

Brief History of Tang Soo Do:

The history of Korean martial arts will never be completely known, due to the destruction of many ancient documents of the Korean people by occupying armies over its history. However, most Tang Soo Do historians agree that the art has its origins roughly two thousand years ago at the time known as the era of the Three Kingdoms.

During the first century BC, the modern Korean peninsula was divided into three kingdoms. Koguryo (37 BC-668 AD), located in the north, was the largest. In the south were the two smaller kingdoms of Paekche (18 BC-660 AD) and Shilla (57 BC-935 AD). The era of the Three Kingdoms lasted for six centuries, during which Korean arts and culture flourished. Since the kingdoms fought continuously with each other, as well as outside invaders, the practice of martial arts was very important. Each of the Kingdoms had their own traditions and techniques and there are many statues and murals from that period depicting techniques that resemble modern Tang Soo Do. This was most evident in the artwork from the Shilla Kingdom depicting the art of Hwa Rang Do

During the 7th century, the Shilla dynasty joined forces with the Tang Dynasty of China to overthrow Paekche and Koguryo. They succeeded, but then the Tang betrayed the Shilla and tried to conquer the Korean peninsula. However, the Shilla repulsed the Tang forces and it was Shilla who ended up unifying the three kingdoms for the next three centuries. Central to this victory were the Hwa Rang warriors of Shilla. Hwa Rang translated means “flowering manhood” and referred to the warriors dedicated to the Shilla emperor’s defense. These warriors were devoted to perfecting themselves in all ways and their martial art was known as Hwa Rang Do. The Hwa Rang warriors had a five- part code of honor that was defined approximately 1800 years ago:

- Be loyal to one’s Country
- Obey one’s Parents, Elders and Teachers
- Honor Friendship, including Brothers and Sisters
- Do not retreat in battle
- In killing, choose with justice and honor

This code clearly forms the philosophical basis of the Ten Articles of faith, which are adopted by all true Tang Soo Do practitioners. Although the code has been adapted to reflect modern culture, the meaning remains, providing a clear path for the students of Tang Soo Do.

Shilla was overthrown by the warlord Wang Kun in 918 AD, establishing the Koryo Dynasty (918 AD-1392 AD), from which the modern name of Korea derives. During this dynasty, martial arts was an important part of the military and social fabric of the Korean people. The art was derived from the hand and foot techniques of Hwa Rang Do and was known as Soo Bahk (Hard Hand). Soo Bahk Do was practiced not only by the military, but also by civilians as a means to improve physical and mental

health. As the influence and practice of Soo Bahk Do grew, it became the national sport, with the royal family organizing public demonstrations by Soo Bahk Do Masters and national competitions.

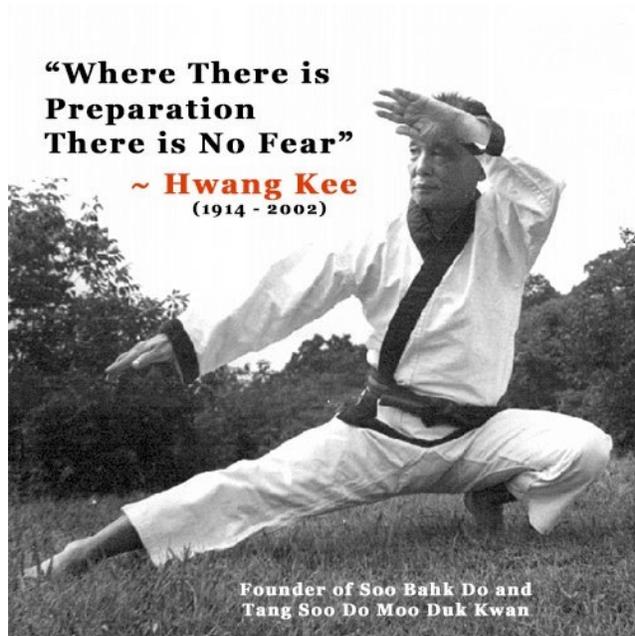
The Shilla Dynasty gave way to the Yi Dynasty (1392 AD-1910 AD). The Yi dynasty initially encouraged more emphasis on literature, music and the arts and did not actively support wide spread practice of the martial arts. In fact, the royal house generally looked down on the discipline, considering it unrefined. During this period, the practice of Soo Bahk was fractured into small schools, with no central organization. Because of this, little growth was realized in the martial arts. However, as military pressure from China and Japan mounted in the 16th and 17th centuries, the practice of martial science and martial arts was reinvigorated and, by order of the royal house, many manuals depicting military skills and training regimens were commissioned. The most notable of these was the “Mooye Dobo Tongji” (Comprehensive Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts) commissioned by King Jungjo and written by Yi Duk-moo and Park Je-gi in 1790.

The Mooye Dobo Tongji describes and illustrates 23 fighting system including various weapons disciplines for mounted cavalry and foot soldiers as well as techniques for hand to hand combat known as Kwon Bop. According to the authors, Kwan Bop incorporated hand and foot techniques derived from the older Soo Bahk style and Chinese Tai Chi. It was from the interpretation of this text by Grand Master Hwang Kee that the ancestral martial art of Korea was revived in the modern art of Tang Soo Do.

The Japanese invaded the Korean peninsula in 1909 and the Yi Dynasty fell in 1910. During the Japanese occupation the practice of martial arts was forbidden. Many of the texts and manuals regarding the Korean heritage, including the martial arts were destroyed. Soo Bahk Do and other styles were practiced in secret, but no written documents of the arts were made. It was not until after the end of the Second World War that modern Tang Soo Do is born under the guidance of its Great Master, Hwang Kee.

Grand Master Hwang Kee;

Founder of Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan



Grand Master Hwang began his martial arts at the age of 7 when he witnessed one man defeat seven men in a street fight during a festival in his home town of Jong Dan, in the Kyong Ki province of Korea; which is currently located in the DMZ. He was told that the gentleman was an expert in Tae Kyun, a native Korean martial art style that was practiced in secrecy, as the Japanese; who occupied Korea at that time, had forbidden the Korean people to practice martial arts. Grand Master Hwang followed the man home and spent many nights watching him train; faithfully copying what he observed. He eventually approached the gentleman about training, but was refused because of his age. Nevertheless, he continued to observe and train on his own, gaining great proficiency through hard work.

Grand Master Hwang graduated high school in 1935, an accomplishment much rarer than college graduation these days, and took a job with the national railroad in Manchuria. While working there, he became acquainted with Master Yang Kuk Jin, a Kung Fu Master, and became his student for several years. Grand Master Hwang studied Stance, Striking and Conditioning under Master Yang, writing down everything he learned and never missing training. After 1946, he was no longer able to train with Master Yang due to China becoming a communist nation, but what he learned would always be an important part of Tang Soo Do.

During his time with the railroad, Grand Master Hwang had access to a large variety of books, as every railroad station had a library. He eventually became a self-educated expert in astronomy and philosophy. He also came across the books of Funakoshi Gichin; the great Shotokan master. Grand Master Hwang diligently studied the books; learning the Pin ahn (Pyong ahn) forms, the Bassai forms, and many others,

Grand Master Hwang Kee

which became the core of the Moo Duk Kwan (school of Martial Virtue) style. Grand Master Hwang then adapted these forms to emphasize offensive and defensive hip movement, which he felt was essential to effective martial arts execution. Grand Master Hwang now had an extensive body of knowledge, both self-taught and formal, that he had developed into a system which he was confident would create strong, disciplined martial artists. But, he would not be able to realize his dream until the end of the Second World War.

The Japanese occupation of Korea ended with the Second World War, and the Korean people were, once again, able to teach and practice martial art. On November 9th, 1945; his 31st birthday, Grand Master Hwang opened his first school, calling his style Hwa Soo Do (Way of the Flower Hand) Moo Duk Kwan, in respect to the ancient art of Hwa Rang Do (Way of the Flowering Man), the art of the Shilla dynasty of Korea. He later changed it to Tang Soo Do (Way of the China Hand) Moo Duk Kwan to honor his Chinese Master and to acknowledge the important influence of Okinawan Karate; which was becoming increasingly popular in Korea. His first school was opened in a railway station, as he still worked for the railroad, and every station had an exercise room which could be used for training. Although his first school failed, he persevered and eventually there was a Moo Duk Kwan Do Jang in every railroad station, and the Moo Duk Kwan was known around Korea as the "Railroad Kwan". During the Korean War (1950-1952) the growth of the school was stopped and Grand Master Hwang was forced to move from Seoul. At the end of the war, he returned to Seoul and Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan flourished, allowing Grand Master Hwang to lease a building from the government to open a permanent headquarters for the Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan, the Joong Ahn (central) Dojang.

Grand Master Hwang retired from the railroad in 1956 to devote himself full time to the teaching and study of martial art. In 1957, He discovered the MooYe Dobo Tongji (The Comprehensive Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts). Written in 1790, the Mooye Dobo Tongji described the Korean art of Soo Bahk Do (Way of the Hard Hand). The book was written in Chinese; the language of scholars at that time, and was full of illustrations detailing the Hand, Foot and Weapons techniques of Soo Bahk Do. Grand Master Hwang would spend the rest of his life interpreting the text and the illustrations to reconstruct the Korean ancestral style and incorporate it in Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan. The devotion to traditional Korean arts and the synthesis of these arts with the other great martial arts styles of Asia, makes Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan the richest, most diverse and effective style to date. It is truly the first "Mixed Martial Art".

Along with translation of the Mooye Dobo Tongji, Grand Master Hwang spent the last part of his life working tirelessly to maintain the integrity of Korean martial arts and extend them to the international community. He sent his students, including Lee Kang Uk and Kim Ssang Soo, around the world to teach the discipline of Tang Soo Do. He and his senior students personally trained UN military personnel, such as Carlos (Chuck) Norris, in the hope that they would take Tang Soo Do and its principals back to their countries. His own son, Kwan Jang Nim Hwang Hyun Chul is the head of the U. S.

Grand Master Hwang Kee

Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan Federation to this day. Spreading martial arts practices to other cultures and countries was a very radical idea at the time. Perhaps it was because he had seen so much war in his life, but it was his dream that international conflict and the personal conflict from which it came, could be ended by the teaching of Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan. Ironically, he met the most resistance for this idea in his native country.

Around 1960, the Korean Government began pressuring all martial art schools to organize as the Tae Soo Do (later called Tae Kwon Do) association under the control of the Korean Athletic association. At that time, nearly 70 percent of the martial artists in Korea were members of the Moo Duk Kwan. Further, all the military and law enforcement personnel were trained in Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan. Wanting to limit Grand Master Hwang's influence, the government only offered 3 seats out of twenty one on the association governing board to the Moo Duk Kwan. Although he wanted to work with the government, Grand Master Hwang felt that this level of representation for his students was unfair. He was also concerned with martial art being organized under the control of the Athletic association, making it a sport, rather than an educational pursuit; corrupting its core message of self-discipline to end conflict in one's life. He, therefore, declined to join the new association. The government immediately removed, without explanation, all Moo Duk Kwan instructors from Military bases and police academies. They further tried to revoke Grand Master Hwang's permit to operate his organization. They failed in front of the Supreme Court of Korea to do so, but they continued to persecute Grand Master Hwang and his students. Eventually, confused by the issues and tired of the conflict, students joined the new Tae Kwon Do organization and the influence of the Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan diminished. But, Grand Master Hwang, never compromised his beliefs; in the face of physical attacks and slander regarding his personal character, he maintained the integrity of his vision of martial art as a vehicle of personal enlightenment and world peace.

To the day of his death, July 14, 2002, Grand Master Hwang worked tirelessly to refine his teaching system of Moo Duk Kwan, and to promote world unity. His countless innovations in martial art training and education are used throughout the martial art community to this day. More importantly, he left a core group of students, among them Grandmaster J. Seo, who understand that Grand Master Hwang meant for Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan to be a "Living Art", one that is constantly growing and evolving as new techniques and training methods are discovered, but, also, one that remains grounded in the immutable principles of loyalty to country, honoring your parents, elders and teachers, fighting for the right reasons and always finishing that fight. The legacy of Grandmaster Hwang Kee, like his art, is very much alive, with many Masters, Korean and international, returning to his vision of a world united by martial art and the core principles by which it is governed.

Grand Master Joseph H.Y. Seo: Founder of International Tae Kwon Do Tang Soo Do Federation



To see words like dedication, perseverance, courage and integrity personified, one only needs to step into Seo's Martial Arts Arvada location and see Grand Master J. Seo at work. His martial arts training are in the areas of Tae Kwon Do, Tang Soo Do and Hap Ki Do. He is currently a 7th Degree Black Belt in Tae Kwon Do and a 7th Degree Black Belt Grand Master Instructor in Tang Soo Do.

Born in Seoul Korea, Grand Master J. Seo came to this country in 1973 with his family. Residing in New York City, Grand Master J. Seo became a student of the highly respected martial artist Tiger Kim at the age of 8. Training alongside the famed "tiger twins", Seo was dedicated to martial arts from the beginning.

"Martial arts training began for me at a very young age, but the lessons I learned from my mother and father were certainly the foundation. I was taught to never give up, no matter the obstacle. I owe those traits first to my parents and secondly to Grand Master Tiger Kim (Kim Sang Soo)".

After attaining his first degree black belt at the age of 12, Grand Master J. Seo began working in Orange County, NY under Master Southerton in 1986. There he learned even more valuable lessons, particularly in the area of the martial arts business. As well, over the years, Grand Master J. Seo personal career as a martial artist is extensive. He has performed in numerous tournaments in both sparring and forms categories. In 1990,

Grand Master Joseph H.Y. Seo

1991 and 1992, he was a member of the USA Moo Duk Kwan team. He taught the NY Dutchess County Police Department and was the assistant instructor for West Point Military Academy. In 1998, he retired from competition to become a full time instructor and business owner.

Currently Grand Master J. Seo has promoted over 500 black belts who are recognized all over the country and operates three Seo's Martial Arts locations here in Colorado and four additional satellite schools on both the East and West Coasts.

"I am striving to make martial arts a positive force in the lives of children and adults. With the assistance of my immediate family and the extended family of Seo's Martial Arts I feel that this goal is very much within reach. I look forward each day to the commitment I have made here in Colorado and that is to have the best schools, with the best instructors and to make Seo's Martial Arts the best place to train in the art of Martial Art."

Grand Master Joseph H. Y. Seo's Moo Duk Kwan Lineage (Rupah):

Grand Master Hwang Kee	(Founder of Moo Duk Kwan)
Grand Master Lee Kang Uk	(Dan No. 70)
Grand Master Kim Sang Soo	(Dan No. 503)
Grand Master Hwang Hyun Chul	(Dan No. 509)
Master Donald Southerton	(Dan No. 19,192)
Grand Master Joseph H. Y. Seo	(Dan No. 29,369)

Lineage (Rupah):

One of the most important and unique features of Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan is the student's Rupah, which is Korean for "Lineage". The Rupah is kept by issuing each student a "Dan Number" when they achieve their Black Belt. The student now knows not only where the rank in their Dan testing class, but also, where they are in the history of Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan, providing a link back to the founder and to generations of Tang Soo Do practitioners yet to come. This helps them to understand that they are a small, but unique part of a proud history that is ever unfolding. Above is Grand Master Seo's Rupah. It is very important for a student to know and understand the Rupah of their instructor in order to honor him and his teachers, as well appreciate their own Tang Soo Do roots.