

Evidence of Taekwondo's Roots in Karate: *An Analysis of the Technical Content of Early Taekwondo Literature**

Udo MOENIG, Sungkyun CHO, and Taek-Yong KWAK

Abstract

The taekwondo establishment presents taekwondo as the descendent of ancient Korean martial arts. However, during the last two decades, some scholars have begun to question this presentation, contending instead that taekwondo is the product of Koreans who studied karate in Japan during the Japanese colonial years, and then introduced karate to Korea after coming home. A comprehensive survey of the existing Korean martial arts literature published between 1945 and 1970 strongly supports the argument that early “taekwondo” had in fact been Japanese karate, or more specifically, Funakoshi Gichin’s Shotokan karate. Therefore, the assertion that early taekwondo had its roots in Korean martial arts is difficult to sustain.

Keywords: taekwondo, karate, *quanfa*, *gwan*, Korean martial arts, literature review

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Introduction

The World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) (2009) portrays taekwondo as having evolved from ancient Korean martial arts. Some scholars oppose this portrayal and have provided evidence that taekwondo actually evolved from Japanese karate (Kim 1990; Capener 1995, 2005; Kang and Lee 1999; Madis 2003; Moenig, Cho, and Song 2012). Despite this evidence, the WTF's position still garners the most recognition.

This article documents taekwondo's evolution from karate by comprehensively analyzing early taekwondo literature, and comparing it to karate publications from the same period. Twelve Korean martial arts manuals, published between 1949 and 1971, are analyzed in this study. The majority of these manuals describe their martial art, using the terms *dangsudo* 唐手道, *gongsudo* 空手道, or *gwonbeop* 拳法. While the terms *dangsudo* and *gongsudo* represent the Korean transliterations of the Japanese term *karate-do*,¹ the term *gwonbeop* refers to Chinese-style boxing. Apart from Choi Hong Hi, all authors of the early Korean martial arts manuals used at least one of these terms when referring to their martial art. Right from his very first publication, Choi referred to his martial art as taekwondo, and was the first to coin the name.

Shortly after Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945, the five original *gwan*² were founded: Cheongdogwan, Songmugwan, Mudeokkwan, Joseon Yeonmugwan, and the YMCA Gwonbeopbu (Gwonbeop Department). Choi Hong Hi's school, Odogwan, was not established until 1954, where it had its beginnings in the South Korean military. The founders of the five *gwan* all studied karate, and all but Mudeokkwan's founder, Hwang Kee, studied in Japan.³ Yun Byeong-in, the founder of the YMCA Gwonbeopbu,

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1. The characters “唐手” were used to write “karate” until the mid-1930s. However, Funakoshi advocated the use of the characters “空手,” removing reference to China's Tang dynasty, and thus disassociating karate from China. Both combinations of characters are pronounced the same way in Japanese—“karate”—but have different pronunciations in Korean; hence, the terms *dangsu* and *gongsu* both appear in the literature.
 2. *Gwan* 館 literally means “hall,” but in this article refers to a martial arts school or style.
 3. For a history of the different *gwan*, see Kang and Lee (1999), Heo (2008), and Madis (2003, 2011a, 2011b).

was the only founder of the five *gwan* with proof of having studied another martial art in addition to karate. As Kang and Lee (1999) state, evidence shows that Yun studied Chinese *quanfa* (*gwonbeop* in Korean) as a child in Manchuria. Of the other founders, Choi Hong Hi (1965) admitted to having studied karate in Japan, but also claimed to have learned *taekkyeon* (generally described as a traditional Korean martial art) as a child. Later, Hwang Kee also made a variety of statements about the martial arts that he had allegedly learned in his youth, but these claims remain disputed (Kang and Lee 1999).

With the exception of the Songmugwan, all of the original *gwan* had early martial arts manuals published by their founders or accomplished students. These manuals provide vital evidence of taekwondo's early techniques and activities, as well as its relationship to karate. For the claims made by some of the Korean instructors that they had studied and incorporated martial art styles other than karate to be true, their works should reveal how their arts were different from karate. Therefore, this article will analyze the technical content and significant features of the original *gwan* manuals, including an explanation of the significance of forms in karate and early taekwondo. The forms described in early taekwondo literature will also be considered. Finally, this article summarizes all the evidence available and concludes that early taekwondo was largely a product of Funakoshi's Shotokan karate, and not a descendent of ancient Korean martial arts.

Comparison of Early Korean Martial Arts Manuals with Karate Publications: Technical Content and Significant Features

The Seminal Karate Texts

Between the late nineteenth century and 1960, well over seventy karate-related manuals and books were published in Japan.⁴ The most influential

4. See the Hawaii Karate Museum website's "Rare Karate Book Collection" for an overview of the publications.

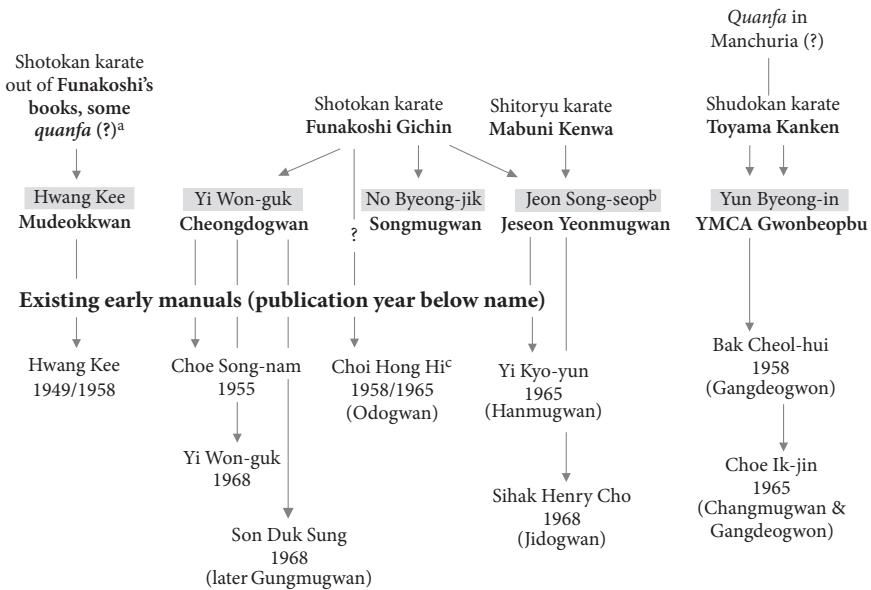


Figure 1. Existing publications by the founders and students of the five original *gwan*, plus Choi Hong Hi.

Note: The arrows indicate the individuals' relationship to their instructors.

The names of the original *gwan* founders are colored grey.

^a Where Hwang learned *quanfa* is not clear, though he claimed to have studied *quanfa* in Manchuria (Hwang 1995, 12). However, the author believes that Hwang possibly learned *quanfa* from one of the students of the YMCA Gwonbeopbu, because he reportedly trained on occasion with students from other schools (Madis 2003, 199).

^b There are different reports of Jeon having studied either under Mabuni or Funakoshi, or both of them (Kang and Lee 1999; Madis 2003; Heo 2008).

^c Choi's claim of having studied Shotokan karate remains unsubstantiated (Madis 2011). In any case, he did learn some karate in Japan.

figure during this time was Funakoshi Gichin, who is often referred to as the "father of karate." Funakoshi was the first to publish comprehensive karate books documenting the Shotokan⁵ style that he pioneered. Funa-

5. Use of the term "Shotokan" as a distinctive style was only introduced by Funakoshi's students, and named after his gymnasium. *Gwan* is the Korean transliteration of the Japanese term *kan* (a martial arts school or style).

koshi is most noted for the manual, *Ryuku kempo todi*, published in 1922, which he soon expanded and republished in 1925 under the title, *Rentan goshin tode-jutsu* (Todi Arts: Polish Your Courage for Self-Defense). The republished edition also includes photographs. His main work, *Karate-do Kyohan: The Master Text* ([1935] 1973), is useful for this study because it displays Funakoshi's main body of *kata* (forms), and thus provides a thorough overview of Shotokan karate during a time when several of the Korean *gwan* founders were studying the style in Japan (see Fig. 1). Another influential figure in Shotokan karate was a man named Nishiyama Hidetaka. Nishiyama's classic work, *Karate: The Art of "Empty Hand" Fighting*, co-authored with Richard Brown (Nishiyama and Brown 1960), is regarded as the best martial arts publication of the era (Noble 1997).

These seminal karate texts by Funakoshi and Nishiyama were compared to the early Korean taekwondo literature, in order to see what influence they might have had on taekwondo. The comparison focused on technical content, such as similarities in the range of basic stances, steps, striking techniques—including fists, hands, elbows, kicks, and knees—striking points, blocking techniques, forms, general training activities, and formal features. Grappling, joint locks, and throwing techniques, which are less used techniques in karate and taekwondo, were largely disregarded, even though some manuals incorporated several of these techniques in sections about self-defense. The primary focus of the comparison was on basic stances, stand-up striking techniques, and forms.

A Comparison of Martial Arts Styles

The general taekwondo establishment portrays *taekkyeon* as the link between “ancient” Korean martial arts and modern taekwondo (WTF 2009). Given this portrayal, early Korean manuals should display some typical *taekkyeon* stances and/or techniques that are easy to distinguish from karate techniques due to differences in posture and execution.⁶ This

6. Compare, for example, Nishiyama and Brown (1960) with the first *taekkyeon* manual by Song and Bak (1983).

hypothesis was tested by focusing on the photographs, the descriptive content, and the names used when describing a technique or form. An examination of the photographs helped to identify similarities or differences in posture, and sometimes, when a series of illustrations are displayed, the sequenced movement of a technique. An examination of the descriptive content helped to identify the execution or movement of certain techniques. Table 1 below is a summary of the typical features identified to distinguish each martial art.

Table 1. Typical Features Used to Distinguish Each Martial Art

	Shotokan karate ^a	<i>Quanfa</i> ^b	<i>Taekkyeon</i>
General features in body posture of stances, strikes, blocks, and kicks	Formal, upright, straight, practical, strong	Often imitate animals, often symbolic in nature	Informal, slightly bent
General features in movement patterns of strikes, blocks, and kicks	Straight, simple, practical	Curved, round, or straight, complex, often symbolic in nature	Round, curved

^a Some other karate styles look much more *quanfa*-like because some of their founders traveled frequently to China to study Chinese styles. For example, the Gojuryu 剛柔流 (“hard-soft style”) karate incorporated many animal postures.

^b *Quanfa* features many styles, but they are usually quite distinctive from Shotokan karate.

Appendix 1 provides a more detailed sample of the content that was compared in this study. More specifically, Appendix 1 compares basic kicking techniques described in the works of three different martial arts exponents—Nishiyama Hidetaka (Nishiyama and Brown 1960), Choi Hong Hi (1965), and Henry Cho (1968). Their training manuals were chosen as samples due to clarity, the quality of illustrational and descriptive content, and the comprehensive range of individual techniques displayed. Other Korean manuals often display a narrower range of techniques, have poorer

illustrations, and are less detailed.

Just as their Japanese predecessors had done earlier, the writers of the early Korean martial arts manuals focused on forms. However, these manuals also displayed a variety of other exercises, such as prearranged sparring. Most of these manuals conclude with a section on self-defense, the ultimate objective of all practical training activity at that time. Full-contact sparring is not described in any of the manuals, and the authors who do mention full-contact sparring reject it vehemently. Non-contact sparring is described in some of the literature, but clearly plays a subordinate role; the main focus is on forms training. The following discussion of individual works focuses mainly on the special features of each manual.

1) The First Korean Martial Arts Manuals of Modern Times

In 1949, Hwang Kee, the founder of the Mudeokkwan, published *Hwasudo gyobon* (Hwasudo Textbook), which is considered the first Korean martial arts book of modern times. From early on, Hwang preferred to use Korean names for his art, with the “*hwa* 花” (flower) in the term *hwasudo* (literally, “the way of the flowering hand”) from the book title referring to the ancient term *hwarang* 花郎 (“flower youth” or “flower boys”). *Hwasudo gyobon* stands out among early Korean manuals because it contains some *quanfa* content alongside the content on karate.⁷

Another very early manual, *Gwonbeop gyobon* (*Gwonbeop* Textbook), was published by Choe Song-nam in 1955. Choe was a soldier and learned *dangsudo* from Yi Won-guk as a member of the Cheongdogwan (Heo 2008). However, Choe was not a key figure in the development and formation of taekwondo. His manual features standard karate techniques and Shotokan *kata*.⁸ In addition, Choe (1955, 192-210) describes a knife form that he calls Dando (Dagger) form. As there are no knife forms in karate and Choe was a soldier, he most likely developed this form himself, possibly for use in the military.

7. For a detailed discussion on this, see the following section about forms.

8. See Appendix 3 for a summary of this.

Hwang Kee's second manual, *Dangsudo gyobon* (Dangsudo Textbook) (1958), describes basic techniques as well as some forms. However, much of the book concentrates on self-defense. In addition, another large portion of the book describes various non-related skills, such as first aid and lifesaving. In later publications, Hwang used the Korean term *subakdo* (empty-handed fighting), which he adapted in the late 1950s to describe his art. He also illustrates a few technical dissimilarities to the Shotokan karate of that time, for the likely reason that he lacked formal training. Hwang (1995) later admitted to having learned karate mostly out of books, and the basic stances that Hwang presents are mostly from standard karate. However, on a few occasions, he illustrates stances that are absent from mature Shotokan karate, such as a stance he calls the "lowest position" (see Fig. 2).

Eric Madis (2003) suggests that Hwang incorporated movements from very early Shotokan karate. This theory is supported by other literature, as the same stance referred to above is found in Funakoshi's early work ([1925] 1996, 178), but not in later Shotokan works. Other evidence includes the fact that Hwang often used the old Okinawan names for forms, as did Funakoshi in his 1920s publications. However, Funakoshi changed the form names in his 1935 publication (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3). The general range of techniques presented by Hwang is similar to standard karate techniques of the time. He displays a modified kick, called a "bit-kick," which is described as being in between a front kick and a roundhouse kick (Hwang 1958, 64). In modern publications, Hwang also

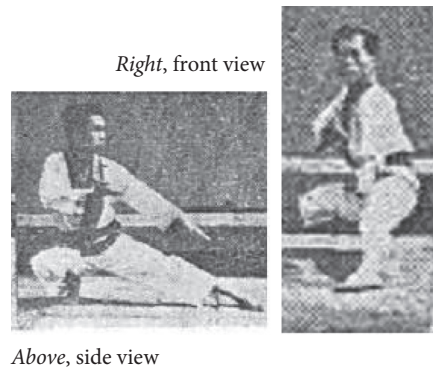


Figure 2. Photographs of Hwang demonstrating the "lowest position" stance.

Source: Hwang (1958, 52).

Note: The position of Hwang's rear foot is problematic. For a comparison, see Funakoshi's *Rentan goshin tode-jutsu* ([1925] 1996, 178). Reprint permission could not be secured.

displays the “inside-out-kick,”⁹ which is a *taekkyeon* kick, but was not shown in his early works. This kicking technique is often showcased by Hwang’s organizations on their official homepages and advertisements because they believe it proves that Hwang’s style is different from karate.

2) The Influence of *Quanfa* (*Gwonbeop*), Chinese Martial Arts

Bak Jeol-hui was a member of the YMCA Gwonbeopbu. However, he and Hong Jeong-pyo split from the school in 1956 and founded the Gangdeogwon. Bak’s instructor, Yun Byeong-in, disappeared during the beginning of the Korean War and left no publications, while Bak wrote a manual, *Pasa gwonbeop: gongsudo gyobon* (*Gwonbeop* Association: *Gongsudo* Textbook), which was published in 1958. Bak’s manual is the only available source that describes the curriculum of the YMCA Gwonbeopbu. Bak’s instructor, Yun Byeong-in had studied *quanfa* in his youth, and later Shudokan karate in Japan under Toyama Kanken, but Bak’s manual shows no influence of any kind from Chinese martial arts. Rather, Bak (1958) displays karate techniques and forms (*kata*) exclusively, although he does mention a few Chinese forms by name.

Although his main curriculum consisted of karate and Funakoshi’s *kata*, on occasion Yun taught some Chinese forms to selected students at the YMCA Gwonbeopbu (Kang and Lee 1999; Madis 2003; Heo 2008). Yun studied Shudokan karate in Japan, but taught predominantly Shotokan *kata* because they were the most popular in both Japan and Korea, as a result of Funakoshi’s status and fame.¹⁰ In addition, by using Shotokan *kata*, the evaluation of forms contests was streamlined and simplified.¹¹ In

9. The inside-out-kick is also referred to as the “reverse roundhouse kick.” It is called *biteureo chagi* in modern taekwondo and *jjae chagi* in *taekkyeon*. It was only adapted later by some taekwondo instructors during the 1970s.

10. Eric Madis, “Storming the Fortress: A History of Taekwondo—Part Four: The First Korean Schools: The Maverick Schools,” accessed November 23, 2012, <http://www.fightingarts.com/reading/article.php?id=686>.

11. Eric Madis, “Storming the Fortress: A History of Taekwondo—Part Four: The First Korean Schools: The Maverick Schools,” accessed November 23, 2012, <http://www.fightingarts.com/reading/article.php?id=686>.

contrast, Bak's manual (1958) shows that *quanfa* was not very popular among students, and that after Yun's disappearance, his successors mostly gave up on practicing Chinese martial arts components in their general training activities, in favor of karate. Nevertheless, Bak was known in the Korean taekwondo community for his knowledge of Chinese *quanfa*.

Several original students of the YMCA Gwonbeopbu also had some knowledge of *quanfa*. Some of them later founded or became members of the Changmugwan and the Gangdeogwon, where Chinese forms were also taught on occasion.¹² However, with the exception of Hwang Kee's 1949 publication, none of the early taekwondo literature displays any typical *quanfa* content, which implies that *quanfa* had no influence on the general training activities of taekwondo.

3) The Early Use of the Term "Taekwondo"

General Choi Hong Hi, founder of the Odogwan, published his first book, *Taekwondo gyobon* (Taekwondo Textbook) in 1958. *Taekwondo gyobon* was the first book published using the word "taekwondo" in its title. Choi's first English publication—the first English taekwondo textbook—appeared in 1965 under the title, *Taekwondo: The Art of Self-Defence*. This textbook expands on the content of the earlier Korean publication, using new, higher quality photographs and more detailed explanations. The book was published before Choi's break with the Korean taekwondo world and the South Korean government. During the 1960s, Choi became increasingly at odds with the taekwondo establishment over issues of leadership and direction. Furthermore, he was personally in disagreement with the military regime of Park Chung-hee, which eventually led to Choi's gradual erosion of influence during the second half of the 1960s (Madis 2003; Gillis 2008). Taking into consideration Choi's status and authority in the formative process of unifying taekwondo in Korea, his publications are rep-

12. Robert McLain, "Master Yoon Byung-in's Legacy: The Changmoo-Kwan and Kang-duk-Won," accessed November 23, 2012, <http://www.martialtalk.com/forum/144-martialtalk-magazine-articles/43718-changmoo-kwan-kang-duk-won-history-photos-available-upon-request.html>.

representative of general taekwondo activity in Korea at that time.

The ranges and styles of Shotokan karate are practically identical to the taekwondo techniques displayed in Choi's 1958 and 1965 publications. The only exception is that karate literature displays no spinning-back-kick. However, Choi, too, did not display the spinning-back-kick in his earlier 1958 Korean piece, but only in his later English publication, where it was called a "reverse turning kick" (1965, 88). This evidence may place the technique's invention in the early 1960s (Gillis 2008, 62; Moenig 2011, 22).

Choi's work displays more jump-kicks than the work of Nishiyama. However, all of these jump-kicks are derived from regular kicking techniques, some of which Funakoshi mentions in his earlier work (Funakoshi [1957] 1973, 23). Choi was even accused of plagiarism when he released his book in 1965 because of its resemblance to Nishiyama's earlier work (Gillis 2008). Apart from the renaming of some techniques, a great number of the pictures used in Choi's book are nearly identical to those used in Nishiyama's work. Choi (1965, 295-6) even admitted to studying karate in Japan, but also claimed to have studied *taekkyeon* and then using this knowledge to combine the techniques. However, no content in Choi's early publications shows an incorporation of *taekkyeon* or any other martial art besides Shotokan karate. Both Choi and Hwang did include some *taekkyeon* techniques, such as the inside-out-kick, but only in their later publications. Thus, their claims that they were exposed to *taekkyeon* in their youth are likely to be wishful thinking.

In 1965, another taekwondo book titled, *Taekwondo: A Way of Life in Korea* (Read and Chai 1965), was published in English. Chai Ik Jin, who had been a student first at the Changmugwan and later at Gangdeogwon, posed for a number of photographs and probably advised the American writer, Stanton E. Read, on the book's content. The purpose of the book was to introduce taekwondo to American audience. It describes taekwondo's ethical values and organizational structure, and martial arts history, while blending fact and fiction. Read and Chai (1965, 48) claim, "Following the liberation [from Japanese colonial rule] . . . Japanese *karate*, Chinese *chüan-fa* [*quanfa*], and the earlier Korean *taekkyon* [*taekkyeon*] were combined to form what is today the art of taekwondo." Chai stressed the

quanfa roots because of his YMCA Gwonbeopbu lineage.

Yi Kyo-yun's 1965 manual, *Baengmanin-ui taesudo gyobon* (Taesudo Textbook for the Millions), is the only book to have been published with the word *taesudo* in the title. *Taesudo* was the official name chosen by the martial arts association for the discipline from 1961 to 1965. Yi's manual provides evidence that the Korea Taesudo Association still used Funakoshi's *kata* up until 1965, and that any new forms had yet to be developed at that stage (K. Yi 1965).

Yi Won-guk, the founder of the Cheongdogwan, and the most important and highest ranked instructor following Korea's liberation, fled from Korea back to Japan in 1950 because of political persecution from authorities who accused him of having been a Japanese collaborator (Madis 2003). After his eventual return to Korea, Yi belatedly published *Taegwondo gyobeom* (Taekwondo Manual), where he introduced Shotokan karate techniques and forms (W. Yi 1968). However, by this time Yi had long ceased being a major player in the field of Korean martial arts. In later years, Yi claimed that he had also studied *taekkyeon* in his youth, but this claim is belied by the fact that there is no evidence of any *taekkyeon* techniques in his manual. *Taegwondo gyobeom* mentions, for the first time without any illustrations, the Palgwae (literally, "eight divination trigrams") *hyeong*, two of the Taegeuk (literally, "source of the dual principle of *yin* and *yang*") *hyeong*, and most of the modern *dan* (black belt) forms. This was the period when the members of the Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) distanced themselves from Choi Hong Hi and developed new forms. It is interesting to note that the term *pumsae* (form) did not yet exist at that time and Yi still used the karate term *hyeong* but in connection to modern taekwondo forms.

4) Korean Martial Arts Instructors Overseas

In 1958, Sihak Henry Cho—who had joined the *Jidogwan* in 1953—became one of the first Korean taekwondo instructors to emigrate to the United States. Cho went on to publish a manual titled, *Korean Karate Free Fighting Technique* in 1968. Cho was the only author at that time to show no forms

in his work. Instead, he focused only on “free fighting techniques,” a decision that reflects his background at the Jidogwan, where free full-contact sparring was pioneered (Moenig, Cho, and Song 2012, 1368). Despite this, the technical system that Cho shows is still karate and does not represent modern taekwondo (Moenig 2012). Cho’s manual is also interesting for the fact that he states, “tae-kwon is the Korean word for karate . . . *Tae-kwon do* . . . is identical to Japanese karate . . . some of the Korean public still uses the ‘karate’ pronunciation in conversation” (Cho 1968, 19).

Son Duk Sung, an influential Korean taekwondo master, published *Korean Karate: The Art of Tae Kwon Do* in 1968 in English (co-authored with Clark). Son had become the leader of the Cheongdogwan after Yi Won-guk fled to Japan. However, during the late 1950s, disagreements with the vice president led to him leaving the organization. In 1959, Son took leadership of the Gungmugwan, and in 1963, he moved to the United States (Heo 2008). Son (1968) states that Funakoshi was the person to introduce Okinawa-*te* to Japan, but fails to mention that his instructor, Yi Won-guk, had learned karate directly from Funakoshi. Son’s style is clearly Shotokan karate.¹³

Publications released after 1968 hold less relevance to this study. With the introduction of full-contact sparring competitions, taekwondo techniques changed and developed a distinctiveness from traditional karate (Moenig 2011; Moenig Cho, and Song 2012). Despite these developments, one book from this later period is worth mentioning because it provides further valuable information.

In 1971, Lee Chong Woo,¹⁴ Chairperson of the Technical Committee of the KTA during that time, published a manual titled, *Taegwondo gyobon* (Taekwondo Manual), which represented the first modern taekwondo textbook. *Taegwondo gyobon* only illustrates the Palgwae and modern

13. See Funakoshi’s *kata* in Son and Clark (1968, 89-218).

14. Lee Chong Woo, a leading taekwondo pioneer, was essential for the development of the WTF. He was the former Secretary-General and Vice-President of the WTF, and the former Vice-President of the Kukkiwon (Taekwondo headquarters established by the South Korean government).

Taegeuk *pumsae*, while no longer mentioning any karate *kata*. Lee also comprehensively formulates, for the first time, “evidence” of taekwondo’s modern, popular historical presentation. For example, he presents the *hwarang* myth,¹⁵ illustrates ancient Goguryeo paintings, and uses the stone carvings of the Silla “taekwondo warriors” in Gyeongju as proof of the existence of “ancient taekwondo” (Lee 1971). In addition, Lee (1971) claims that taekwondo originated from *subakdo* (empty-handed fighting) and *taekkyeon*. Some elements of Lee’s claims, such as the stone carvings of the Silla taekwondo warriors, are no longer included in the modern portrayal of taekwondo’s history by the WTF because their connection with taekwondo has been thoroughly debunked. As Kim (1990) points out, for example, rather than representing “taekwondo warriors,” the stone carvings symbolize the fearsome Buddhist temple guardians commonly found at the entrances of East Asian Buddhist temples. Incidentally, despite the general rejection of the warriors as proof of taekwondo’s ancient history, the organizers of the 2011 Taekwondo World Championships in Gyeongju nevertheless decided to depict the warriors as their main point of attraction when advertising for the games. The popular myths created by Lee and others continue to prevail, and are often invoked to suit certain agendas. In an interview in 2002, Lee confessed his role in fabricating taekwondo’s history: “I am one of those who wrote that in a book. To be frank, we did not have much to come out with.”¹⁶

Early Korean martial arts literature is conveniently phrased “taekwondo literature” by many instructors and academics. However, this is not an accurate title because the name “taekwondo” was not universally recognized at that time, and most of the early authors thought of their martial art as something else. The evidence presented in these manuals provides solid proof of taekwondo’s origins in karate. With the exception of a few photographs in Hwang Kee’s 1949 text, none of the stances, striking tech-

15. Refer to the explanation on page 157 above.

16. “Kukkiwon Vice President Chong Woo Lee’s Shocking Confession of Olympic Competition Result Manipulation!” interview by Yook Sung-chul, *Shin Dong-A*, April 2002, http://tkdreform.com/yook_article.pdf.

niques with the hands, striking points, blocking techniques, or kicking techniques displayed in these manuals are noticeably different from the techniques displayed in earlier karate publications. The photographs and descriptive content in these books are either identical, or almost identical, to the content of earlier karate publications. In addition, the range of techniques presented is almost exactly the same. If one were to display, for instance, some *quanfa* stances, strikes, or kicking techniques in these manuals, a host of similarities would, of course, be evident, but one would also be able to identify some distinct differences in body posture and the variety of techniques. Moreover, none of the photographs presented by Choi Hong Hi, or any of the other authors in their publications, resemble *taekkyeon* techniques, in terms of the subject's posture or the description given. This evidence suggests that taekwondo techniques were identical to karate techniques during the time when these photographs were taken.

The Significance of Forms in Karate and Early Taekwondo

Providing an overview of the forms used in early taekwondo and comparing these forms with patterns used in karate is helpful in establishing and verifying taekwondo's lineage. This is because forms training was the main training activity used before the introduction of full-contact sparring tournaments for taekwondo in 1962 (Moenig, Cho, and Song 2012).

1) The Evolution of Training Activities

By the end of the nineteenth century, the only surviving game-like fighting activities in Korea were *ssireum* and *taekkyeon*. Traditional bare-handed martial arts had long before ceased to exist and were forgotten. *Ssireum* was a wrestling art, and *taekkyeon* was a folk game-like activity where use of the legs was emphasized. In the past, both *ssireum* and *taekkyeon* were often performed as recreational folk games by commoners during festivities, and lacked any formal characteristics in terms of organization, training content and method, or rules and regulations. General formalities such as dress code, rank, and designated training sites were also absent (Cho, Moe-

nig, and Nam 2012). Of most relevance to this study is the fact that both activities lacked any kind of forms training,¹⁷ which is the hallmark of traditional Chinese and Japanese martial arts. Forms training was neither a part of *ssireum* nor of *taekkyeon*, although the concept of *kata* was known to Koreans because of the incorporation of judo and kendo into the Japanese colonial education system of Korea in 1914 (Capener 2005). However, the forms (*kata*) training of the classical Japanese martial arts (*bugei*), and its modern offsprings, judo and kendo, was fundamentally different than the forms training of Chinese martial arts, Okinawa-based Japanese karate, and modern Korean martial arts. Forms training in Japanese martial arts represented a set of prearranged exercises performed with a partner, whereas the other arts understood *kata*, or forms, mostly as a “solo performance” by a practitioner (Friday and Humitake 1997, 102-103).

Before the introduction of karate *kata* 形/型 (*hyeong* in Korean; form)¹⁸ with the opening of the first *dangsudo* (karate) school by Yi Won-guk in 1944, this kind of systemized forms training had not existed on the Korean peninsula. Furthermore, there is no evidence that the term *hyeong* was used in connection with Korean martial arts any earlier than this.¹⁹

Karate teachings in Okinawa were secretive and instructions were individually transmitted from master to disciple. Moreover, karate was only a collection of a number of different fighting techniques and forms (*kata*),

17. Modern *taekkyeon* started to incorporate forms and formal characteristics during the early 1980s, and was modeled after other existing martial arts (Jeong 2005). Nowadays, *taekkyeon* has twenty-four forms, called *bonttae boegi*.

18. According to Friday and Humatake (1997), when describing *kata*, the traditional Japanese *bugei* and modern judo generally use the character “形,” whereas karate (and traditional taekwondo) mostly use the character “型.” The former, “[it] is argued, better represents the freedom to respond and change—albeit within a pattern essential to success in combat . . . [while the latter] implies a rigidity and constraint inappropriate to martial training [according to *bugei* philosophy]” (Friday and Humitake 1997, 107).

19. The only surviving martial arts manuals of earlier periods in Korea are the China-based *Muye jebo* 武藝諸譜 (A Compendium of Several Martial Arts) (1598) and *Muye dobo tongji* 武藝圖譜通志 (Comprehensive Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts) (1759). Both books use the term *bo* 譜 to describe series of illustrations intended as training guides (see C. Bak 2007).

which varied from school to school without any standard curriculum. Only after its introduction to Japan did karate develop structure and a consistent method of instruction (Hassell 2007). This new structure was modeled after the system already being used in judo and kendo at that time (Madis 2003). *Kata* training—a solo performance by a practitioner—had been the main focus of karate training in Okinawa. However, during the 1930s, after its introduction to Japan, prearranged partner exercises (*yaksoku kumite* 約束組手 in Japanese)²⁰ modeled on the training methods of existing Japanese martial arts were added to karate's training routine (Hassell 2007, 44; Bittmann 1999, 127). During these exercises, at their most basic level, the student attacks the opponent with a straight punch, and the opponent is supposed to defend him/herself with a block, and then counterattack. The same kinds of exercises still exist in present-day taekwondo under the name *yaksok daeryeon* 約束對鍊 (prearranged sparring). These kinds of exercises represented the pre-stage for free sparring.

In judo and kendo, all training activities are geared toward free sparring. However, Funakoshi only reluctantly introduced free non-contact sparring to the daily training routine of karate during the mid-1930s. Despite these modernizations, Funakoshi, and many other early karate masters, maintained an emphasis on forms during training (Funakoshi [1935] 1973). A majority of the first Korean taekwondo instructors also followed this practice. However, the main focus of taekwondo training changed from forms exercises to sparring-related exercises with the introduction of full-contact competitions during the 1960s. This change signaled the start of taekwondo's evolution into a martial art in its own right, distinct from karate (Moenig 2011; Moenig, Cho, and Song 2012). Forms training has nevertheless maintained its importance among many taekwondo practitioners, especially those not wishing to engage in sparring. Additionally, mastery of the different forms continues to be a requirement of passing belt grade promotion tests.

20. Also called *kihon kumite* 基本組手 (basic sparring).

2) Forms Training in Taekwondo

Early taekwondo philosophy inherited a focus on lethal self-defense from karate. The concept of “one blow, certain death” (*ikken hissatsu* 一拳必殺 in Japanese) was an essential characteristic of traditional karate philosophy, which rejected full-contact sparring. Since many masters upheld the belief that one strike could kill an opponent, they considered full-contact sparring too dangerous and, therefore, insisted on forms training as a necessary substitute. This attitude was also adapted by many of the early practitioners of taekwondo (Choi 1965; Son and Clark 1968).

Further evidence of the importance placed on forms training by Korean authors is the fact that, in almost all of their books, illustrations and instructions of forms make up more than half the entire content. Added to this, a majority of the forms illustrated in the Korean books analyzed for this study also resemble those in the photographs of Funakoshi's orthodox Shotokan karate *kata*. Their descriptive content and names are also similar to those of Funakoshi's. When Funakoshi brought these forms from Okinawa to Japan during the 1920s, he modified some, renamed most, and invented a few of his own. Funakoshi grouped the forms into the Shorinryu 少林流 and Shoreiryu 昭靈流, named after the two most well-known styles of karate in Okinawa (Hassell 2007; Bittmann 1999).²¹ Given the well documented origins and history of the karate *kata*, summarized above, it would be fanciful to suggest that any of these forms existed in any traditional or indigenous Korean martial art prior to their introduction from Japan.

As a majority of the Korean taekwondo leaders studied Shotokan karate, it seems likely that the forms of other karate styles played a minor role in early Korean martial arts teachings. However, this assumption cannot be concluded with certainty because all other *ryu* (“school” or “style”) practiced a number of the same forms as Funakoshi.²² In addition, two of

21. See also the forms in Funakoshi ([1957] 1973, 35-208). Bittmann (1999) contends that the distinction between the two schools only came about due to misspellings and differences in dialect.

22. The other *ryu* usually kept the old Okinawan names.

the *gwan* founders also had connections to Shitoryu and Shudokan karate (see Fig. 1).

In the period between Korea's liberation from Japan in 1945 and the 1960s, the original forms naturally changed as the art was taught to the next generation. Furthermore, Choi Hong Hi created his own forms, called the "Changheon School," although these were still heavily influenced by the techniques and style of karate *kata*. In Choi's 1958 publication, only five forms are mentioned and partly illustrated (123-288), but in his 1965 book he mentions 20 forms (174-215). For the most part, however, Choi's forms were only used by the Odogwan, which he had established in the military. Other schools continued to use Funakoshi's original Shotokan *kata*, as displayed in the manuals of the other *gwan*.

Some *gwan* also developed other forms over the years. For example, Son Duk Sung invented forms that he called "Kuk Mu" (Gungmu) *hyeong* (Son and Clark 1968). No new forms were as influential as Choi's *hyeong*, however. For example, although the Korea Taesudo Association mostly used Funakoshi's karate *kata* to test students for their belt exams during the 1960s, they did also test some of Choi's *hyeong* (listed in Kang and Lee 1999, 45-46).

After Choi's differences with the South Korean regime, and break from the taekwondo world during the second half of the 1960s, the KTA developed the Palgwae *pumsae*, which were used from 1967 to 1971.²³ The Palgwae *pumsae* specified the rankings of color belts. Finally, in 1971, the modern Taegeuk *pumsae* were introduced, which are still used today. In addition, during the same period, the KTA also developed new forms for black-belt (*dan*) testing. The stances in these forms are usually shorter than in karate, but the karate influence is still visible. Lee Chong Woo claimed that, in association with other "masters who taught Karate," he played a "central role," in developing these forms.²⁴

The Taegeuk *pumsae* are only used by schools affiliated with the

23. There was no earlier use of the term *pumsae* in martial arts to describe forms.

24. "Kukkiwon Vice President Chong Woo Lee's Shocking Confession of Olympic Competition Result Manipulation!," interview by Yook Sung-chul, *Shin Dong-A*, April 2002, http://tkdreform.com/yook_article.pdf.

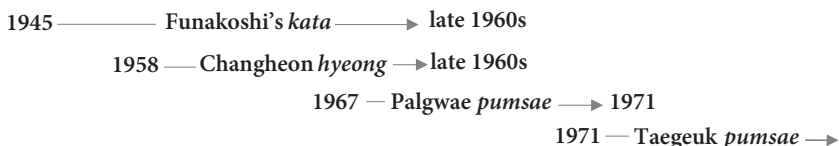


Figure 3. Timeline for the general use of forms in taekwondo schools.

Source: Moenig (2012, 68-74).

Note: Many schools kept using several different sets of forms throughout this general time line.

WTF, which promulgates the Olympic taekwondo style of competition.

Other smaller organizations, such as Choi Hong Hi's International Taekwondo Federation(s) still use the Changheon *hyeong*, and Hwang Kee's organizations still mostly use Funakoshi's *kata*.

3) Discussion of Forms in the Literature

The early Korean martial arts manuals all focus on Funakoshi's conventional *kata*, which he renamed during the early 1930s. According to Funakoshi ([1935] 1973, 35):

The names of the *kata* have come down to us by word of mouth . . . many of which had ambiguous meanings . . . Since karate is a Japanese martial art, there is no apparent reason for retaining these unfamiliar and in some cases unclear names of Chinese origin.

Funakoshi wanted to distance himself from his roots in Chinese and Okinawan martial arts so that karate could gain acceptance as a "Japanese martial art." A similar process occurred later with the introduction of karate to Korea, when Korean leaders increasingly tried to distance themselves from their roots in karate.

Appendix 2 lists the *kata* featured in Funakoshi's *Karate-do Kyohan: The Master Text* ([1935] 1973), a revised edition of his 1935 manual. Appendix 2 also displays the original Okinawan names for *kata*, as well as the terms modified by Funakoshi and first introduced in this book, and the *kata* names used in the Korean literature. In some cases, such as the Tai-

kyoku, Heian, and Tekki *kata*, Korean authors changed the transliteration of the Chinese characters from Japanese to Korean. In other instances, the Japanese pronunciation was kept, but spelled in Hangeul (Korean alphabet). Generally speaking, the Korean *gwan* lacked standardized language or curricula. Appendix 3 provides a detailed list of forms described in some of the early Korean manuals.²⁵

Hwang's 1949 manual, *Hwasudo gyobon*, was the only work to feature a non-karate form (145-146) in addition to Funakoshi's standard *kata* (82-143). This form was a Chinese form that Hwang called the "Sorim Janggwon 少林長拳" ("Shaolin Long Fist"). This term is frequently used in Chinese martial arts and broadly describes a northern Shaolin *wushu* 武術 ("martial art"; or literally, "skill") style. Hwang displays only three photographs while describing this form, which are shown in Figure 4. Hwang's stances look out of balance in these photographs, suggesting Hwang's limited knowledge and likely lack of formal training in Chinese martial arts.

Chinese forms are not mentioned in Hwang's next publication. In *Dangsudo gyobon* (Hwang 1958, 68-163), Hwang only illustrates some of Funakoshi's Shorim School patterns and just one form from the Shorei School. Only in his 1970 book, *Subakdo daegam*, does Hwang again mention, next to Funakoshi's forms, two Chinese forms, the Taegeukkwon 太



Figure 4. The Sorim Janggwon form by Hwang Kee.

Source: Hwang (1949, 145-146, 151).

25. See a comprehensive list in Moenig (2012, 72-74).

極拳 (Taijiquan in Chinese) and the Sorim Janggwon (Hwang 1970, 604-622, 628).

In his early works, Hwang frequently used the original Okinawan Chinese characters to describe Funakoshi's forms. However, occasionally, he wrote the Japanese pronunciation in Hangeul, or transliterated the terms into Korean. Hwang's confusion could be the result of his lack of formal training and education in karate. Later, when Hwang promoted his art in the United States and overseas, he deliberately concealed the Japanese origins of many of the forms that he taught, while also claiming credit for their invention or introduction into Korea. For example, many *dangsudo* instructors, and Hwang's son, still claim that Hwang brought the Pyeongan *hyeong* back from China (Hancock 2009).

Conclusion

Choi Hong Hi was the most important figure in taekwondo during the late 1950s and 1960s, though his leading 1965 publication, *Taekwondo: The Art of Self-Defence*, looks, to a large degree, like a copy of Nishiyama Hidetaka's earlier 1960 book, *Karate: The Art of "Empty Hand" Fighting*. Hwang Kee, in his 1949 and 1958 publications, was the only Korean author to show any differences between Korean martial arts and contemporary karate. For example, he incorporated some of Funakoshi's very early Okinawan karate techniques into his style. Hwang admitted to having studied karate using books, and some of the stances that he displays resemble stances right out of Funakoshi's earlier 1925 publication. Hwang showed a great deal of interest in other martial arts, and incorporated a Chinese martial art form in his first publication in 1949, although this was not reflected in his later 1958 book. He might have come into contact with Chinese martial arts when he worked for the railway in Manchuria, or he might have learned the pattern from a student of the YMCA Gwon-beopbu, where some students had a little knowledge of *quanfa*. However, Hwang ultimately relied on the styles of Japanese karate.

Even though several leaders of the early *gwan* published nothing tan-

gible, some of their accomplished students authored manuals. These publications provide visual and written evidence of the training activities of four of the original five *gwan*. However, no significant difference from karate is reflected in any of the taekwondo literature presented by these individuals. Each publication contains between two and three hundred pages, often with hundreds of illustrations. Of all the forms presented in these publications, only one is a *quanfa* form, and only three photographs exist of this particular form. The illustrational and descriptive content of these early books greatly resembles karate. Furthermore, an analysis of the early publications reveals that the main training activity used in the early taekwondo schools was forms training, and that a majority of this training content consisted of Funakoshi's *kata*. After a comprehensive consideration of the existing literature, this study concludes that early taekwondo was largely a product of Funakoshi's Shotokan karate.

The few *taekkyeon* elements—such as the inside-out-kick—that exist in modern taekwondo are not displayed in any of the early manuals. These elements were likely introduced to the technical body of taekwondo at a much later time. Rather, early taekwondo techniques, curriculum, terminology, dress, and formalities were practically identical to karate. Unique techniques, training methods, and a purpose, distinct from karate, only started to develop with the introduction of full-contact competitions during the 1960s. Taekwondo forms and terminology also changed during this same period, as the establishment increasingly sought to conceal taekwondo's origins in karate.

This study concludes by suggesting a revised portrayal of taekwondo's history. Further investigations on the disputed origins of taekwondo will provide an arena for more accurate and historically evidenced research, thereby resulting in a greater understanding of taekwondo.

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Appendix 1. Sample of a Comparison of Kicking Techniques Described and Illustrated in Early Karate and Taekwondo Publications

Nishiyama's Karate (1960)	Choi's Taekwondo (1965)	Cho's Korean Karate (1968)
Basic Kicking Techniques		
Front kick		
Front kick (p. 121)	Front snap kick (p. 81)	Front snap kick (p. 122)
	(Choi shows also as groin kick with instep, p. 81)	(Presents thrust-kick as variation)
Push kick (primitive)		
Front thrust kick (p. 121)	Checking kick (p. 97)	Front-pushing kick (p. 124)
Roundhouse kick (with ball of foot, not instep)		
Roundhouse kick (p. 129)	Turning kick (p. 82)	Roundhouse snap kick (p. 207)
	(Cho presents "thrust kick" and "short kick" as variation pp. 208-209)	
Side kick		
Side kick (p. 124)	Side-thrusting kick (p. 84)	Side-rising kick (p. 158)
	(Cho presents side "side thrust kick" and "rising-heel kick" as variation, pp. 159-160)	
Side-rising kick		
Leg swinging Part of stretching (p. 41)	Side-rising kick (p. 95)	Side limbering-up kick (p. 157)
Back kick		
Back kick (p. 127)	Back-thrusting kick (p. 85)	Back kick (p. 240)
Spinning-back kick		
Absent	Reverse-turning kick (p. 88)	Hook kick (p. 234)
Crescent kick (outside-in motion)		
Crescent kick block (p. 139)	Crescent kick (p. 96)	Crescent kick (p. 241)
Crescent kick (inside-out motion)		
Crescent kick block (p. 139)	Hooking kick (p. 97)	Outer-edge-crescent kick (p. 244)
'Primitive' Axe kick		
Leg swinging Part of stretching (p. 41)	Front rising kick (p. 95)	Front-limbering-up kick (p. 121)
Hook kick		
Absent	Absent	Hook kick (p. 235)
	(Cho treats the hook-kick as a variation of the spinning-back-kick and uses the same name.)	

Source: Moenig (2012, 82-91).

Note: The bold letter names are common modern names.

See photographs and more comparisons in Moenig (2012, 82-91).

Appendix 2. Funakoshi's 13 Shorinryu 少林流 and 6 Shoreiryu 昭靈流 *Kata* in Karate-do Kyohan^a

Used in Okinawa	Used in Okinawa	Changed by Funakoshi	Japanese pronunciation	Hangeul	Korean pronunciation
...	...	太極	Taikyoku 1-3 (introduced by Funakoshi)	태극/기조/기본	Taegeuk/ <i>gijo/gibon</i> ^b
平安	Pinan	平安 (unchanged)	Heian 1-5	평안	Pyeongan
バッサイ	Passai	拔塞	Bassai	밧사이	Bassai
クーサンクー or 公相君	Kusanku or Kosokun	観空	Kwanku (Kanku)	공산군	Gongsanggun
ワンシウ	Wanshu	燕飛	Empi (Enpi)	엔피	Enpi
チントウ	Chinto	岩鶴	Gankaku	간카쿠	Gankaku
十手	Jutte or Jitte	十手 (unchanged)	Jutte or Jitte	잡테/십수	Jitde/Sipsu
半月	Seisan	半月 (unchanged)	Hangetsu	한갯츠/반월	Hangetcheu/Banwol
チイハンチ, チイファンチ, or 騎馬	Naihanchi, Naifanchi or Kibadachi	鉄騎	Tekki 1-3	철기	Cheolgi
ジオン	Jion	慈恩	Jion	지온	Jion
...	...	天の方	Ten-no-kata ^c (developed by Funakoshi)

Source: Moenig (2012, 70).

^a See Funakoshi ([1935] 1973, 35-208) and compare with Bittmann (1999, 101). According to Bittmann, it is customary for the old Okinawan forms, which can be written using a number of different Chinese characters, to be written in katakana. Often several names for the old Okinawan kata exist, probably as a result of dialects and different usage of Chinese characters. Likewise, many different versions of romanization exist across the literature.

^b The term *taegeuk* 太極 is also used in Chinese martial arts, as in *taiji*, but there is no direct relationship to karate *kata*. The modern taekwondo forms are also called the Taegeuk *pumsae*, but they are also not related to Funakoshi's forms or Chinese forms. In addition, Koreans also call Funakoshi's Taegeuk forms *gijo* (basic) or *gibon* (standard) forms.

^c It is a *kumite* 組手 form (sparring form), probably developed around 1941. Therefore, it is not in Funakoshi's 1935 first edition, but in *Karate-do nyumon* (1943). Not mentioned in the Korean literature.

Appendix 3. Sample of Forms Described and/or Illustrated in Early Taekwondo Literature

Forms	Hwang Kee (1949), founder of Mudeokkwan	Choe Song-nam (1955), member of Cheongdogwan	Bak Jeol-hui (1958), member of YMCA Gweonbeopbu and founder of Gandeogwan
Funakoshi's 13 Shorinryu and 6 Shoreiryu <i>kata</i> in <i>Karate-do Kyohan: The Master Text</i>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pyeongan 1-5 (Heian 1-5, written in Chinese characters. All other forms are written in Hangeul, accompanied by Japanese pronunciation characters). 2. Naihantchi 1-3 <i>dan</i> (Tekki 1-3) 3. Jitte 4. Bassai 5. Jjindo (Gankaku) (82-143) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heian 1-5 2. Bassai 3. Kibadachi <i>shodan</i> (Tekki 1) 4. Tekki 2 5. Jutte 6. Gongsanggun (Gwankeu) 7. Jion (all written in Chinese characters, 57-192) 	<p>Uses Chinese characters for the following forms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gibon <i>hyeong</i> 1-5^a (Taikyoku) 2. Heian 1-5 3. Kibadachi <i>shodan</i> (Tekki 1) 4. Jutte 5. Nohai (written in Korean; Rohai is the Okinawan name, renamed by Funakoshi to Meikyo; not mentioned in <i>Karate-do Kyohan: The Master Text</i> (41-117). <p>Bak mentions a variety of other forms by name^b (39-40).</p>
		Dando <i>hyeong</i> (192-210), probably developed by Choe ^c	Jeongchi 1 <i>hyeong</i> (67-71), probably developed by Bak or his instructor Yun Byeong-in
<i>Quanfa</i> form	Sorim Janggwon (144-154)		

Source: Moenig (2012, 72-74).

Note: The original Japanese pronunciation as used by Funakoshi is indicated in brackets.

^a The Gibon *hyeong* are similar to the Taegeuk *hyeong* or the Taikyoku *kata* in Shotokan karate, but there were originally only three. Funakoshi developed them based on the Heian *kata*. He simplified them and thought of them as a preparation for Heian. Only the first one of Bak's forms, Gibon *hyeong* 1, is similar to Taikyoku *shodan* 1. The All Japan Karate-do Goju-kai Karate-do Association (founded by the leaders of the Gojuryu) developed five Kihon *kata* based on Funakoshi's, but only left the first one unchanged. Bak also shows five forms. However, forms 2, 4, and 5 seemed to be modified, possibly by Bak's teacher Yun Byeong-in.

^b Bak mentions several Chinese *quanfa* forms by name among about fifty karate *kata*.

^c The Dando *hyeong* is a knife form, but no knife forms exist in karate.