

A Study of the Characters and History of 7th Century Korea Honoured in ITF Taekwon-do Patterns



5th Degree Black Belt Grading Thesis

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Introduction

The ITF Taekwon-do patterns (Tuls) were developed by General Choi Hong Hi (hereafter, General Choi) with his pioneering colleagues and students, as a physical and mental means of practising self-defence. It was intended that, when practising a pattern, students should learn the meaning and purpose of each movement, aim to perfect each technique and perform each movement with a self-defence mindset. The patterns then effectively become drill movements of offensive and defensive techniques, designed to train the student's body to move and react in an effective way.

When developing the patterns, General Choi wanted to establish Taekwon-do as a uniquely Korean martial art, to distinguish it from Karate and the Japanese arts, from which it was developed. He therefore named the patterns after heroic and patriotic figures from Korea's history, as well as some of the key events in his nation's development. General Choi also wanted the Taekwon-do patterns to reflect his own life's work and identity. He stated: "*Here I leave Taekwon-do for mankind, as a trace of man in the 20th century. The 24 patterns represent 24 hours, one day, or all of my life*".

Whilst studying the patterns that are learned at 4th degree black belt (i.e. Yon-gae, Ul-ji and Moon-moo Tuls), I found it interesting that they all honour figures from the 7th century A.D. This was a key period in the pre-modern history of Korea, during which the three kingdoms which had previously occupied the Korean peninsula (Koguryo, Baekje and Silla) were unified into a single nation for the first time. Kaya was another, small (and much less well known) territory that was eventually absorbed into Silla.

Events in China were also of great importance to Korea during the 7th century. The Sui Dynasty ruled China from 589 until about 618. A few Chinese factions then fought for power over the next 10 years, but by 628 the Tang Dynasty had established rule over all of China, under Emperor Taizong. The Sui and Tang Dynasties both made repeated attempts to conquer the Korean peninsula. In addition, the three Korean kingdoms frequently fought against each other over territory within the peninsula.

The 4th degree patterns are not unique in honouring figures from the 7th century. Four other patterns from the syllabus of 24 also relate to 7th century history; Won-hyo, Hwa-rang, Ge-baek and Yoo-sin. Nonetheless, there appears to be a concentration on that period for the 4th degree black belt. It is, of course, possible that this apparent concentration is a coincidence, but I wonder if, perhaps, General Choi saw some correlation

between a black belt's development at 4th degree and the development of Korea as a nation during the 7th century.

Attempting to guess General Choi's mind is, unfortunately, more than I can hope to achieve in this thesis. Instead, I will look at the each of figures honoured by the 4th degree patterns in turn, before (a little more briefly) examining the 7th century figures and events honoured by the other patterns referred to above. In the concluding chapter, I will summarise and comment on how these 7th century events and figures related to and influenced each other. I will also highlight the lasting influence they have had (and still have) on modern culture, politics and of course, Taekwon-do.

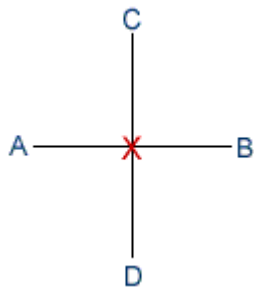
Yon-Gae

Encyclopedia Definition

Number of Moves: 49

Ready Posture: Warrior Ready Stance 'A'

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



Yon-Gae Somoon

Additional Information

Yon-Gae is the 19th pattern in the syllabus and it was developed in Korea around 1968, by General Choi and Master Cho Sang-Min (probably also aided by other pioneering instructors).

Yon-Gae Somoon (hereafter, Yon-Gae) was born in 603 A.D.; he was the first son of Yon Tae-Jo, the prime minister of Koguryo. Yon-Gae started his own military career at a young age and was promoted quickly through the ranks. His father died when Yon-Gae was about 13, when the court of King Yeong-Yang split into two factions. This led, in 618, to the King's replacement by King Yeong-Nyu. Around this time, the Tang Dynasty also succeeded the Sui Dynasty in China.

Yon-Gae became governor of the western province of Koguryo and over the following years, he gained great power and influence. In 631, the Tang Dynasty sent a small invasion force into Koguryo and in response, Yon-Gae started the construction of a great wall along the Chinese border, known as the Cheoli Jangseong. This was not only a traditional 'wall', but it housed military garrisons about every 500 yards along its length.

The Cheoli Jangseong was completed in 647, at which time the Koguryo forces were battling against Silla in the south (against General Kim Yoo-Sin), as well as facing the Tang threat in the north.

Yon-Gae's position as such a powerful military leader made King Yeong-Nyu nervous, so the King plotted to kill Yon-Gae. However, in 642 (having recently become the governor of Koguryo's eastern province as well as the west), news of the plot against him was leaked to Yon-Gae. He therefore invited 100 opposing court officials to a banquet to celebrate his new position, but had them all ambushed and killed as they travelled to the celebration. Yon-Gae then attacked the palace with his troops and beheaded the king.

Yon-Gae placed a nephew of King Yeong-Nyu on the throne, who became King Bo-Jang. However, Yon-Gae was now supreme military commander of the Koguryo forces and effectively, had full control of the nation.

Also in 642, Kim Chun-Chu, an ambassador from Silla arrived in Koguryo, seeking military aid against Baekje. However, King Bo-Jang (or, more likely, Yon-Gae) saw him as a treat and imprisoned him. Kim Chun-Chu was a blood brother of the Silla general, Kim Yoo-Sin and when Kim Yoo-Sin heard of his imprisonment, he sent a Hwa-rang army to rescue Kim

Chun-Chu. However, a scout told Yon-Gae of the approaching army and Kim Chun-Chu was released before any blood was shed.

Over the next twenty years, Yon-Gae fought and used diplomatic measures, (including the promotion of Taoism as an attempt to pacify the Chinese) to keep Koguryo safe. Tang and Silla invaded Koguryo four times between 645 and 661, but they were unsuccessful on each occasion.

The 645 Tang invasion of Koguryo was led by Emperor Taizong, who sent 170,000 troops towards the Koguryo fortresses of Lyodong and Ansi. The Tang forces captured Lyodong, but the fortress commander at Ansi Sung held off the Tang army while Yon-Gae intercepted another, elite Tang force that was heading for Pyong-yang. Yon-Gae then also moved towards Ansi Sung and forced the Tang forces to retreat.

In 649, Emperor Taizong was succeeded by his son, Emperor Gaozong, who in 661 sent another invading force of 350,000 troops against Koguryo, followed by another attack in 662. However, these forces were also defeated and repelled.

Koguryo survived for another 8 years, against attacks from both Tang and Silla. However, Yon-Gae died in 666, effectively leaving Koguryo leaderless and a power struggle ensued between his three sons. Koguryo was eventually defeated in 668, by the allied forces of Tang and Silla. Baekje also fell that year, unifying the Korean peninsula for the first time, under the kingdom of Silla.

It seems that the pattern meaning for Yon-Gae quoted in the Taekwon-do Encyclopedia is not quite historically accurate. Yon-Gae certainly won an important victory at Ansi Sung, but historical sources suggest that it was not in 649 and the force of over 300,000 troops was defeated later and elsewhere.

Yon-Gae (the man) remains a figure who divides opinion among historians, with some describing him as a power-crazed, (king-killing) tyrant and others as a patriotic hero.

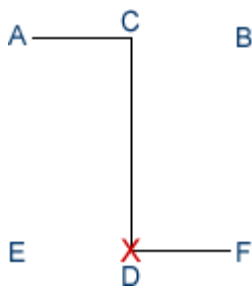
Ul-Ji

Encyclopedia Definition

Number of Moves: 42

Ready Posture: Parallel Stance with an X-back hand

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



Ul-Ji Moon Dok

Additional Information

Ul-Ji is the 20th pattern in the syllabus. It was developed in Korea around 1957, by General Choi and Master Han Cha Kyo. It was the 3rd pattern to be developed for Taekwon-do (after Hwa-Rang and Choong-Moo).

Ul-Ji Moon Dok (hereafter, Ul-Ji) was born in the mid-6th century in Koguryo, near Pyong-yang. Ul-Ji was well educated and rose to become the prime minister of Koguryo. Tensions between Koguryo and the Chinese Sui Dynasty grew during the latter part of the 6th century, until the first Sui invasion of Koguryo, in 598, which was led by Emperor Wen's son, Yang Liang and Admiral Zhou. Yang Liang took 300,000 troops into Koguryo, but poor weather and conditions hampered their progress. They were also continually attacked by Koguryo troops. They then combined forces with Admiral Zhou's navy, but suffered another defeat, after which they had lost over 90% of their total invading force.

Emperor Wen died in 604 and was succeeded by Emperor Yang. Emperor Yang built a great canal to connect the north and south of China and he mustered a huge army. In 612, he invaded Koguryo with a force estimated to be over 1,100,000 men.

King Yeong-Yang of Koguryo ordered all of their forces to withdraw behind the Liao river. Ul-Ji was commissioned as a Field Marshal and he adopted a strategy of deception, including repeated attacks, followed by feigned retreats. He also used a tactic known as Chongya, where the land was cleared of all food, or anything that would be of use to the invading forces.

After five months, the Sui had failed to conquer a single Koguryo fortress, so Emperor Yang decided to change his tactics, launching a huge attack against Pyong-yang from land and sea. The naval forces arrived first, but Ul-Ji ambushed them in the city, allowing them small victory before attacking them and forcing the Sui navy to retreat to their ships.

As the huge Sui land army approached Pyong-yang, Ul-Ji was sent to spy on the Sui troops by King Yeong-Yang. Ul-Ji visited the Sui camp under the pretence of negotiating a peace treaty, but whilst there, he noted that the Sui were very short of provisions. He then pursued a policy of gradual retreat, drawing the Sui forces deep into Koguryo territory, from where he launched numerous, guerrilla-style attacks against the Sui, dwindling their force.

By the time the Sui army was close to Pyong-yang, they were tired, hungry and demoralised. When they reached the Cheongcheon river, the water

level was very low, so the troops started to cross. However, Ul-Ji had built a dam across the river before the Sui troops arrived there, which he then opened, drowning many thousands of Sui soldiers as the flood water engulfed them. Ul-Ji's cavalry then attacked the survivors at the Battle of Salsu. Of the 350,000 Sui troops sent to Pyong-yang, it is thought that only 2,700 survived.

Emperor Yang tried again to invade Koguryo in 613 and 614, but was unsuccessful. King Yeong-Yang pressed for peace after this and Emperor Yang eventually agreed. However, the campaigns against Koguryo had left the Sui Dynasty severely weakened, so they faced increasing rebellions in China. Emperor Yang was assassinated in 618, ending the Sui Dynasty. Ul-Ji passed away soon after the fall of the Sui Dynasty, although the exact date of his death is unknown.

In the pattern Ul-Ji, the ready posture (X-back hand), the first movement (a backward-stepping, attacking movement) and movement numbers 33 and 34 of the pattern (a sliding, L-stance, reverse punch, followed by a double backward-stepping and jumping guarding block), all symbolise the hit-and-run guerrilla tactics employed Field Marshal Ul-Ji. There is also an historical inaccuracy in the Taekwon-do Encyclopedia pattern definition, because it states that Ul-Ji fought against Tang invaders, when it was, in fact, a Sui invasion force that he repelled. The Tang Dynasty was not established until 628. Finally, whilst the 42 movements reportedly represent General Choi's age when he designed the pattern, it is thought that he was only 38 or 39 when the pattern was designed, although he would have been 42 when the pattern was first published in print, in General Choi's first book on Taekwon-do, dated 1959.

Ul-Ji remains a national hero of Korea. Shrines were built in his honour in the early 10th century (Goryeo Dynasty) and again in 1680 (Joseon Dynasty). A biography of Ul-Ji was written during the 20th century occupation of Korea by Japan, as a great example of Korea's tradition of resisting oppression. In the modern South Korean army, the 'Field Marshal Lord Ul-Ji's Order of Military Merit' is the second highest honour that a soldier can earn. The South Korean navy also has a destroyer named 'ROKS Ulchi Mundok' and there is a famous statue of Ul-Ji astride his horse in North Korea.

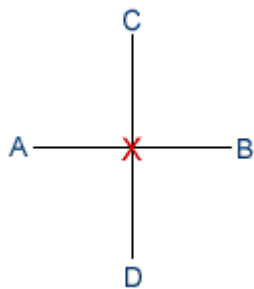
Moon-Moo

Encyclopedia Definition

Number of Moves: 61

Ready Posture: Parallel Ready Stance

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



King Moon-Moo

Additional Information

Moon-Moo is the 21st pattern in the syllabus. It was developed in Korea around 1968 by General Choi and Master Cho Sang Min (aided by other pioneering instructors).

Moon-Moo was born in 626, as Prince Kim Beom-Min, the son of King Muyeol and Queen Mun-Myeong. His mother was the sister of General Kim Yoo-Sin.

Moon-Moo's father was a personal friend of the Tang Emperor Gaozong and he called on Emperor Gaozong for aid in 655, when Baekje and Koguryo combined their forces against Silla. The Silla-Tang alliance defeated Baekje in 660 and then started to prepare for an attack against Koguryo, but King Muyeol died in 661, so Prince Kim Beom-Min took the throne, taking the name Moon-Moo.

King Moon-Moo and his Tang allies went ahead with the planned attack of Koguryo, but the campaign was unsuccessful. However, Moon-Moo did not give up and in 667, they attacked Koguryo again. Koguryo had not fully recovered from the previous attack and it fell in 668, making Moon-Moo the first ever king of the entire Korean peninsula, as 'Unified Silla'.

Despite their alliance with Silla, the Tang Dynasty wanted to exert authority over the entire Far East, including Korea, so the Silla-Tang alliance soon dissipated.

By 674, Silla and Tang were engaged in frequent skirmishes, as Moon-Moo tried to defend the unified Silla territories against Tang domination. Moon-Moo then sought help from a Koguryo resistance group led by Geom Mojang and An-Seung. Geom is thought to have been a bastard son of the former Koguryo king, Bo-jang, whilst An-Seung was a great nephew of his. Moon-Moo proclaimed An-Seung to be King of Bodeok and gave him some territory to rule over, as a close ally and brother of Silla. However, the territory of Bodeok was in the former Baekje lands rather than Koguryo and Moon-Moo had chosen the location to act as a protective buffer between Tang and the core Silla territory.

Emperor Gaozong was angered by Moon-Moo's resistance and prepared to place his brother, Kim In-Mum, on the throne of Silla. However, as Kim In-Mum approached the Silla capital, with orders to replace Moon-Moo, Moon-Moo apologised to Emperor Gaozong and offered him tribute to make peace with Tang.

In 675, Mohe forces (a race from ancient Manchuria) attacked Silla, and, because the Mohe had previously been Tang subjects, Moon-Moo considered the attack to be a Tang incursion, so the peace collapsed again. A year later, Tang sent a naval force under General Xue Li to invade Silla, but they were defeated by Silla's navy; Xue Li was stripped of his rank and exiled.

After Xue Li's defeat, Emperor Gaozong withdrew Tang forces from Silla and by 679, he had abandoned any thoughts of further attacks against Silla, due to a revolt against Tang by the Turks. Gaozong eventually abandoned all claims against Silla territory and Moon-Moo was left to rule the unified Korean peninsula in relative peace. Xue Li's attack was the last ever invasion of Korea by China.

Moon-Moo became ill in 681 and abdicated his throne to his son while on his deathbed, saying "*A country should not be without a king at any time. Let the Prince have my crown before he has my coffin. Cremate my remains and scatter the ashes in the sea where the whales live. I will become a dragon and thwart foreign invasion*".

As he requested, Moon-Moo's ashes were cast into the sea at Dae Wang Am (Great King's Rock), about 100 metres off the Korean coast. His son, who became King Sin-Moo, built the Gomun-Sa temple (Temple of Appreciated (or Treasured) Blessing) in his father's memory, which had a chamber for his father, the dragon, to sleep in. The temple was connected to the sea by a waterway, so the dragon could pass between the land and the sea.

King Sin-Moo is said to have had a dream in which his dragon father and General Kim Yoo-Sin appeared and said that "*blowing on a bamboo flute will calm the heavens and the earth*". Kim Sin-Moo then apparently found a bamboo flute, blew on it and invoked the spirits of Moon-Moo and Kim Yoo-Sin, who could protect the land against invasion, call for rain when it was needed, or cure illnesses!

The pattern Moon-Moo is a very challenging, but spectacular pattern, which is very popular among elite level competitors. Many world and continental patterns champions have won their titles by performing Moon-Moo. I wonder if pattern Moon-Moo was deliberately made to be so, to represent a King that presided over a tie of glory in Korea's history, when the Chinese invaders, who had been attacking Korea for nearly 100 years, were expelled for the last time. It was also the first time that Korea had been united as a single nation (although it soon split into smaller states again, during the reign of King Sin-Moo).

Whilst the pattern definition given in the Encyclopedia seems to be historically sound, I suspect that Moon-Moo's dying words have been edited to reflect more modern events. It does not seem likely that he said "*my soul shall forever defend my land against the Japanese*" because the threats against Silla during Moon-Moo's life came from China (as well as the other Korean states). "*I will become a dragon and thwart foreign invasion*" seems to be a much more plausible pledge and the historical sources I have seen suggest that is the case. I suspect the reference to Japan was a 20th century modification, because when the pattern was designed, Korea had recently been liberated from a period of brutal Japanese rule and oppression. Japan also invaded Korea in the 16th century Imjin war, during which Chinese troops provided aid to the Korean Joseon Dynasty.

King Moon-Moo is another figure who is still revered as a hero in modern Korea. Dae Wang Am and the nearby Suk Gol Am are now popular tourist attractions. Also, like Ul-Ji, Moon-Moo has a South Korean destroyer named after him, the 'ROKS Munmu the Great'.

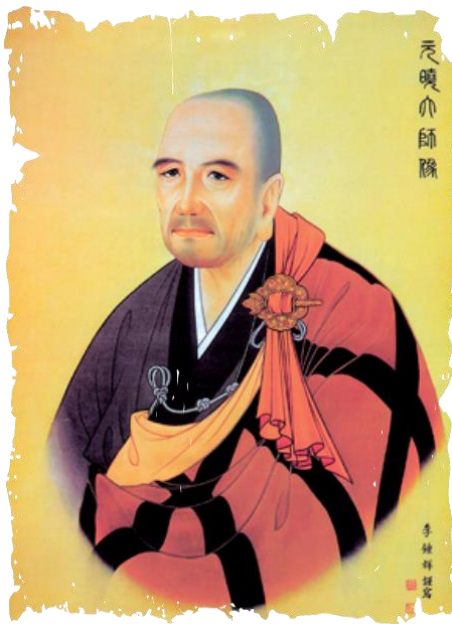
Won-Hyo

Encyclopedia Definition

Number of Moves: 28

Ready Posture: Closed Ready Stance 'A'

Won-Hyo was the noted monk who introduced Buddhism to the Silla Dynasty in the year of 686 A.D.



Won-Hyo

Additional Information

Won-Hyo is the first pattern in the syllabus to honour an historical figure from the 7th century. It is the 4th pattern in the syllabus, studied at green belt and it was designed in Malaysia, between 1962 and 1964, by General Choi, with Masters Kim Bok Man and Woo Jae Lim.

Won-hyo was born in 617, with the name Sol-Sedang. Won-Hyo was his penname, which means 'break of dawn'. This name comes from the story of his birth. Won-Hyo's parents prayed to Buddha for a child at dawn every day until one night, when Won-Hyo's mother had a dream that a star fell from heaven and pierced her breast. Very soon afterwards, she became pregnant. His mother went into labour while they were in Chestnut Valley, so his father made a temporary shelter for the birth. According to the story, five clouds of brilliant light enveloped the shelter just before Won-Hyo was born.

Won-Hyo was a well-educated and talented child and he joined the Hwa-Rang as a youth, where he fought in the wars between Silla and their Korean neighbours, Baekje and Koguryo. Witnessing so much violence and death drove Won-Hyo to become a monk and by the age of 20, he had abandoned all violence to pursue his religious beliefs. This is when he took the penname Won-Hyo.

Won-Hyo and his friend Uisang tried to travel to China in 650 to study under a Buddhist scholar, but they were captured and imprisoned as spies for a while, before being sent back to Korea. They tried to go to China again in 661, but while sheltering from a storm in a cave, Won-Hyo had an enlightening vision. After this, he decided that he now understood life and death, so he abandoned his journey to China and returned again to Korea.

Buddhism had existed in Korea for about 90 years by this time, but it was only accessible to the highly privileged and required the ability to read Chinese literature. Won-Hyo started the sect of Chongto-Gyo (Pure Land) Buddhism, passing on Buddha's message by word of mouth (and songs) and spreading it to the masses. It is though that his efforts eventually led the whole of Silla to adopt Buddhism.

During his travels, Won-Hyo met Princess Yosok, whose husband had been killed in battle. She fell in love with Won-Hyo and although they would normally have been forbidden to marry, they eventually did and had a son, Sol-Ch'ong, who later became a great Confucian scholar. Won-Hyo eventually left his wife and son in favour of his religious duties again and it is said that he entered Nirvana at Hyol temple.

Won-Hyo died in 686 and was laid to rest at Bumhwang-sa temple. The inscription on his grave stone stated "*He strove to master the principles of the universe, and make his goal the most profound truth of all*". During his life, Won-Hyo wrote 86 works, and one of these, 'the Awakening of Faith' is considered the most influential Korean text ever.

It is clear that Won-Hyo is another pattern where the Encyclopedia definition does not match fully with historical records. Won-Hyo did not introduce Buddhism to Silla, but he did make it accessible to all and influenced its adoption by most or all of the country. Also, 686 was the year that he died. Nonetheless, his influence on Korean culture and Buddhism was huge and is still relevant today.

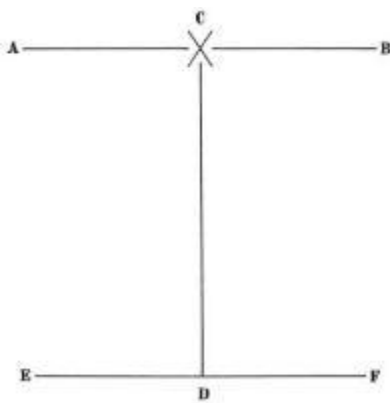
Hwa-Rang

Encyclopedia Definition

Number of Moves: 29

Ready Posture: Closed Ready Stance 'C'

Hwa-Rang is named after the Hwa-Rang youth group, which originated in the Silla Dynasty in the early 7th century. The 29 movements refer to the 29th Infantry Division, where Taekwon-Do developed into maturity.



A screenshot from a Korean TV drama, showing the Silla Queen Sun-duk with an escort of Hwa-Rang warriors.

Additional Information

Hwa-Rang is the 8th pattern in the syllabus, taught at red belt. It was the first Taekwon-do pattern ever developed, in Korea, in 1955, by General Choi, with Colonel Nam Tae Hi and (then) Sergeant Han Cha Kyo.

'Hwa-Rang' means 'Flower Boys' or 'Flowering Youth' and they were an elite group of warriors in 7th century Silla. They are sometimes thought of as equivalents to the Japanese Samurai, but the Hwa-Rang actually pre-date the Samurai by about 500 years!

It is though that the Hwa-Rang actually developed from groups of women called Won-hwa (Original Flowers) who, in the mid-6th century, were taught courtly manners and etiquette. Some years later, the King of Silla wanted to strengthen or improve his country and started recruiting boys of good moral character, from good (probably aristocratic) families for training. At first, it may well have been the King's intention to train these boys as scholars rather than warriors, but over time, they started to train in combat-related skills and eventually formed the elite warrior band that they are now known as.

The Hwa-Rang code of chivalry (Se Sok O Gye) was:

1. Loyalty to one's king
2. Love and respect your parents and teachers
3. Trust among friends
4. Never retreat in battle
5. Never take a life without a just cause.

They also lived by the 9 Virtues (Kyo Hoon): humility, justice, courtesy, wisdom, trustworthiness, goodness, virtue, loyalty and courage.

As the Hwa-Rang became established as Silla's elite warriors, their training increased, so that it took more than 10 years to earn the title Hwa-Rang. The unarmed portion of their training is thought to have come from the Kuguryo King, Kwang-Gae the Great. It comprised 'Subak' (a martial art with Chinese roots, developed for Kuguryo troops, focussing on upper body techniques) and 'Taek-Kyon' (a traditional fighting folk dance using the legs). These two systems were eventually merged and it all became known as Taek-Kyon.

Many famous Korean (or Sillan) heroes and kings are thought to have come from the ranks of Hwa-Rang, the most famous being General Kim Yoo-Sin. However, there are dozens (maybe hundreds) of stories of the heroic deeds and achievements of individual Hwa-Rang, as well as the group as a whole.

The Encyclopedia pattern definition for Hwa-Rang is split into two sentences, the first of which briefly describes the Hwa-Rang warriors from the Silla Dynasty. The second sentence refers to the 29th Infantry division of the South Korean army, which General Choi commanded in the mid-1950s.

It seems that General Choi wanted to indicate parallels between the Hwa-Rang of Silla and his division of the South Korean army. I will discuss this further in the concluding chapter of this thesis. However, I think many Taekwon-do students have misunderstood this definition (at least at first) and assumed the implication is that Taekwon-do was developed by the Hwa-Rang. I believe this causes some confusion among students who have not studied the history of Taekwon-do. In fact, until recent years, it was not uncommon for the myths that Taekwon-do is ancient and that it was developed primarily from Taek-Kyon to be actively taught by instructors and Taekwon-do associations. I suspect this was a deliberate attempt to cover up the Japanese (Karate) roots of Taekwon-do early in its history and to associate it with Korean tradition and the heroic Hwa-Rang warriors.

The 29th infantry division of the South Korean army was formed on Jeju Island in September 1953. Their emblem comprised the General's fist over a background in the shape of Korea. Taekwon-do in the 29th infantry division was taught at the 'Oh Do Kwan', which translates roughly as 'My (or our) Art (or way) School (or gym)'. General Choi apparently chose this name because it was part of a quote from Confucius, "*Oh Do Il Kwan Zi*", which means "*My principle is to master one thing*". General Choi associated this with his ambition to create and master Taekwon-do and then spread it to the world.

The above quote also reminds me of training with General Choi's son (then VIII Dan), Choi Jung Hwa, who frequently told us that "*Once you know one thing through and through, you know everything*", as we practised the same block over and over again. The implication was that, true or deep understanding of one technique, gave greater understanding of the whole martial art, or in the case of Confucius, life. I have no doubt that General Choi taught that principle to his son.

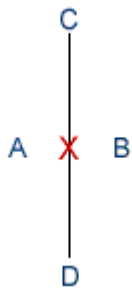
Ge-Baek

Encyclopedia Definition

Number of Moves: 44

Ready Posture: Parallel Ready Stance

Ge-Baek is named after Ge-Baek, a great general in the Baekje Dynasty (660 AD). The diagram represents his severe and strict military discipline.



General Ge-Baek

Additional Information

Ge-Baek is the 12th pattern in the syllabus, studied at 1st degree black belt. It was developed in Korea, in 1961 by General Choi, with Master C.K. Choi (Choi Chang Keun).

Little is known for certain about Ge-Baek's birth, although there are several mythical stories, including one where his mother fainted after birth and he was suckled by a female tiger! However, it is generally thought that he studied martial arts from a young age and he joined the Baekje military.

In the mid-7th century, King Uija of Baekje was a poor king, neglecting matters of state and allowing the country to fall into disarray, although they retained a military alliance with Koguryo.

In 660, Baekje was invaded by 50,000 Silla troops led by General Kim Yoo-Sin, as well as 130,000 Tang soldiers, led by General Su Ding Fang. King Uija promoted Ge-Baek to be the head of the Baekje armed forces, but he could only muster an army of about 5,000 men. In preparation for the battle, Ge-Baek is reported to have killed his wife and children supposedly so they could not be tortured and used as leverage against him, but perhaps also because he thought the battle was a suicide mission.

General Ge-Baek roused the courage of his men and inflicted great casualties on the Silla-Tang army during their first battles, so Kim Yoo-Sin sent a Hwa-Rang warrior to try and assassinate Ge-Baek. He failed and was captured, but was soon released. The warrior then made another attempt to assassinate Ge-Baek and managed to kill his second-in-command, apparently kicking him off his horse and breaking his neck!

Soon after this, Ge-Baek and his forces were overwhelmed by the Silla-Tang forces, at the battle of Hwangsan Field. Ge-Baek and his men were all killed, as they refused to surrender. The Baekje Dynasty fell soon afterwards and Baekje became part of Silla.

Ge-Baek's Confucian principles and strict military discipline were recognised and commended much later, when neo-Confucianism was popular in Korea. This strict discipline is represented by the pattern diagram. I am not aware of any specific reason for the 44 moves in the pattern, although the author of one of the books that I have referred to in this thesis speculates that it could be the number of battles that Ge-Baek fought as a military commander.

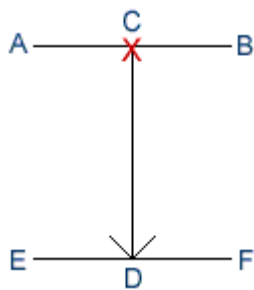
Yoo-Sin

Encyclopedia Definition

Number of Moves: 68

Ready Posture: Warrior Ready Stance 'B'

Yoo-Sin is named after General Kim Yoo-Sin, a commanding general during the Silla Dynasty. The 68 movements refer to the last two figures of 668 A.D., the year Korea was united. The ready posture signifies a sword drawn on the right rather than left side, symbolizing Yoo-Sin's mistake of following his King's orders to fight with foreign forces against his own nation.



Kim Yoo-Sin

Additional Information

Yoo-Sin is the 17th pattern in the syllabus, which is studied at 3rd degree black belt. Like Won-Hyo, it was developed in Malaysia between 1962 and 1964, by General Choi, with Masters Kim Bok Man and Woo Jae Lim.

Kim Yoo-Sin was the son of King Jin-Heung (of Silla)'s daughter and General Kim Seoh-Yeon, of the Silla army; he was born in 595. Yoo-Sin became a Hwa-Rang at 15 years old and became a Kuk-Son (unit commander) at 18. His unit was the Yonghwa-Hyangdo (Band of the Dragon Flower Tree).

By the age of 34 (in 629), Yoo-Sin had command of all the Silla armed forces, having proved himself as a commander in many battles against Baekje. He became the most famous of the generals in the Korean unification wars of this period and he was active on all fronts, including against General Ge-Baek (Baekje) and Yong-Gae Somoon (Koguryo). Japanese troops also became involved in the unification wars in 663, when they joined a Baekje restoration army. They too, were defeated.

There are many legends of Kim Yoo-Sin, including one where, during a heated argument between him and a Chinese General (during the Silla-Tang alliance), his sword is said to have leapt into his hand. At that time, it was believed that an officer's sword held part of his soul and this apparently frightened the Chinese General so much that he immediately apologised.

At another time, when Baekje forces were repeatedly entering Silla territory, Yoo-Sin twice turned around to return to battle when very close to home, having been away for weeks. Once, he was actually in sight of his house and sent a soldier to fetch a cup of water from his well and declaring that it still tasted the same, before returning to battle without stopping to greet his wife or children. This, apparently inspired his men to great loyalty and impressed Queen Sun-Duk (who had come to power in 632) so much that she awarded him money and another title. When Yoo-Sin met the Baekje forces, they fled before engaging him in battle.

In 642, Yoo-Sin became blood brothers with Kim Chun-Chu (the future King Muyeol). Kim Chun-Chu was captured during a mission to Koguryo and Yoo-Sin prepared a rescue mission for his friend, summoning 3,000 of his Hwa-Rang to help him. The King of Koguryo heard about this and released Kim Chun-Chu before Yoo-Sin and his soldiers even left! Kim Chun-Chu married Yoo-Sin's sister and after his first wife died, Yoo-Sin married Kim Chun-Chu's sister, Lady Jiso.

In June 673, servants claimed to have seen soldiers walking out of Yoo-Sin's house crying, before they disappeared. Yoo-Sin said this must have been his guardians, who had now left him. Ten days later he fell ill and he passed away on 1st July 673, having served 3 Silla Kings and 2 Queens and been recognised as the primary driving force in the unification wars of Korea. He was posthumously awarded the title of Heung-Mu Taewang (Great King of War) and he was buried at the foot of Songhwa Mountain.

The Encyclopedia pattern definition states that the ready posture "*symbolizes Yoo-Sin's mistake of following his King's orders to fight with foreign forces against his own nation*". Such a mistake is not explicitly referred to in any of the historical texts that I have reviewed and I have found no reference to him fighting against Silla. Therefore, it seems that this must refer to his participation in the Silla-Tang alliance against other Koreans (Baekje and Koguryo). It seems unlikely to me that Yoo-Sin himself would have seen this as a mistake. He apparently did strongly believe that the Korean peninsula should be united, but presumably, he envisaged the state of 'Unified Silla', which it effectively became after the defeat of Koguryo. Indeed, after the Tang were expelled from Korea, 'Unified Silla' enjoyed relative peace for about 200 years, but it had a rigid caste system (called the Bone Rank system), which meant that the Silla aristocrats enjoyed lots of privileges, whilst the former Baekje and Koguryo people had far less. Nonetheless, the people of the former states did mingle and join with each other during this period, creating a genuinely 'Korean' identity.

I suspect General Choi (and perhaps other modern Koreans) looked back at Yoo-Sin's achievements with some regret that he fought with Chinese Tang forces against what they now see as other Koreans. However, my research (and my relative impartiality, as a European) suggests that the unified Korean identity that is clear in modern times developed to a large extent after this period and perhaps largely because of it.

Summary and Discussion

Korean National Identity

As I studied the figures behind these patterns, I found it interesting that they are all portrayed and revered as patriotic Korean heroes, despite several of them being direct enemies (e.g. Yoo-Sin vs both Yon-Gae and Ge-Baek). To me, this reflects the strong, modern Korean belief that all of the peninsula's inhabitants are effectively one people, despite any political divisions. This seems to be the case now, as both North and South Korea only refer to themselves as 'Korea'. I am uncertain of North Korean policy, but it is also the case that South Korea effectively recognises all North Koreans as citizens, albeit in a form of exile. Any North Korean fugitives that make it to South Korea have been granted benefits and citizenship.

The recognition of all of these figures in the Taekwon-do patterns suggests to me that General Choi believed all Koreans to have been 'one people' 1400 years ago too. In other words, although these figures were subjects of different leaders, they were all heroic Koreans to General Choi. As noted above, my research suggests that a large degree of the 'Korean' national identity probably developed in the years that followed the first unification, but there is evidence that some (e.g. Kim Yoo-Sin) believed in it before then too, although I believe he saw it as his duty to fight the other Korean states to achieve it.

Studies of prehistoric populations also suggest that modern Koreans all share a strong ancestral link to a Neolithic population that settled on the peninsula and became established there between about 10,000 and 4,000 B.C. It was their (earlier) descendant, Dan-Gun, who formed the state of Gojoseon in 2,333 B.C., which modern Koreans see as the first Korean nation.

Influence on the Modern World

I also find it interesting to consider the impact that the figures from these patterns have had (and continue to have) on modern culture, history and politics. There is little doubt that if Sui or Tang China had successfully invaded Korea in 7th century, the peninsula would have been absorbed into China and Korea would never have existed as a modern nation.

When one considers the impact of Korean politics on the world in the last 100 years, it is impossible to guess what a difference that might have made to the world now. For example, the separation of Korea after the Second World War led to the Korean War and undoubtedly had some influence over the Vietnam War. Soviet and Chinese support for communist North Korea was also a significant feature of the Cold War, whilst America still supports the democratic South.

Today, North Korea continues to be considered a threat to South Korea, Japan and even NATO countries due to their pursuit of nuclear weapons capabilities and their enormous army. At the time of writing this, the current (apparent) willingness of Kim Jong-Un to consider relinquishing their nuclear ambitions in favour of improved international relations is the first such move in many years (arguably, decades). Even so, his true intentions (or those of Donald Trump) have yet to be revealed. If Korea had been part of China for the last 1400 years, none of this would have happened and who knows what else would be different than it is now?

Another point to consider is that, if the Sui or Tang had conquered Korea easily (as they probably expected to do), where else might they have gone? Would they also have then invaded Japan, for example? Would they have expanded towards South-East Asia, or would they have expanded further west, towards Central Asia and even the Middle East? Given that Islam was first established in Arabia in the 7th century, what an effect that might have had on the world! If China had come to dominate Asia as a superpower, would the European powers have developed to the same extent a thousand years later? The map below shows Sui China as it was in 600.



Influence on Taekwon-do

I will consider Hwa-Rang first, because it is unique among these patterns that it does not refer to a single person, but rather, the elite warrior band from the Silla Dynasty. In my opinion, there are quite clear parallels between the Hwa-Rang, General Choi's 29th infantry division of the South Korean army and Taekwon-do, or the ITF. Indeed, as I pointed out earlier, I believe the pattern definition was deliberately designed to make that connection, to associate Taekwon-do with a much-revered band of heroic Koreans, with ancient national heritage.

Other parallels include the Tenets of Taekwon-do, which bear close comparison with the Hwa-Rang's 'Kyo Hoon' (9 Virtues). The Hwa-Rang Code of Chivalry can also be compared to the ITF student oath, in my opinion. I believe General Choi modelled his army division and later, the ITF on the Hwa-Rang to quite a large extent. He saw all three as tight-knit groups of warriors (and/or martial artists) with strict moral and ethical codes. Whilst Taekwon-do and the ITF has undoubtedly drifted away from this model to some extent over the following decades (for example, by expanding to teach children and through the increased emphasis on the sport/competition aspect of the art), I believe it was highly influential in Taekwon-do's early development.

As I have pointed out throughout this thesis, I believe the figures that are honoured in the other patterns from the 7th century (and those from other periods of history) were chosen as examples of people to follow as examples. Common attributes, including courage, indomitable spirit, patriotism and morality (e.g. Won-Hyo) are all very clear among them.

As I suggested in my introduction, I believe these characters were also chosen very much to promote the apparent strength, heroism and value of Koreans. It is likely that this was very important to General Choi after the Japanese occupation of Korea, particularly considering that he personally had to endure persecution and imprisonment under Japanese rule. The Japanese had also attempted to suppress all Korean culture and traditions in favour of their own, which I believe General Choi (and presumably, many Koreans) found deeply offensive.

In other words, I consider that the pattern definitions and the characters they refer to were chosen to promote the 'Korean-ness' of Taekwon-do. Whilst Taekwon-do (particularly as the ITF) has spread to become a global martial art and sport, it was fiercely promoted as Korean in its early days.

References

Most of the resource texts that I have used have been paraphrased in this thesis, rather than being quoted directly. As such, I have not identified specific resources throughout the document, but most of the information I have obtained came from the following sources:

- Encyclopedia of Taekwon-do (condensed, 5th edition); 1999; General Choi Hong Hi.
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- This is Taekwon-do; 2012; FGM Rhee Ki Ha.
- Various internet resources, including Wikipedia.