

The Meaning of Tang Soo Do

Literally translated the word **Tang**, means Tang Dynasty of China which reflects the shared cultural background between China and Korea (617-907 AD). **Soo** means hand, but it implies fist, punch, strike or defense, etc., and **Do** means way of life or art. Thus **Tang Soo Do** means the Korean classical martial art which legendarily was influenced by the Tang method of martial art. **The Way of the China Hand!**

Brief History

The exact origin of Tang Soo Do, as well as of any of the martial arts in general, is obscure though there are a number of historical theories. However, the most credible and traditional view is that martial arts originated not in any one country, but in almost all parts of the globe, as primitive people needed them.

The ancestral art of Korean Tang Soo Do can be traced back to the period of the three kingdoms. At that time, Korea was divided in to three kingdoms.

Koguryo was founded 37 BC in northern Korea. The Silla Dynasty was founded in 57 BC in the southeast peninsula, and Paekche was founded in 18 BC.

After a long series of wars, the Silla Dynasty united the three kingdoms in 668 AD. During this period of time, the primitive martial arts were very popular in warfare.

This is evidenced by mural paintings, ruins and remains, which depicted Tang Soo Do in those days.

Among the three kingdoms, the Silla Dynasty was most famous for its development of martial arts. A corps formed by young aristocrats who were called Hwa Rang Dan was the major group who developed those arts. These warriors were instrumental in unifying the peninsula as the new Silla Dynasty (668 AD – 935 AD), and furnished many of the early leaders of that dynasty. Most Korean martial arts trace their spiritual and technical heritage to this group. The names of some groups and arts reflect this, such as Hwa Rang Do or Hwa Soo Do. The ten creeds of Moo Duk Kwan Tang Soo Do, originated by Won Kwang, a monk, are part of their spiritual heritage.

The unified Silla Kingdom was overthrown by a warlord, Wang Kun, in 918 AD and a New Kingdom called Koryo lasted for 475 years. In 1392 AD the New Kingdom, Yi Dynasty succeeded and lasted about 500 years. Approximately a thousand-year period elapsed between the two dynasties. Tang Soo Do became very popular among the military society. However, most importantly, this art also became very popular with the general public. In those days it was called Kwon Bop, Tae Kyun, Soo Bahk, Tang Soo etc.

Tang Soo Do is both a hard and soft style, deriving its hardness in part from Soo Bahk and its soft flowing movements from the southern Chinese Tang systems. The very first complete martial arts book was written at this time. This book is called Mooyae Dobo Tongji. It was written in 1790 AD and contained illustrations that substantiate the theory that Soo Bahk Ki the formal name of Tang Soo Do, had quickly developed into a sophisticated art of combat techniques.

Modern History

The subsequent occupation of Korea by the Japanese military regime took place from 1909 to 1945. During this period, practicing and teaching of martial arts was restricted.

After World War II, 1945 this restriction was lifted. Several martial art training schools were erected at that time as follows:

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| Moo Duk Kwan | - | Hwang Kee |
| Chi Do Kwan | - | Kwai Byung, Yun |
| Chung Do Kwan | - | Duk Sung, Son |
| Song Moo Kwan | - | Byung Jik, No |
| Chang Moo Kwan | - | Nam Suk, Lee |
| Yun Moo Kwan | - | Sang Sup, Chun |

The man who developed Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan, Grandmaster Hwang Kee, is a martial arts prodigy, having mastered Soo Bahk at the age of 22. At that time, (1936) he traveled to northern China. There he encountered a Chinese variation of martial artistry called the Tang Method and developed what was to be known as Tang Soo Do Moo Kwan. It is a classical martial art, and its purpose is to develop ever aspect of the self, in order to create a mature personality who totally integrates his intellect, emotions and spirit. This total integration helps to create a person who is free from inner conflict and who can deal with the outside world in a mature intelligent, forthright and virtuous manner.

Besides the Soo Bahk Do Association's existence in Korea, there were various types of other martial arts called Kong Soo or Tae Soo. In 1965 all of these various systems were united into one organization, called the Korean Tae Kwon Do Association and the art was called Tae Kwon Do uniformly.

As a Korean national sport, Tae Kwon Do initiated a new era and instructors were dispatched throughout the world and international tournaments were held. In those days, Tang Soo Do and Tae Kwon Do were divided principally, with Tang Soo Do striving to remain as a traditional martial art while Tae Kwan Do held its world games and sports.