

Grandmaster Hwang Kee

Founder of Tang Soo Do (Soo Bahk Do) Moo Duk Kwan

November 9, 1914 - July 14, 2002



Born November 9, 1914 in Jang Dan, Kyong Ki province, Grandmaster Hwang Kee was destined to become a part of martial arts history, alongside names such as Jigoro Kano (1860 - 1938, founder of Judo), Gichin Funakoshi (1868 - 1957, father of modern karate) and Morihei Ueshiba (1883 - 1969, founder of Aikido). His father was a scholar who was awarded a special recognition by the last King of the Yi Dynasty. Before his son's birth he dreamt of a bright star (Sam Tae Song) and named the Grandmaster "Tae Nam", meaning "Starboy".

Often referred to as a "martial arts prodigy" the Grandmaster was widely acknowledged as a gifted martial artist, due in large part to his inquisitive nature and scholarly approach to the development and refinement of his art. It began at the age of seven, when he attended a traditional holiday festival and witnessed a confrontation where one man defeated seven or eight attackers using various martial techniques.

He followed the man to his home and a few days later began to observe the man practicing from a distance and imitated what he saw. Later, he approached the man and asked to be taught the techniques he witnessed. The man refused because of his young age. This did not end the Kwan Jang Nim's interest. He continued to observe the man training from afar, and practiced what he saw.

The Moo Duk Kwan Story

The Japanese Occupation - 1910 to 1945

It was a difficult time when the only martial arts allowed in Korea were Kendo and Judo. The Grandmaster studied and trained on his own from 1921 until 1936. In 1936, while working with the railroad in Manchuria, he was introduced to a Chinese master, Master Yang with whom he trained until his return to Seoul in August of 1937.

In 1939, he began work with the Cho Sun Railway Bureau. There he had a library with many books on martial arts, particularly Okinawan Karate. Through the books, he studied this art which later influenced Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan and is evidenced in the Pyung Ahn forms as well as Bassai and Kong Sang Kun.

The Development Period - 1945 - 1960

With the end of Japan's occupation, the Grandmaster was free to pursue the development of his art according to his vision. On November 9, 1945 he founded the **Moo Duk Kwan** and named his art **Hwa Soo Do** (art of the flowering hand). Unfortunately, it was not immediately popular so it struggled to gain and keep students. He later met Won Kuk Lee, the founder of Chung Do Kwan, whose art was Tang Soo Do. Lee had trained in Karate in Japan, was very successful and had many more students than the Moo Duk Kwan. Because Tang Soo Do had a more recognizable martial arts name, it was better received by the public. The Grandmaster decided to combine it with his Hwa Soo Do and what he learned from the Okinawan books. In 1947 he began teaching his new art of **Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan** to the public.

At the start of the Korean War in 1950 the development of the art was again disrupted until the war's end in 1953, when the Kwan Jang Nim returned to Seoul to continue his work. He leased his first commercial space in 1955 and it grew to be known as the legendary "**Joong Ang Do Jang**".

As the Moo Duk Kwan's popularity grew, more dojangs sprang up. The Moo Duk Kwan system was taught in schools, to the police and the military, both at the Naval & Air Force Academy of Korea and the Republic Of Korea Air Force Academy where the Grandmaster taught personally.

In 1957, Tang Soo Do Moo Duk Kwan was first introduced to U.S. servicemen. Classes were held at the U.S. 8th Army's Trent Gym in Yong San, Seoul. By 1960 it had spread to five other U.S. military bases which led to introduction of Tang Soo Do in the U.S. by returning servicemen.

1957 was a pivotal year in another respect. During his research, the Kwan Jang Nim discovered a 300 year-old Korean manuscript called the "**Moo Yei Do Bo Tong Ji**" that documented Korean martial techniques known as Soo Bahk. This was a fortunate find as his vision was to have a truly Korean martial art and a traditional Korean martial arts organization.

In Korea at that time there were only five original Kwans - **Moo Duk Kwan** (Hwang Kee), **Yeon Moo Kwan** (Yun, Kwei Byong), **YMCA Kwon Bup Bu** (Lee, Nam Suk), **Chung Do Kwan** (Shon, Duk Song), **Song Moo Kwan** (No, Byong Jik).

Ji Do Kwan, an offshoot of the Yeon Moo Kwan merged with the Moo Duk Kwan and on June 30, 1960 they were officially registered as the **Korean Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan Association**, with Grandmaster Hwang Kee as its head.

More Difficult Times - 1961 to 1966

1961 marked the beginning of another round of hardship for the Moo Duk Kwan. On May 16th, a military revolution led by Lt. General Chong Hee Park took place. The Grandmaster was removed as instructor for the ROK Air Force base and the national police, and was prohibited from publishing his monthly publication, **Moo Yei Si Bo**. Between 1961 and 1965, operation of the the Association became very difficult as the government exercised great political control over it.

In 1964 the Korean Tae Soo Do Association was formed, which in 1965 became the Korean Tae Kwon Do Association. Due to its political influences, the Tae Kwon Do group, led by its second President, General Choi, Hong Hee, tried to unify it with the Korean Soo Bahk Do Association. Kwan Jang Nim's organization was the largest of any martial arts system in Korea at the time. Grandmaster Hwang Kee agreed to discuss unification, but when it became clear that the move was designed to gain control over his organization, he ultimately refused. The result was a weakening of the Moo Duk Kwan as the Tae Kwon Do movement grew in strength, absorbing many Moo Duk Kwan members in the process.

In 1965 and again in 1966, the Kwan Jang Nim won two legal battles that would allow him to run his organization without interference and thereby work to rebuild his organization. As a testament to the Grandmaster's perseverance in the face of great adversity, Tang Soo Do (Soo Bahk Do) is today practiced in nearly 40 countries around the world.