kwan	1944	Won Kuk Lee
Song Moo Kwan	1944	Byong Jik No
Moo Duk Kwan	1945	Hwang Kee
Yun Moo Kwan	1946	Sang Sup Chun
Chang Moo Kwan	1947	Byung In Yoon
Kuk Moo Kwan	1949	Suh Chong Kang

Since the term “taekwondo” had yet to be coined, the disciplines practiced during this period went under the monikers of *tae soo do* (kick, fist, Way), *tang soo do* (Way of the China hand), *kong soo do* (Way of the empty hand) and *kwonbop* (Way of the fist).

One of the first to establish a stable Korean training venue was Won Kuk Lee, born on April 13, 1907.

While at university, Lee began his formal training in Japan under Gichin Funakoshi, a student of Yasutsune Itosu whom we shall meet later in this book. There he claims to have studied the Korean martial arts forbidden by law back home. Lee bolstered his martial arts education by visiting various training centers in Okinawa and China during his travels abroad. This exposure resulted in his becoming a student of Shotokan karate-do.

After returning to Korea in 1944, Lee twice sought permission from the occupation government to teach his countrymen native martial arts. This was possible only because the Japanese had lifted the ban on defensive training in 1943. Following an initial refusal, Lee ultimately was given the nod to proceed and began teaching at the Yung Shin School in the Ok Chun Dong district. As we have seen, Seoul at this time was a hotbed of unrest. Gangs and political groups roamed the streets at will often resorting to the use of martial arts in the resolution of conflict. In response, the imperial forces, enjoying their final days in power, again clamped down on martial arts instruction in public buildings. A man not to be deterred, Won Kuk Lee went on to establish what was to become the preeminent martial arts academy of the time choos-

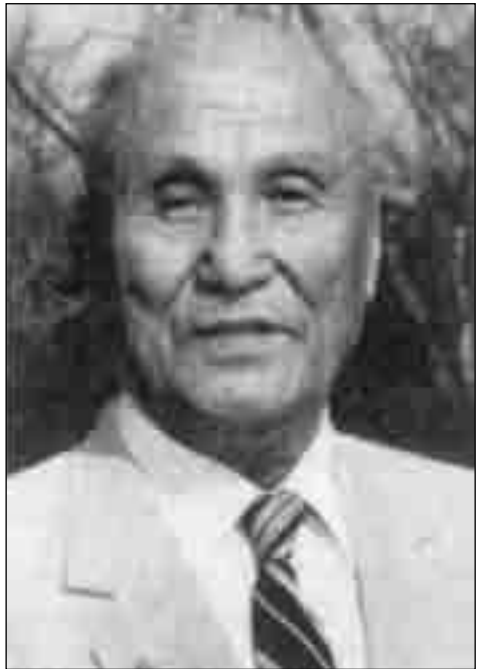
ing the name Chung Do Kwan, or the “Blue Wave Institute”.

Lee secured quarters for his training hall at Ya Go Sa Temple, but was later forced to relocate several times, eventually settling at Number 80 in the Kyun Ji Dong district of Seoul. Sung Duk Son eventually assumed the leading role following Lee’s retirement later followed by Woon Kyu Uhm.

Likewise, Hwang Kee, the originator of *soo bahk do moo duk kwan*, born on November 9, 1914, was the recipient of a similar amalgamation of styles.

In 1921 at age seven, Kee became enthralled with the martial arts when he witnessed an attack on a lone man by a group of ruffians. Relying on a series of blocks and kicks, the outnumbered defender eventually defeated his aggressors. This display of fighting skill so impressed the future grandmaster that he immediately dedicated himself to a diligent study of the martial arts. Despite the existing Japanese prohibition on martial arts training, Kee practiced in secret mastering the native defensive styles of *taekkyon* and *subak*, the art of punching, kicking, and butting, yet another Korean combat discipline with roots deep in antiquity. In 1936, the discovery of his clandestine training by the occupying forces earned him jail time and a death sentence. Having escaped his detractors, Kee packed what belongings he had and went on to study Chinese martial arts while employed as a railroad worker in Manchuria. Under the watchful eye of Master Yang Kuk Jin, Kee gained instruction in *she bop* (postures), *bo bop* (steps), *ryun bop* (conditioning), and *hyung* (forms).

On November 9, 1945, after returning to Seoul, he established the Moo Duk Kwan or the “Institute of Martial Virtue.”



Grandmaster Won Kuk Lee,
founder of the Chung Do Kwan.



Chung Do Kwan emblem.

CHAPTER 7

Physical Conditioning for Martial Arts

Prior to beginning any intense physical activity, particularly martial arts, it is wise to prepare the body both externally and internally for the challenges that lay ahead. External exercises condition the striking and blocking surfaces of the body including the hands, forearms, legs and feet. Conversely, internal preparation entails warming the body's core through aerobic activity while enriching the muscles, tendons, and ligaments with a fresh supply of blood to reduce the likelihood of injury. Once this is accomplished, the practitioner can then safely advance to exercises that promote strength and flexibility, a much-needed element for meaningful taekwondo practice.

Whereas internal preparation is a constant prelude to every training session, external conditioning requires progressive practice over long periods of time in order to prove effective. One cannot expect to receive a blow of any magnitude with equanimity, or break a solid object with the hands or feet in an effort to develop focus and indomitable will, without first performing a regimen of exercises aimed at conditioning strategic areas of the body. Often various types of training equipment are employed to accomplish this goal. One such device is the *makiwara* (Figure 7-1). Originally a straw-padded striking post, the *makiwara* found in most *dojangs* today consists of a piece of canvas-covered foam mounted on a strip of wood. It is primarily used to develop the fists and edges of the hand. Assuming an appropriate stance, the practitioner strikes the *makiwara* repeatedly, conditioning the intended point of the body in the process. Any number of techniques can be practiced in this manner



Figure 7-1



Figure 7-2



Figure 7-3



Figure 7-4



Figure 7-5

including the fore fist (Figure 7-2), knife hand (Figure 7-3), ridge hand (Figure 7-4), and back fist (Figure 7-5).

CONDITIONING DRILLS

In an effort to improve kicking techniques, in addition to conditioning the striking surface of the foot, heavy bags, focus pads, and kicking shields are frequently used. The kicking shield is a useful tool in developing a strong side kick (Figure 7-6), round kick (Figure 7-7), or back kick (Figure 7-8). Focus pads are relied upon when the martial artist chooses to concentrate on striking at a



Figure 7-6



Figure 7-7



Figure 7-8



Figure 7-9



Figure 7-10

single point in space. Training mitts held by a partner will prove effective in practicing any of the aforementioned hand techniques as well as the jab/reverse punch combination (Figures 7-9 and 7-10). Similarly, kicking paddles provide a target for many of the kicks mentioned above as well as jumping and spinning kicks (Figures 7-11 and 7-12).

Conditioning the forearm to accept a sudden strike is a more difficult task and, therefore, requires some imagination when creating drills that harden this portion of the body. A partner drill that has proven effective in not only conditioning the forearm, but in enhancing focus and stamina, has two students facing one another. Student A assumes an appropriate stance in conjunction with a desired blocking technique. Student B then steps into the same stance and executes the same block only mirror image (Figure 7-13). Student A then steps forward initiating the block as student B steps back doing the same (Figure 7-14). This motion is continued for the length of the training hall. Once the students reach the opposite end of the room, their roles are reversed with student B stepping forward while A steps back. This drill can be repeated with any number of forearm blocking techniques. An inside to outside middle block (*bakat momtong makki*) in back stance (*dwi koobi*) is illustrated here for demonstration purposes. If training space is at a premium, static drills exist



Figure 7-11



Figure 7-12



Figure 7-13



Figure 7-14

Training Methods in Traditional Taekwondo

Clearly, if practiced in a traditional manner, taekwondo has proven to be an extremely effective means of self-defense. However, skills of this sort are not developed overnight. For the most part, years of diligent training are required to condition the body, fortify the spirit, and enrich the mind in preparation for precise, focused technique. How, then, does the sincere practitioner reach this point of proficiency?

Realistic self-defense training in anticipation of an unprovoked attack is difficult at best. One cannot accurately predict the terrain, time of day, or weapon of choice whether it be knife, firearm, or something as common as a trash can lid, unique to a given altercation. Compound this with the fact that one's temperament is rarely consistent from day to day, and the true nature of this dilemma begins to emerge. Still, in the eyes of the martial artist, it is better to be prepared through a regimen of conscientious practice, than to fall victim to the misdirected vengeance of a bellicose aggressor. Yet, if one were to respond to a mock attack in the training environment with maximum effort and power, it is likely that one's daily routine would often be interrupted due to serious injury. With this in mind, the founders of taekwondo provided several ritualistic methods of drilling between pairs of students that allows one participant to assume the role of the aggressor while the other counters with an appropriate defense and counterattack. Not only do these scenarios address the physical requirements of self-defense practice, but bundle in the philosophical considerations as well.

The first component of the taekwondo defensive syllabus that we shall examine is traditionally referred to as *il su sik*, or one-step sparring. A modern label for the same body of techniques, adopted by practitioners of WTF-style taekwondo, is *han bon kyorugi*. Since my training is rooted in traditional taekwondo, I will use the former phrase throughout this work. One-step sparring strategy, at least for the most part, prepares the student to defend against the lunge punch, perhaps the most prevalent offensive tool common to nearly all confrontations. This by no means excludes

defense against other related instruments of attack such as the front kick or round kick. In addition to one-step sparring, the student often practices *sam su sik* or three-step sparring, with similar results.

Likewise, another segment of the traditional core curriculum that we will study focuses on *ho sin sool* or self-defense techniques. While *il su sik* provides solutions against strikes, *ho sin sool*, conversely, is concerned with defending against various grabs including, but not exclusive to, headlocks, bear hugs, the full nelson, cross hand grabs, shoulder grabs, and same side grabs. Weapon defense, too, plays an important role in *ho sin sool* practice.

Although this volume focuses mainly on *il su sik* and *ho sin sool* techniques, still another facet that nurtures the defensive capabilities of the taekwondoist is that of *prearranged* and *free sparring*. It should be pointed out that in years past, the bulk of martial arts training was handed down through the practice of the classical forms or *poom-se* as described earlier. Sport sparring was rare or virtually non-existent; if the martial artist fought at all it was for self-preservation. Free sparring today, however, coupled with the use of innovative safety equipment, teaches the student how to turn a threatening situation to his advantage through the use of superior strategy and a strong will. Naturally, in today's sport-oriented society, it is often used as a means of competition and entertainment.

Were it not for the ritualized practice of *il su sik*, *ho sin sool*, prearranged, and free sparring, self-defense practice holds the potential of being a chaotic and painful pursuit. Most martial artists due to the very nature of their art learn to accept a modicum of discomfort in the course of their training. This discomfort does not mean that they take pleasure from it nor does it exempt them from injury. As we shall see in greater detail, the sincere practitioner of traditional taekwondo by using the above training strategies will develop an understanding of safety, courtesy, knowledge of distancing, power, body mechanics, breath control, use of *Ki*, presence of mind, and a deep appreciation for the true essence of martial arts doctrine.

IL SU SIK: ONE-STEP SPARRING

The diligent performance of *il su sik* serves a variety of purposes. Primarily, it permits the student of taekwondo to practice predetermined defensive tactics against an opponent confident that there is little danger of injury. This last point assumes both parties are adroit in the basic technique of striking, blocking, sweeping, and falling correctly. Subsequently, since there is seldom any hard contact made, practitioners of all ages and gender can benefit from this type of training. The term “one-step sparring” is derived from the fact that the aggressor advances one step forward while



Figure 8-1



Figure 8-2

attacking prior to the defender initiating an appropriate defense. The drill consists of two students facing one another at a minimum distance of three feet, with a maximum distance not to exceed the height of the tallest participant. The students are then instructed to assume the ready stance (*joombi*) (Figure 8-1), followed by attention stance (*cha riot*) (Figure 8-2), and then, bow (*kyungye*) (Figure 8-3).



Figure 8-3



Figure 8-4



Figure 8-5

At this point, both will return to the ready stance (Figure 8-4), and the instructor will introduce the drill by announcing “*il su sik!*” The students will respond to this command by replying “*il su sik, Sir!*” After confirming proper distancing, one of the pair, being assigned the task of attacker, will step back with the right leg into a front stance (*ap koobi*) and signify his intent to strike by shouting “*kihop*” while simultaneously executing a left low block (*abre makkki*) (Figure 8-5). The defender will then yell “*kihop*” in return signaling his preparedness to defend. The aggressor, advancing one step forward, shouts “*kihop*” once again, and executes a predetermined strike, in this case a middle punch (*momtang juluki*) (Figure 8-6). Consequently, the defending student will mount a combination defensive/offensive technique commensurate with their level of proficiency (Figure 8-7).

One-step sparring can be thought of as bridging the gap between the dynamic self-defense practice offered by *poom-se* and the more realistic spontaneity of free sparring. Practiced slowly at first and with purpose, it is a proven method of overcoming the “startle-flinch” reaction. This is a response, founded in self-preservation, whereby the individual is overcome with surprise by an incoming attack and thus unable to defend effectively, a truly dangerous situation for the experienced martial artist. Furthermore, the ritualistic self-defense drill of *il su sik*, while artificial in



Figure 8-6



Figure 8-7

nature, is steeped in tradition and safety. Not exclusive to taekwondo, the value of *il su sik* practice is evident since it is practiced throughout the martial arts community in the related disciplines of Korean, Okinawan, and Japanese descent.

SAM SU SIK: THREE-STEP SPARRING

The parameters that apply to *il su sik* practice relate equally to *sam su sik* or three-step sparring drills. Known in modern nomenclature a *sam bon kyorugi*, the main difference here is that rather than advancing a single step forward with a pre-arranged offensive technique, the attacker advances three steps forward with an offending strike. Three-step sparring provides the beginner with an additional few seconds to consider his counterattack. Likewise, the advanced martial artist can benefit from *sam su sik* practice by having the attacker initiate three different offending techniques. The initial four *sam su sik* techniques depicted in this book revolve around defense against the high lunge punch with the final four centering on defense against the middle lunge punch. After becoming familiar with the rhythm of *sam su sik* practice, the taekwondoist can begin to improvise defensive strategies against a variety of techniques.

CHAPTER 9

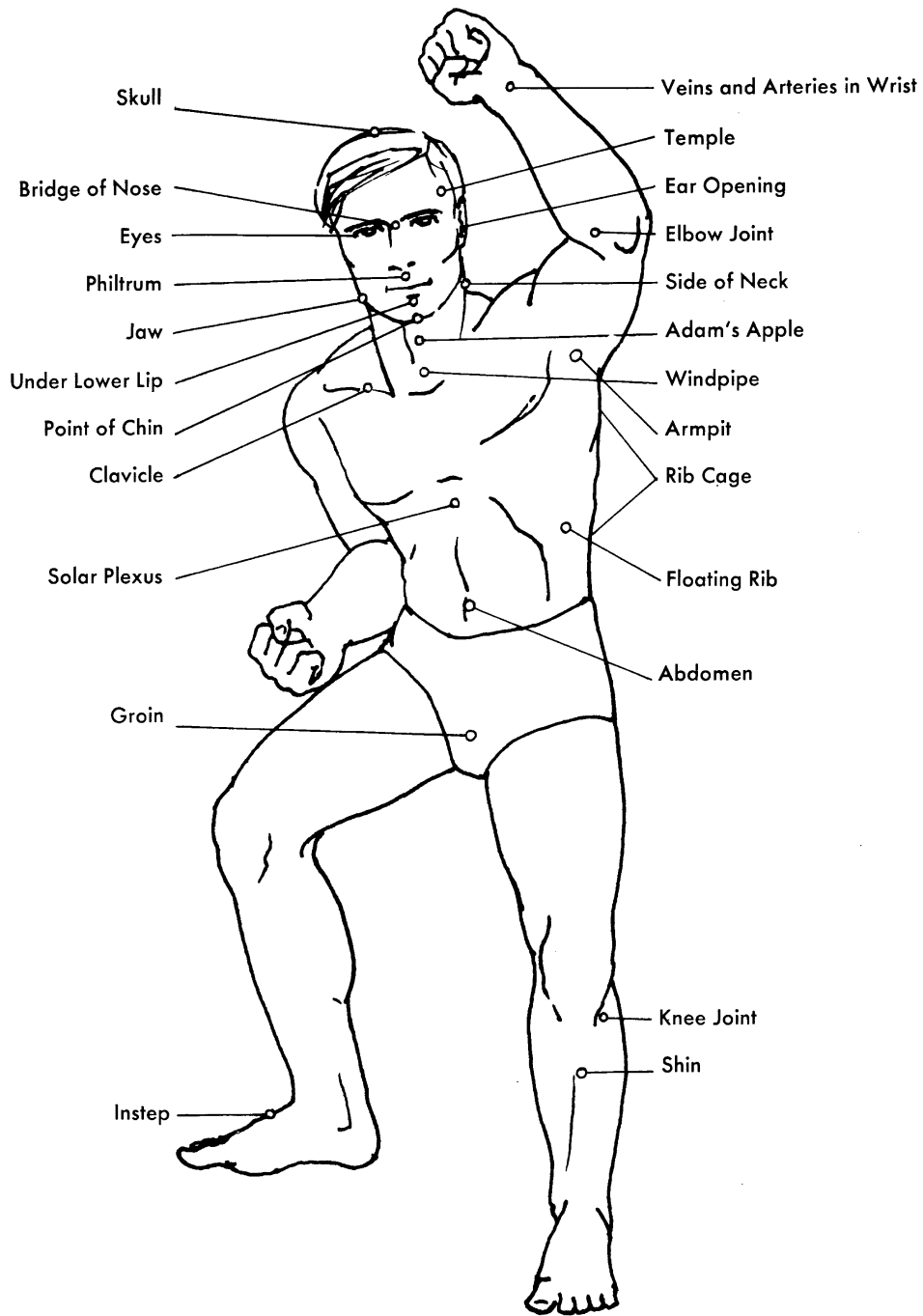
Il Su Sik Practice

The defensive tactics that follow, progress from relatively simple combinations of techniques, to strategies that require a pronounced level of proficiency. As always, it is wise to begin slowly and master each motion before moving on to the next. Moreover, in attempting to perform these highly effective and elegant self-defense sequences, one must remember to proceed with great caution as well as purpose. Once mastered, however, the martial artist will find them extremely useful as additional tools in their arsenal of traditional taekwondo skills.

Emphasis should be placed on several key elements during the practice of *il su sik* and *sam su sik*.*

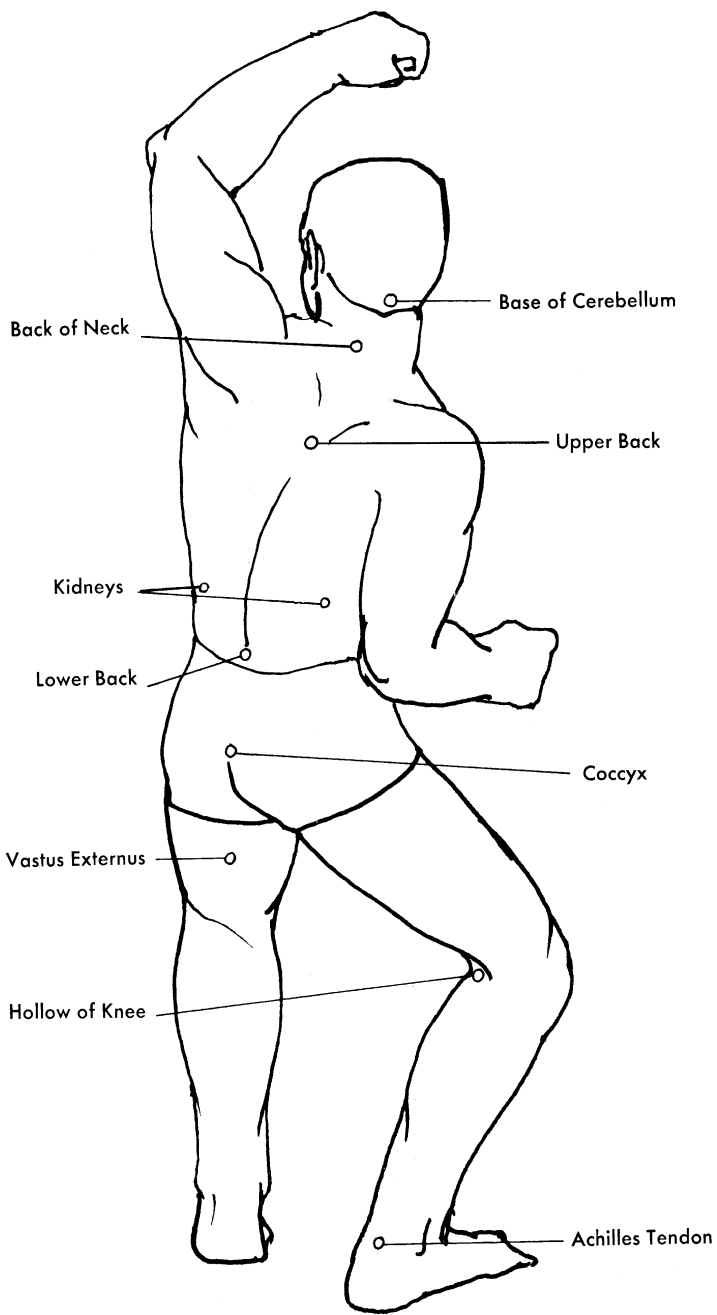
- Always use caution during practice.
- Practice slow and deliberately in the beginning.
- Approach the application of these techniques with utmost seriousness as though you were truly being attacked.
- These techniques must become ingrained if they are to be effective.
- Always bow at the beginning of self-defense training to display respect and courtesy.
- *Kihop* vigorously at the appointed times to demonstrate intent and to motivate your training partner.
- Check your distance before commencing in an effort to make your practice more effective and meaningful.
- Maintain proper stances throughout the sequence.
- Concentrate and maintain focus.
- Practice both the left and right sides of the body.
- Blocks should remain within the body margin.
- Commit the initial block before executing an appropriate counterattack.
- Students are encouraged to experiment and create defensive sequences of their own within the bounds of traditional taekwondo technique.
- One- and three-step sparring practice is not limited to self-defense against punches, but can also include counterattacks against kicking techniques.

*The practice drills for *sam su sik* begin in Chapter 10



Vital Points (front).

From Chun, Richard. *Taekwondo: A Korean Martial Art*.
New York, Harper & Row, 1976.



Vital Points (rear).

From Chun, Richard. *Taekwondo: A Korean Martial Art*
New York, Harper & Row, 1976.

IL SU SIK DRILLS—IL SU SIK 1



a. Joombi position.



b. Attacker slides right foot back assuming a left front stance while performing a left low block.



c. Attacker advances executing middle lunge punch in front stance.



d. Defender steps 45 degrees with right foot into horse stance while simultaneously performing a left hand in/out middle block.



e. Immediately execute a right hand high punch to the face.



f. Finish with a left hand middle punch to the solar plexus.

IL SU SIK 2



a. Joombi position.



b. Attacker slides right foot back assuming a left front stance while performing a left low block.



c. Attacker advances executing middle lunge punch in front stance.



d. Defender steps back with left leg into right back stance while executing right hand in/out middle block.

About the Author

Master Doug Cook holds a fourth degree black belt in the Korean martial art of taekwondo and is certified in rank by the United States Taekwondo Association, and the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF). After training three times in Korea, he went on to become a six-time gold medalist in the New York State Championships, the USTA Taekwondo Invitational Championship, and the New York State Governor's Cup competitions. He holds a D3 status as a U.S. Referee and has received high honors from Korea in the form of a "Letter of Appreciation" signed by World Taekwondo Federation President, Dr. Un Yong Kim, and presented by Grandmaster



Richard Chun. In 2003, Master Cook was awarded the Medal of Special Recognition from the *Moo Duk Kwan*. In 2004, during a training camp in Korea, Master Cook received a Special Citation from the Korean government for forging a stronger relationship between the two countries through the martial arts. A six-page interview with Master Cook appeared in the May 2005 issue of Taekwondo Times magazine discussing taekwondo philosophy and his views on the role the martial arts will play in the twenty-first century.

Master Cook and his students are credited with creation of the Chosun Women's Self-Defense Course—an exciting and effective workshop geared towards women of all ages, generally offered to corporate and civic groups as a community service. Likewise, in answer to a request for training from the U.S. Army National Guard / 42nd Division, Mr. Cook developed the Chosun Military Self-Defense Course. In 2002, Master Cook was called upon to demonstrate the art of taekwondo as part of a three-man team at the annual Oriental World of Self-Defense held in New York's famed Madison Square Garden. There, he and his colleagues were cheered on by martial arts legend, Chuck Norris.

Master Cook is a traditionalist and places great emphasis on the underlying philosophical principles surrounding taekwondo. He demonstrates this belief by infusing meditation, *Ki* development exercises, strong basic skills, and attention to the classic forms, or *poom-se*, in his instructional methodology. Aside from continuing his martial arts education in New York City under the tutelage of world-renowned, ninth degree black belt Grandmaster Richard Chun, Master Cook owns

and operates the Chosun Taekwondo Academy located in Warwick, New York – a school specializing in traditional taekwondo instruction and *Ki* development.

Master Cook currently shares his knowledge of taekwondo through a series of articles he has written for Taekwondo Times, Black Belt, The United States Taekwondo Journal, and other martial arts magazines. Master Cook is author of the best-selling book, *Taekwondo: Ancient Wisdom for the Modern Warrior*, published by YMAA of Boston.

Master Doug Cook can be reached through the Chosun Taekwondo Academy web site at: www.chosuntkd.com or at chosuntkd@yahoo.com. Training seminars can be arranged by contacting him at this email address.

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The principles and techniques illustrated in this book—having been handed down over the decades, if not centuries—emphasize a core philosophy rich in defensive strategy.

Taekwondo, literally translated, can be defined as “foot, hand way” or “the way of smashing with hands and feet.” Such descriptive nomenclature understandably implies a curriculum rich in self-defense. Too often, however, this is simply not the case. Given the current popularity of sport competition in the martial arts, many techniques of defensive value have been stripped away or forfeited altogether in favor of those certain to score in the ring. While the thirst for Olympic gold has clearly played a significant role in propelling Taekwondo into the forefront, it should be remembered that this native Korean martial art contains over 3200 distinct self-defense techniques.

This book describes in detail, the history and evolution of Taekwondo from its ancient roots to modern-day applications. Also included are exercises in “Ki”, or internal energy development, meditation practice, and practical self-defense strategies. This work focuses on the traditional aspects of Taekwondo rather than on its sportive component.



Doug Cook holds a fourth-degree black belt in Taekwondo, and is certified as an instructor by the US Taekwondo Association and World Taekwondo Federation. He is a contributing columnist for *Taekwondo Times*, and editor of the *United States Taekwondo Association Journal*. His earlier book *Taekwondo—Ancient Wisdom for the Modern Warrior* has become recommended reading in Taekwondo Schools worldwide. Doug resides in Warwick, New York.



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