

# Kumdo

## Korean Sword Fighting Art



*A text for learning the basic Korean vocabulary and beginning training techniques of Kumdo*

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Kumdo - Korean Sword Fighting Art – A text for learning the basic Korean vocabulary and beginning training techniques of Kumdo

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## **Preface**

### 2022 Update

First and foremost, many most sincere thanks to Master Park Yong Chon who embodies the philosophy of living ones art. His understanding of martial spirit is a transcendent one. During my training years with him, every move and word was perfect as far I could tell.

Second, I must likewise give great thanks to my dear friend Ahn Jeong Huan who patiently explained so much of the information contained in this book to me.

Third, so many thanks to all the great people in Jeonju Kumdoguan. They were all quite excellent and honorable people.

I've been gone from South Korea for more than 12 years now and moved from Jeonju to Nonsan city four years before that. Oh! I miss them all.

Finally, this short book is not an instructional manual, but rather just simply a vocabulary helper for English speaking beginning Kumdo students. I am no master! Far, far from it. Though I studied Kumdo at Jeonju Kumdoguan for several years, then in Beijing for a couple more years, and briefly Kendo in Tokyo, I'm still nothing more than a mediocre beginner.

That said, learning the basic vocabulary for Kumdo by itself is something of a challenge and it took a while for me to get the ABCs of just that alone. So, I thought I'd put together the notes I collected in Korea for this short book.

Any mistakes herein are mine and mine alone.

## INTRODUCTION – WHY STUDY KUMDO?

Kumdo is not simply a fighting art and sport. It is a way of life.

Kumdo is the Korean version of Japanese Kendo; it is different and the same. Just as Japanese Karate is an extension of Chinese Shaolin Kung Fu, so too Kumdo is related to Kendo.

KUMDO...

### IS A WAY TO LEARN MASTERY OF SELF

In Kumdo one trains very hard to attain goals. Just so, in life, one must work hard to succeed. In Kumdo one must be willing to learn and open to criticism. The ego must be subjugated to one's goals. Thus, Kumdo is a fight within the student - a fight to control one's "self" better. This "self" is the body, the mind and the spirit, which ultimately, are all one. The ego is a tyrant. When the ego is allowed to rule the mind and body, all parts become a slave to the ego. Learning an art requires letting go of the ego in order to be open to new perspectives. Is it better to think of one's self as knowing everything (inflated ego) or be humble and willing to learn new things? This is a battle that must be won by humility and open-mindedness or nothing is learned and student never progresses.

In competition, one either wins or loses. Just so is life. Kumdo practitioners must learn from mistakes and become stronger fighters from those lessons.

### IS LEARNING ABOUT OTHER PEOPLE

To compete effectively in Kumdo one must be able to learn about other people. Sometimes there is the luxury of time to study an opponent's strengths and weaknesses before the competition. Sometimes one must go through "fusion" learning – that is, on the spot during competition. To win one must study the opponent. Is he over-confident, or afraid, is he too aggressive or not aggressive enough? A million bits of data can be learned about an opponent even in a few seconds if the observer is perceptive.

### IS COURTESY

In Kumdo, everything must be right. Body, mind and spirit are one moving together. In Kumdo one learns courtesy. Dogs can fight. But, they cannot learn courtesy. They cannot control an attack. Learning how not to hurt someone is even more difficult than learning how to hurt someone. This kind of control is a uniquely human ability. Unfortunately, too many people never develop this skill. Good social skills are learned behaviors. Babies, for example cannot share. Sharing is a learned skill. In Kumdo, students train with others who have more and less skill. The student must be able to relate to each with modesty and respect.

### DEVELOPES CONCENTRATION AND AWARENESS

Kumdo students learn concentration ("*jitjune*"). They learn to relax in tense situations and remain focused when their environment may appear to consist of a confusing barrage of seemingly deadly attacks.

This ability to concentrate when the environment is fluid is also called “field independence.” Some people never learn internal control. They live reacting to external stimuli. In Kumdo one learns to focus on scoring while ignoring unessential data.

Likewise, in Kumdo one learns to be aware of subtle cues indicating the opponent’s intent. A Kumdo practitioner’s visual, auditory, and kinesthetic perceptions are enhanced. Telepathy is sometimes called “subtle cues interpreted intuitively.” Just so, Kumdo masters seem to be telepathic, that is, their awareness is so heightened that they can intuit what is coming long before it arrives.

This marriage of concentration and awareness is essential to good Kumdo play. One without the other is useless. Neurologically this is unimaginably complex. Motor skills interact with sensory perceptions on a millisecond by millisecond basis. The sword however cuts through any complexity and the truth is constantly revealed.

#### IS SELF DEFENSE

There are many self-defense aspects to Kumdo. Footwork, timing, single attacks, combinations, defenses, counterattacks, strategy and tactics are all learned and refined to the point where they become instinctual. More importantly, one learns when not to attack – but to wait and study the situation rather than rushing in out of fear or habit.

Kumdo attacks are lightning fast. But every move and breath must be coordinated with the opponents. Good Kumdo fighters know how to use feints and combinations that tie the opponent in knots. Extreme quickness is developed in both attack and defense.

In Kumdo one learns about timing. There is always a right time for attack. Masters are usually counter-fighters, because it is too easy for them to win just attacking. Their speed, feints and combinations are practically unstoppable.

Kumdo students learn how to win. One cannot win without attacking in sports or life. It takes effort, will and desire to win. It takes speed, forethought and timing. If your opponent gives you an opening, you must attack instantly.

If he does not give you an opening, you must create one using feints and combinations. Or, you can score if you practice extreme speed. Opportunity knocks but once. If life doesn’t give you an opportunity, you must make your own.

#### IS CLEAN and PURE

The Kumdo training hall is clean and organized. So too, the mind and body must be clean and organized. In the beginning of each class, students practice meditation: “*mook-sang*”. This is critical to clearing the mind of excess baggage that may clutter a student’s consciousness. At the end of class students clean the floor, which is always bright and shining. Just so, the mind, body and spirit are purified during training. The harder the training, the greater the purity: “The hottest fire makes the purest gold.” Even in winter, the body will sweat during a Kumdo workout, cleaning the blood and internal organs.



## IS HEALTHY

Kumdo provides the student a healthy form of exercise. All the body's muscles and joints are stretched in the beginning of class and exercised during class. Hand to eye coordination is greatly enhanced. Kumdo is both aerobic (continuous movement of large motor groups over a long period of time) and anaerobic (sprint) exercise.

During evolution, battles between animals were won by the fiercest, the fastest and the most cunning. Over the last 10,000 years or so, battles between people were won by superior strategies, tactics, training and technologies.

Before the rise of civilization, humans exercised a huge amount. Life was rugged and one had to struggle to survive. Our bodies were engineered by evolution for very intense exercise. Now-a-days, however people push buttons on their TV remote controls, play computer games and sit in classrooms. This sedentary lifestyle is fatal, i.e. obesity, heart disease, etc. Exercise reduces the probability of fat developing immeasurably. Blood sugar is stored in the blood and liver for about three days before the body starts converting it into fat. Thus, regular Kumdo training is an excellent way to stay trim and fit.

People must exercise to realize their true human potential. Human potential is vast, and Kumdo helps people realize some parts of that sleeping potential that otherwise would never be woken up. Body, mind and spirit only become one when forged in the fire of intense desire – the desire to excel.

## TEACHES PRUDENCE

In Kumdo competition one learns to be careful. Feedback is usually immediate and precise. So often in life feedback is slow or inexact. In Kumdo one learns to be fluid and careful in the process of learning and winning. Sloppy thinking and/or techniques are not reinforced. Precise study and attack are reinforced.

## IS ART

Real Kumdo is very beautiful. There is elegance in master competition that is difficult to define. In learning any art, the student must first learn a basic set of techniques. Then, at some magical point, the training all comes together and is “gestalted.” Gestalt is a principal which suggests that the “whole is greater than the sum of its’ parts.” For example, a car engine is not just a collection of parts. It is functional only because all the parts work together such that the car can go forward. Art is a transcendent process. All techniques work together to score points. Rigid thinking and strategies don’t work. The spontaneous mind is exercised in interaction with an opponent.

In the process of learning an art the artist undergoes metamorphosis. New levels of awareness and concentration develop. Superior strategies evolve. Real art is like a diamond and it takes incredible pressure to create the perfect translucency of a diamond. Kumdo training takes the raw gems that are people and cuts and polishes them such that they sparkle.

## IS FOR PEOPLE OF ALL AGES

Kumdo masters seem to get better with age. In most sports, performance declines after the mid-

twenties. In Kumdo, however, skill is the primary prerequisite for winning. Children and mature people equally enjoy and participate in Korean Kumdo.

#### IS FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

Kumdo is one of the few sports where women and men compete on an equal basis. This is because size and strength are not as important as skill.

#### IS FUN

Kumdo is great fun. The armor (*Ho-gu*) protects the body allowing for ultra-rapid freestyle sparring (“*yonsup*”). Regardless as to the student’s level of skill, Kumdo is fun! This by itself is enough reason for someone to practice Kumdo. So much of life becomes boring after a while. Kumdo is always exciting because the student always has new levels of learning to attain. Sure, winning is a thrill, but even losing is OK because of the protection afforded by the armor and the high level of control and courtesy practiced by other students.

#### DEVELOPS SELF-CONFIDENCE

Fear is the main reason people fail. In Kumdo one gains self-confidence along with skill. It is a gradual process, but, virtually inevitable over time. Self-confidence and fear are inversely related. This is part of mastering the self. A psychologically healthy person has positive self-esteem. Simultaneously they are modest, polite and courteous.

#### A METAPHOR

Kumdo is a metaphor of life. Certainly, competition is important in life and in Kumdo, but, more important is courtesy and respect for teachers and fellow students. Developing a pure mind, body and spirit takes time, effort and a total life commitment. Kumdo instills the essential framework for a superior life.

## CHAPTER 1 - HISTORY OF KUMDO

### INTRODUCTION - MODERN SPORT WITH ANCIENT ROOTS

The word “Kumdo” is a combination of two root words, “Kum” which means “sword” and “do,” which is the Korean and Japanese derivation of the Chinese word: “*Tao*.” (See Chapter 2 for more information on *Tao*.)

Traditional martial arts in Japan were called “*Jitsu*” i.e. *Ju-Jitsu*, *Aiki-jitsu*, *Ken-jitsu*, *nin-jitsu*, and so on. Traditional martial arts are defined as secret fighting arts designed for furthering the political or economic aims of the groups that developed them. They are by definition, killing arts. The change from “*Jitsu*” to “*do*” happened relatively recently in history (Judo, for example was founded in 1956) and signifies that the art is a sport, not intended for killing. Just so, Kumdo is a modern sport of Japanese origin.

Kumdo, however is not just a sport. It is also a highly refined art of ancient origin. For some, it is more like a religion and philosophy – a total way of life.

The roots of swordsmanship in Korea and Japan are deep. And, there is lively debate between Korean, Japanese and American scholars as to what was happening back in the fourth, fifth and sixth centuries in regards to the origins of swordsmanship in this region.

However, most scholars generally agree upon a few facts. For example, it appears that the iron used to make the first Japanese weapons came from Korea until about the fifth century. (See Ferris, 1996:6)

### INARIYAMA TUMULUS SWORD

One key bit of evidence supporting the role of Korea in early Japanese weapon development comes the “*Inariyama Tumulus Sword*.” Discovered in Japan in 1968, this iron sword contains a 115 character inscription of gold inlay including characters denoting the year 471. According to researchers Murayama and Miller (1979), the characters contain significant linguistic and orthographic indicators of Korean origin or influence in the text of the inscriptions. They further suggest that author was probably a Korean due to overt linguistic evidence. Because *Inariyama* and other swords utilized the Korean “*Idu*” system of writing, Kim Soo Hyoong concluded that they originated in Paekche (Korea). (Hong, 1994)

Interestingly, eighty years before the forging of the *Inariyama Tumulus Sword*, Korean King Kwang-Gae-Toh Wang, 19th sovereign ruler of the *Koguryo* Dynasty propagated sword arts in Korea, and regained much lost territory including the greater part of Manchuria.

## HWARANG – Flower Youths of Korea

It was under the leadership of King Chinghung (540-575) that the youth organization called “*Hwarang to*” originated. Literally meaning “flower youths” these groups trained children in military, philosophy, arts, as well as government and social institutions. As adults they become elite troops and government leaders.

King Chinghung’s accomplished numerous conquests including the entire area upstream from the Han River in spite of pressures from Koguryo and Paekche kingdoms. (Joe and Choe 1997, 49)

Although the *Hwarang* were not part of the Army per se, they contributed enormously to the strength and vitality of the *Silla* army. The ever expansion-oriented government aided in organization, recruitment and training of the youths. Spiritual beliefs of the *Hwarang* included belief in the Gods of *Sinkyo*: the *Ch’onji Simyuong* (God-light of heavens and earth) spirits of the holy mountains, Dragon kings of great rivers and seas, and ancestral spirits. *Hwarang* often secluded themselves in mountain retreats for prayer and “*suyang*” or mental cultivation. (*ibid*, 69)

The *Hwarang* also developed rules for human relations based on group and family-centered social life. During the time of King Chinpyong (579-631) a Buddhist Monk named Won Gwang Popsa wrote the Five Commandments for Mundane Life specifically for the *Hwarang*. They contained elements of Buddhism and Confucianism, such as serving one’s sovereign with loyalty, ones parents with filial piety, to associate with friends with sincerity, not to retreat in battle and not to destroy life, human or otherwise aimlessly. Humility and moral obligation were also emphasized.

Actual training of the *Hwarang* included martial skills like horsemanship, swordsmanship, javelin, stone throwing, football and climbing. “Through group discussions, appreciation of songs and music, pilgrimage to holy mountains, they fostered the magnanimity and infinitude of soul. They were expected to become brave soldiers and officers in war and loyal officials and leaders of government in peace.” “(*ibid*, 70)

This *Hwarang*’s emphasis on military, spiritual and scholastic skills training predated the rise of the Samurai in Japan by several hundred years. Though their roles were different in many ways the parallels cannot be denied either. Both groups inculcated the arts of pen and sword in equal measure, with an added strong current of spiritual cultivation.

“It is said the warrior is the twofold way of pen and sword, and he should have a taste for both ways.” Miyamoto Musashi, “*A Book of Five Rings*,” 1645

## ANCIENT ROOTS

An honest accounting of all rivers feeding into the modern art of Kumdo would probably also have to consider Indian tributaries. For example, the *Hwarang* during the time of King Chinpyong were considered as *Maitreya* or “next Buddha.” Having attained enlightenment, they postponed entering Nirvana in order to help others achieve salvation. These concepts are certainly Indian in origin. Likewise, most scholars assert that Chinese martial arts started with an Indian Monk, Bodhidharma who walked north across the Himalayas and taught Chinese Buddhist monks the “*Muscle Change Classic*” in order to keep them healthy and fit during long periods of meditation.

Looking further back in history, one could suggest that the Indian civilization was almost certainly influenced by even more ancient Babylonian and Assyrian civilizations. Their civilizations prospered with a variety of sword and spear arts.

Thus, though the modern form of Korean Kumdo came from Japan, the ancient roots of this art are very ancient and many. These roots reside in Korea, China and other places.

This short history has very briefly looked at the history of sword training in this part of East Asia. It hopes to make the point that all learning is multi-causally determined.

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## **CHAPTER 2 - Philosophy and Gi – Intrinsic energy**

### **PHILOSOPHY**

Kumdo is a lot more than a sword fighting art. The purpose of Kumdo is:

1. Learning spirit culture
2. Mind and body training
3. Technique training
4. Needs of the real world
5. The most important aspect of Kumdo training is courtesy (“Yea-ui”) so it is good for the nation, families and communities.

This is the spirit of Kumdo. The most important principal of Gumdo training is mind. The sword hits with the mind. Right mind and spirit are essential. In Kumdo it is important to have good training, but most important is mind and spirit.

The word “philosophy” comes from the Greek language and means “love of wisdom.” Usually philosophies are time tested, i.e. they last for a thousand or so years and gain some face validity as the result. Like a fine sword, they do not wither with age but retain a keen edge over the ages.

Kumdo philosophy evolved through a confluence of sources, including Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism.

### **BUDDHISM**

Buddhism began with Crown Prince Sakyamuni, born to wealth and power in a small kingdom in Northern India around 500 B.C. After witnessing the aged, the sick, the dead and an ascetic he renounced his former life to seek truth, via an intensive six-year journey of asceticism and meditation. On his path to enlightenment he successively gave up all forms of dualism, including pleasure and pain, being and non-being. One day, sitting under the *bo*-tree he realized the supreme *Satori* or highest enlightenment. This is the state of supreme peace and bliss that comes from ceasing to be the slave of an ego (letting go of the “self”) and instead identifying with the universe - outside of time. After that he preached the four Noble Truths: life is suffering, desire is the cause of suffering, freedom from suffering can only be attained by letting go of desire, and that the only way to achieve these things is via the Eight-fold path: right belief, right aspiration, right meditation, etc.

Officially Buddhism was introduced to Korea in 372 as part of a diplomatic mission by Chinese Emperor Fu Chien to Koguryo.

In the early sixth century, one of the great kings of Paekche, King Song (523-553) brought his people to new heights of cultural sophistication. He imported large quantities of Buddhist and Confucian materials from the Liang dynasty (China) to Korea. At Japanese request, King Song sent groups of scholars, in medicine, astronomy, Buddhism and Confucian philosophies to Japan.

“By this time Japan had culturally come completely under Paekche’s influence.” (Joe & Choe 1997 p. 46)

## **Son Buddhism**

To understand East Asian sword philosophy, it is essential to have some familiarity with “*Son* Buddhism.” Called *Ch’an* in Chinese and *Zen* in Japan, Son Buddhism is an intuitive branch of Buddhism.

It was four hundred years after the reign of King Song, in the ninth century that Son Buddhism became very popular in both China and Korea. This occurred as Buddhism in Korea shifted from urban centers to more remote temples in beautiful natural areas. Son Buddhism, also called “meditation Buddhism” was the last of the so-called sectarian branches of Buddhism to enter Korea.

Son Buddhism is a philosophy of no philosophy. Instead, it is through intuitive insight during meditation that Buddha nature can be discovered. To attain this ultimate reality, Son masters taught psychological purification from the mundane world, which hinders the flowering of the Buddha mind.

Son Buddhism teachers direct experience without the filters of dualistic perception.

Dualisms are pairs of opposites, like up-down, this-that, me-you, understanding-not understanding, being-non-being. As infants learn language, they begin to “chop up” the universe into dualities. Freeing the mind from dualities allows a human to see purely without prejudice, an experiential/phenomenological approach.

This process is not like layering more knowledge into the mind, but freeing the mind of it. “All” is mind. All-mind is no-mind (*Mu-shin* in Japanese) because dualisms have been re-unified. The “mind” not subjugated to the petty ego but released into the greater reality. Like a raindrop entering the ocean, the human mind joins the cosmos.

Thus, in Kumdo, a Master may say: “hit with mind.”

Certainly most modern people do not have time to meditate for years in order to attain enlightenment. There are however, certain practical benefits to having some familiarity with Son experience.

If one fights full of fear or egoism, the fight is already lost. Thinking too much is a danger in a real fight. Freeing the mind of excess baggage and “directly seeing” the battle is critical to the spontaneous mind flow necessary for high-level competition.

Everyone should have the experience of learning Son Buddhism meditation. “Just sitting” is a liberating experience. As civilization goes forward in time, our slavery to modern technologies

and world-views only increases. Learning about our true-self is useful not just for Kumdo, but for life.

Knowledge of “true-self” is an essential part of Kumdo and other East Asian sword arts.

## **CONFUCIANISM and COURTESY**

Confucius was born about the year 551 B.C. in what was then called the state of “Lu” now located in the modern province of Shantung, China. His high level of ethical beliefs often brought him into conflict with the practical considerations of numerous provincial governments at that time. Though extremely popular – he was often followed by thousands students at a time – his desire to work in government was repeatedly thwarted. At the end of his career, “He came home with experiences and revelations which only a virtuous man could have and spent his last years in retirement on the highest level of spiritual attainment.... His impeccable moralism, warm humanism, transcendental lightheartedness and genuine interest in sport and music, all seem to have so well blended to make a great man, indeed, the greatest man China has ever produced.” (*ibid* p. 80)

In Confucian philosophy the most important virtue is “*Jen*” or “*In*” in Korean. This word means “love” or “human heartedness.” Social relations, emanating from the family outward, however, regulate Confucian love. One shows this love through the form of “*li*” (“*Yi*” in Korean language), i.e. ceremonies, rituals, etiquette. Outward manifestation of this love is carefully outlined in Confucian philosophy.

Next in importance is righteousness, or “*I*,” called “*Ui*” in Korean. This is actualized by resisting inappropriate selfish temptations i.e. for personal profit over ethical values. There must be equal courtesy in victory and defeat. Egoistic displays of triumph are not to be seen in Kumdo!

In Confucianism there is also “*Shu*” or “*So*” in Korean, which means reciprocity, altruism and mutual respect. “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.”

Confucian philosophy teaches that the perfect man is a sage-gentleman, as compared to the small or inferior man who is always motivated by greed and other selfish desires. The perfect man is above all, courteous. Courteous behavior is a *sine qua non* required behavior in a Kumdo-gwan.

## **TOGYO or TAOISM**

Another powerful influence on Korean and other East Asian philosophies is Taoism or “*Togyo*,” in Korean. Literally meaning “school of way and power,” this naturalist philosophy is based on the mystical concept of “*Tao*” or “natural path.”

The origin of *Tao* is attributed to *Lao-Tzu*, (“*Noja*” in Korean) literally meaning “old master,” who according to tradition lived in China during the late sixth century B.C. Other historians date



the writing of the *Tao Te Ching* the - classic text of Taoism - to the third century B.C. (The *Tao Te Ching* is called “*Todokkyong*” in Korean.)

It says in the *Tao Te Ching*, that: “In the man who is one with the Tao, the sword will find no place to pierce.” It also says that a “man who lives a violent life will die and violent death,” and “The way that can be spoken of is not the true way.”

## **GI – INTRINSIC ENERGY**

The origin of the Korean word “*Gi*” is “*Chi*” - a Mandarin Chinese word. In Japan is it called “*Ki*.” The oldest written characters in Chinese for “*Chi*” imply steam rising off a rice pot. Much later in history the character implied lightening, spirit and breath.

Virtually every ancient language has a word for “*Gi*.” In Hebrew it was called “*Ruakh*”, in Greek it was “*Pneuma*,” in Hindi, “*Pranna*.”

The medical science of acupuncture is based on understanding the *Gi* flow through the body. Virtually any modern science can be applied to gain a better a better understanding of *Gi* however no theory is complete. Western scientists have studied various aspects of *Gi* yet fail to really understand it. What follows are some interesting theories about *Gi*, but, again, no single theory fully accounts for the activities of *Gi*.

## **Physiologic Basis of *Gi***

Back in the 1950s some American physiologists were studying electrical conductivity of the skin. They found a map of points on the body, which were more electrically conductive than others. They didn’t know what to think of this, and left the map lying on a lab table. One day, someone walked in and, seeing the map, asked: “what are you doing with the acupuncture map?”

The question then arises, why would evolution favor species with some electrically conductive points on the body? The answer may have to do with the cycles of sun and moon. The earth, sun and moon all have powerful electromagnetic fields. Electromagnetic fields produce generalized stressor effects on all biological systems, i.e. the stresses of the sun’s electromagnetic field wake humans up more.

Humans evolved with these cyclic stressors. Full moon celebrations occur because there is more light during the full moon and because humans are more awake, alert and aroused during that time. These cyclic stressors (sun and moon) may act as a rhythmic physiologic massage on the electrical (neural) and hormonal (endocrine) systems of all mammals.

“The way of strategy is the Way of nature. When you appreciate the power of nature, knowing the rhythm of any situation, you will be able to hit the enemy naturally and strike naturally.” (Mushashi, M. “*Book of Five Rings*” 1645)

(This is one possible reason why humans may benefit from getting out of the city now and then and living for a while in an area where there are no electrical wires or machines, i.e. camping or Buddhist Temples. Synthetically created electromagnetic field pollution interferes with the interaction between the natural field cycles – sun, moon and earth fields, and human fields.)

Another physiologic theory of *Gi* development states that *Gi* comes from wakening ancient circuits in the brain that control primordial fighting and hunting behaviors. Located primarily in the midbrain these areas govern aggression, sexual and eating behaviors. Naturally, sex, aggression and eating are related and were essential for species survival during evolution. The theory is that these behaviors are hard-wired into the brain and need environmental stimuli (i.e. martial art training) to awaken them.

Along more traditional lines, Chinese and Korean medicines are based on the balance of Yin and Yang, (“*Um-Yang*” in Korean) positive and negative forces. Thus, there is a *Yin Gi* and *Yang Gi*. *Yin* is dark, cool and moist. *Yang* is light, hot and dry. Chinese and Korean medicine works by balancing these forces.

In physiology and in Korean medicine there are many pairs of opposites, which need balancing also, i.e. acid/alkali, nutrition and exercise, and so on.

#### Gi and breath

*Gi* is also intrinsically associated with breath. In Yoga and Kumdo students learn that most humans inhale only about a pint of air with each breath. All East Asian martial arts teach proper breathing, i.e. from the diaphragm, rather than shallow chest breathing. This allows for fuller oxygenation of the body. Oxygenation is another powerful potential mechanism of *Gi* enhancement.

#### Gi and the martial arts

Chinese, Korean and Japanese martial arts all teach about the use of *Gi* in fighting. It's is believed that *Gi* emanates in the body from a central point called the “*tan tien*” in Chinese, the Tan Jun (단 전) in Korean and “*hara*” in Japanese. This spot is approximately three centimeters below the navel and is the center of gravity in the human body.

*Tai Chi Chuan* is a Chinese martial art entirely based on *Gi*. Students learn meditation and relaxation. After about 10 years of study, students may begin to master manipulation of *Gi* flow through the body. Tai Chi masters are remarkable in that they can throw people away like rag dolls while staying perfectly relaxed and balanced.

(How is this accomplished? One scientific theory is that pathological relaxation of the body over the period of years allows the neurotransmitter receptors to spread out in the post-synaptic junction between nerves causing a much larger electrical – neural - response to motor effort in animals and humans. This is an electro-chemical theory of *Gi*.)

Whatever the mechanisms of *Gi*, when your energy is flowing correctly, you are invincible. When your *Gi* is blocked, you sicken and die. Thus, *Gi* (energy) flow is invaluable.

In Kumdo the shout that must accompany a valid point is called: “*Gi-hap*.” (In Japanese it is called “*Kiai*.”) This primal/ancient war-shout arises from deep within the body, not just the chest or vocal folds. Each person’s *Gihap* is different. Of the three qualities necessary for scoring a point in Kumdo (*Gi*, *Kum*, *Che* or energy/shout, sword strike, body position and movement) *Gi*, is listed first. This is a powerful indicator of the importance of *Gi* in Kumdo.

Because Kumdo is a highly evolved science and art with a long history, its’ philosophy is somewhat labyrinthine. Many personal and technical qualities are required to become a master. The following are just two of a vast constellation of qualities needed by the developing student.

### **Good mind, spirit, will, centering: Jong Shin**

Jong Shin has many meanings. It is the basis of good form in Kumdo. The character and spirit of the fighter must be good. The will must be focused. The sword during sparring must be held low along the midline and centered upon the left eye of the opponent. Though there are many translations for Jong Shin, which vary according to the context, in regards to Kumdo, the best translation may be “passion.”

Righteous, correct, honest, straight-forward, upright: Pa-ru-ge (바 르 게)

This word implies straightforward and honest activity. Unnecessary or immoral behaviors are shunned. For example, jumping around during sparring or unnecessary gi-haps (shouts), used for showmanship purposes are not considered righteous. Also, excessive drinking, or other unhealthy or immoral behavior is a violation of “Paruge”.

Concentration, or “Jip Jung” (집 중) is absolutely essential in Kumdo. It basically means “pay attention,” however, concentration is more focused.

Also essential is self control and self discipline or “Cha ki hun li-on” (자 기 훈 련).

Discipline, concentration and wisdom. Taken together these three essential qualities are called Sangaku in Japanese. Though a swordsman may learn all of the techniques of the art, without Sangaku, he will fail. Discipline is required for learning techniques and mastering the self. Concentration is required to focus on the essential while maintaining awareness of all things in the environment. Wisdom is the crowning jewel of thought, feeling and learning. With Sangaku a person can attain anything worthwhile; without it a person is little more than a jellyfish.

It is the Master’s responsibility to attend to the most minute of details within the Dojang (training hall). Behavior obviously must be correct, but so also must be the words and attitudes of all students.

It is easy to be overwhelmed by the awesome skill of a master, and the immensity of learning necessary for mastery. Simultaneously it is good to remember that an expert is someone who does the basics better than anyone else. Progress is made one step at a time. A wise (“Chi Hay” 지 혜) person is patient (“in ne shim” 인 내).

## References

Joe, Wanne J. & Cheo, Hongkyu A. *Traditional Korea A Cultural History* – Revised Edition, Hollym Press, Seoul, 1997

Mushashi, M. “*Book of Five Rings*” 1645

## CHAPTER 3 – BEGINNING EXERCISES

The first thing a beginning student must be aware of is the need for courtesy (“Yea-ui”) in the training hall (see Chapter 2 – Philosophy of Kumdo). Once this most important concept is internalized, the real training can begin.

### WARM-UP

Each class begins and ends with a formal bow to the Master (*Photo 3-1*) and a couple of moments of meditation called *Mook-sang*. In this brief period the students kneel formally before the instructor. The mind is emptied but focused on a single point. The spine is straight. The fingers and thumb form an oval shape (*photos 3-2 & 3-3*).

This is followed by a warm-up. This is a sequence of light exercises designed to loosen the body and prepare the mind. Neck, shoulders, hips, knees, ankles and wrists are rotated at fairly slow speed.

Following this brief sequence of very light exercises, advanced students take the *Juk-do* (bamboo sword) and go through a series of warm-up exercises.

The first sword warm-up exercise is called “*Hurigi*,” or “sword swing.” In this exercise the students swing the *Jukdo* (bamboo sword) forward and backward within the full range of movements allowed by the shoulder joint. (*photos 3-4 and 3-5*) Steps are taken with each swing, i.e. step forward on the forward swing, and step back with the backward swing. This exercise helps to

- a. loosen and warm the shoulder joints
- b. coordinate arm and foot movement
- c. focus the students concentration of bringing the sword in a straight line forward and back while keeping the elbows in.

Then, the students begin sword technique warm-ups as described in Chapter 4.

### BEGINNERS TECHNIQUE TRAINING

Technique training for beginners, starts from the ground up, beginning with footwork.

### BASIC STANCE

In Kumdo, one faces the opponent squarely, with the left foot parallel to and in front of the right foot. (*Diagram 3-1*.) The distance between the feet is precisely – one foot. The feet are always “cocked,” that is, the heels are off the ground and the weight is on the balls of the foot. (*Photo 3-6*.) However, whereas the heel of the right may be a centimeter or less off the ground, the heel of the left foot should be 2 – 3 centimeters off the ground.

(This is radically different from fencing, where the feet are at a 90 degree from each other, left foot is behind, and the body is turned partly sideways. However, in both arts, the majority of the body weight is on the left foot in the basic fighting stance.)

### **TIPS ON THE BASIC STANCE**

1. The backbone is always straight. Avoid hunching the shoulders.
2. The right foot is the distance of one foot from the left foot.
3. The heel of the right foot is in line with the tip of the toe of the left foot. (See illustration.)

### **FOOTWORK**

Once the basic stance is correct, the beginning student learns the correct movement for the four cardinal directions: forward (“*ab-pe-ro*”), backward (*duy-ro*), left (“*chua-ro*”) and right (“*u-ro*”). (Note: These Korean words derive from the Sino Korean language.)

These movements must be practiced rigorously for weeks, months and years, until they are done with perfect form, effortlessly. To aid learning the forward and backward steps, instructors often put the bamboo sword (“*jukdo*”) on the floor, and have the students practice jumping over it; forward and back. The movement must become smooth. It is not a “hop” but a sliding movement. Though this may seem tedious to the average Western student, perfecting the footwork is essential to later development.

Movement in the four cardinal directions must be done smoothly while maintaining the basic stance.

Forward movement involves pushing off with the left leg. This may seem simple, but, is more difficult than one might imagine. For example, the left leg must not bend too much – it should be kept relatively straight. The correct posture must be maintained throughout.

Backward movement comes from pushing off with the right. Movement to the right involves pushing off the left leg, and left movement begins with the right leg.

### **TIPS ON FOOTWORK**

1. Again, backbone must always be straight.
2. The right foot in particular moves in a smooth, sliding motion.
3. The student must watch forward, carefully.
4. Always maintain the correct distance between the feet.
5. Start slowly, and little by little, begin to practice moving faster and faster.

The student must learn breathing, balance, form, and grounding before ever holding a sword.

## **HOLDING THE SWORD**

The handle of the *Jukdo* (bamboo training sword) is rather long, approximately 33 centimeters. (See Appendix 1: “Anatomy of a Jukdo.”) In Kumdo, the left hand holds the base of the handle, while the right grasps the handles near the hilt. The right hand must be rotated slightly counterclockwise to ensure a firmer grip upon full extension.

## **TIPS ON HOLDING THE SWORD**

1. The sword must not be held too firmly or too lightly. Think of it as a bird. Held too loosely it will fly away. Held too tightly it will die.
2. Power percentage: right hand 20%-30%, left hand 70-80%.
3. The hands must be in the same line (See photo).
4. The shoulders must always be relaxed.

## **HOLDING THE SWORD IN READY POSITION FOR FIGHTING (“Jundan” – En-guard position)**

In the basic ready position, the base of the sword is held fairly close to the body, about the distance of one fist. Because the left hand is closest to the bottom of the handle the angle of the elbow is fairly sharp, approximately 105-115 degrees. Because the right hand is closer to the hilt, the elbow angle is wider, i.e. about 130 degrees. (*Photos 3-6*)

The base of the handle is pointing an inch or two below the navel, while the tip of the sword is usually pointing towards the throat of the opponent, though sometimes it is pointing at the right eye of the opponent, below the nose or at the chest.

(There is also a “high” en-guard position used by advanced practitioners, however, that style will not be discussed in this “Beginners Text.”)

## **TIPS ON HOLDING THE SWORD IN READY POSITION (JUNDAN)**

1. Remember the left hand holding the base of the pommel does not rest on the body but is held at the distance of one fist from the body.
2. Though the sword is usually pointing at the throat of the opponent, this is not always true. Some masters say point at the eye, while others give different advice.

3. The shoulders must always be relaxed.
4. Look at your opponent's eyes as they often telegraph the intentions of your opponent. This is an essential part of etiquette also.
5. Breath through the nose deeply into the diaphragm.



## CHAPTER 4 - KUMDO BASIC TECHNIQUES

### INTRODUCTION

In the movies, people dressed in traditional East Asian sword fighting garb strike with a bizarre array of techniques. Kumdo is not like that. Kumdo competition is highly formalized.

In Western fencing, the foil and epee are point weapons whereas the saber is a slashing weapon. Kumdo technique, however, incorporates both slashing and point attacks, with the emphasis on slashing techniques.

There are only three legitimate slashing strikes in Kumdo, the head strike (“*mori chigi*”), wrist strike (“*son-mok chigi*”), and the waist (“*huri chigi*”) strike. At all times the Kumdo competitor must maintain good form, posture, attitude and “*Gi*.” To score points, the cut or thrust must be “clean.”

The one “point” (tip of the sword) technique is basically a thrust to the throat of the opponent. This is almost always done as a counterattack, thrusting into the opponent while he is charging forward during an attack.

The head, wrist and waist techniques can be done with either large movements (“*kun dong jak*”) or small movements (“*cha gong jak*”). Beginners start with the large movement attacks, only later learning the more effective small movement attacks. Needless to say, it is critical that beginners learn good form.

Most attacks in Kumdo are done with forward movement (*apero!*), though backward and lateral movement strikes are also practiced. However, for beginners, forward movement is the rule. In both large and small movement attacks, the body is still while the sword is brought up.

In the beginning of training, movements are done slowly so that good form and technique are learned. After some expertise is attained, speed becomes very important. In the beginning, however, precision technique is paramount in importance.

### KUN DONG JAK (Large movement attack)

In the large movement attack (“*kun don jak*”) the attacker pushes off the left leg and the body moves forward an instant after the sword starts coming down. Specifically, the body moves forward just when the sword is vertical above the body in its’ downward arc. (*Diagram 4-1.*)

The sword strikes the opponent at the same instant as the right foot hits the ground. The sword strike and foot hit must be simultaneous - together (“*gat-chi*”). This is a critical part of good form and technique. Likewise the attackers right arm must be fully extended (straight) upon impact. (*Photo 4-1*) Striking the opponent with bent arms is pitifully bad technique, and a point will not be scored however clean the strike might otherwise be.

In all pair practice slashing attacks, the attacker must move his body “through” the opponent, i.e., there must be body movement forward, backward, or sideways. One cannot score a point standing still except for the one “point” attack - to the throat. The forward, backward or sideways attack must continue through and past the opponent. (*Photo 4-2*)

Pair practice is different from 3 and 2 motion attacks discussed in the next section where the practitioner is solo and returns to the ready position. In either solo or pair practice there must be a powerful “*Gihap*” or shout with the attack. Likewise, body form, footwork and posture must be correct before, during and after the technique.

### **THREE SEGMENT (“sam dong jak”) LARGE MOVEMENT (“kun dong jak”) HEAD STRIKE (“mori chigi”)**

The basic (large movement) head strike is broken down into three segments. Though this forms the foundation of training for beginners, even the most advanced masters still practice this exercise. This technique is the single most critical attack in Kumdo.

From the ready position:

1. The sword is raised above and behind the head. (*Photo 4-3*)
2. Forward movement strike (as described above) stopping precisely at head level. (*Photo 4-4*)
3. Backward step to the ready position – sword tip pointing towards the opponents throat. (*Photo 4-5*)

Students practice the head strike for weeks, even months, before they acquire the necessary skill to begin learning the wrist and waist strikes. Why? Because the foot and arm movements are similar and a pyramid absolutely must have a firm base.

### **DIAGONAL HEAD ATTACKS**

Once the student has grasped and refined the large, three-movement head attack, they learn two other diagonal head attacks, about 15 degrees to the right and left of the center head attack first learned. These are called “*cha-myen*” (left) “*uh-myen*” (right) and “*cha-un-myen*” (left/right) in Korean language. (*Diagram 4-2*)

### **LARGE TWO MOVEMENT HEAD ATTACK (“i-dong-jak”)**

Once the student has learned the three-movement head attacks, and the two diagonal head attacks, the three movement practice is shortened into a two movement practice, by combining steps one and two. The rise and fall of the sword must be very, very swift.

## **TIPS ON THE HEAD STRIKES**

1. At the moment the attackers sword strikes the opponent, the right arm *must be straight*. This is critically important. The left arm does not straighten entirely because it is holding the base of the sword's handle.
2. There must be a loud "*Kihap*" shout.
3. In slashing attacks the attacker must move through and past the opponent.
4. After striking the sword remains high and once past the defender the attacker must turn defensively such that he is always protecting himself through the turn.

## **THREE SEGMENT ("sam dong jak") LARGE MOVEMENT ("kun dong jak") WRIST STRIKE ("son-mok chigi")**

The wrist attack is the same as the head strike, except the right wrist of the opponent is the target. (Photo 4-6)

And, like the large movement head attack, after skill has been attained in the three-movement exercise, the attack is shortened into a two-movement attack by combining steps one and two.

## **TIPS ON THE WRIST STRIKE**

1. Strike and right foot land at the same time
2. The arms must extend fully at strike. This is not a push but a strike.
3. The practice bamboo sword (*Jukdo*) snaps up (an ultra-rapid) quick bounce) after the strike, however, it does not rise high, like the head strike. Instead, it snaps up only 6 – 12 inches and then continues forward in a straight line until the attacker turns around at the end of the charge (through and past the opponent).

## **THREE SEGMENT (Sam Dong Jak) LARGE MOVEMENT (Kun Dong Jak) WAIST STRIKE (Huri-Chigi)**

The waist strike is in some ways the most complex in Kumdo.

1. Like the head and wrist strike, the sword is raised above and behind the head.
2. The attacker steps forward – right, at a 45 degree diagonal while sweeping the sword in an arc slashing the opponent's right waist. (Photo 4-7)
3. Step back to original position.

## **TIPS ON THE WAIST STRIKE**

1. The attackers' body remains erect during this attack, even though there is a reflexive attempt to duck below the defenses of the defender.
2. This attack is usually done as a counterattack to the head strike because the defenders arms are raised, exposing his waist.
3. This attack must be very, very fast because it is technically more difficult than either head or wrist attacks.
4. The attackers body moves at an angle to the side of the defender such that the defender is not too close for this attack.
5. Body movement must continue past (through) the opponent. (*Photo 4-2*)
6. Whereas in the head and wrist attack, the sword snaps back up after the strike, in the waist attack the sword simply cuts through the opponent without snapping up or back.

## **CONCLUSIONS ON THREE AND TWO LARGE MOVEMENT ATTACKS**

Head, wrist and waist attacks form the basis of Kumdo training. The three and two movement attack sequences are designed to train student's good technique. In pair work, however, the three and two movement attacks become compressed into a *single motion*. This is critically important. Kumdo attacks are lightening fast. However, good technique must first be learned before speed is attempted. You will not score points with fast sloppy techniques in Kumdo. Points are only scored with clean, fast, perfectly executed form.

## **ONE MOVEMENT ATTACK ("il-dong-jak")**

Ultimately these attacks must be sped up to the point where they can be done in one smooth coordinated movement. Naturally, each segment must be polished before they can be welded together into a seamless attack.

## **SMALL MOVEMENT ATTACKS ("Cha don jak")**

Small movement attacks are not taught to students until they have mastered large movement attacks.

Small movement attacks are what the name suggests. Almost all points in competition are scored with small movement attacks. Though the targets of the small movement attacks are the same as the large movement attacks, the rise of the sword before the attack, is much, much, much smaller. It takes years to learn to master the whippy snap necessary to effective scoring with small movement attacks.

## **SMALL MOVEMENT HEAD STRIKE**

In the small movement head strike, the sword moves forward towards the opponent's face (*Photo 4-8*) rising above his head only at the last instant, before it rapidly snaps down (*Photo 4-9*) and just as quickly rises again.

As with the large movement attacks, the front (right) foot strikes the floor at the same instant the sword hits the opponent. Also, the attacker (when working in pairs) must move through and past the opponent in a line. The whole movement from the initiation of attack to the follow through past the opponent must be lightening fast. Because the small movement is shorter, the whole attack is faster. In sparring and tournaments, most points are scored with small movement attacks.

## **SMALL MOVEMENT WRIST ATTACK**

There are several ways to initiate this attack. Most typically, the attackers sword curves to the left over the defenders sword by millimeters before snapping down on the defenders wrist. Sometimes this attack is a counterattack following parrying the defenders sword – which opens a line to his wrist.

## **SMALL MOVEMENT WAIST ATTACK**

In this attack the sword comes back only enough to clear the defender's sword before arcing in for the cut. As stated before the waist attack is usually a counterattack used when the defender is attempting a head attack.

## **STRIKING TARGET (Ta Kyok Te)**

Once the student knows the basic techniques described above, it is time to refine them on the *Ta Kyok Te*. (*Photo 4-10*)

The cut tires on the *Ta Kyok Te* are placed in six locations, with three on each side. On each side there are horizontal targets for the head strike and wrist strike and a vertical target for the waist strike. The two sides are designed for children and adults, with the children's targets being lower (*Photo 4-11*).

All the above techniques can be practiced on this unique piece of training equipment. Footwork, distancing, striking, and *Gi-hap* (shout) can be brought together with a real target. Students usually spend a couple of months practicing with the *Ta Kyok Te* before purchasing the *Ho-gu* (body armor - see Chapter 5) necessary for competition. Yet, even the most experienced masters still practice with the *Ta Kyok Te* because it provides a stable target necessary for the hours of training required to attain and maintain mastery.

The striking target helps the student and master practice, refine and master:

- Footwork (the right foot forward, pushing off the left with a gliding movement during approach, while the front foot hits the floor with great force at the same instant the sword hits the target)
- Timing
- Distancing from target when launching attacks.
- Quantification of force (light whippy snap, or harder strike)
- Speed of approach
- Angles of attack
- Speed of follow-through (moving past target after strike)
- Gihap (shout)
- Total body movement
- Attitude
- Strength
- Endurance
- 

Every one of these things is critically important. When practicing with the *Ta Kyok Te*, your Quanjanim (Master) or Sabonim (Assistant Teacher) may push you (literally, with his sword) to go faster - leading up to and after striking the target. This emphasizes the basic and eternal need for ultra-rapid attacks and follow-through.

Naturally, as your skill improves so will the sophistication of your attacks. You start with single, large movement attacks. Then learn single small motion attacks. Then, you start putting together combination attacks; first combination large movement attacks, then combination small motion attacks.

This chapter has attempted to introduce the interested reader to the basic techniques in Kumdo. No book, however good, can replace a real teacher. However, for a beginning student, this chapter can help reinforce essential details of the structure of Kumdo single attacks.

## CHAPTER 5 - COMBINATION ATTACKS

*Watching a master spar (“yunsup”) with his students, one is continuously astonished at his use of combinations. It seems that even the best students are always “open.” A master plays his opponents like a fiddle using combinations and feints. Watching a master work makes Kumdo look easy. This, however is deceptive. It takes decades of hard practice to become a master.*

*Sometimes it is possible to win with ultra-fast single attacks. More often, a single attack will not succeed. The trick here is to never give up. Keep attacking. Thus, the penultimate need for combinations.*

There are a large number of combination attacks in Kumdo. They can generally be divided into several groups, i.e. forward-forward attacks, forward-backwards, and in combination with lateral (sideways, i.e. waist) attacks.

Beginning students often first learn the following:

### **FORWARD-FORWARD ATTACKS**

1. Head-head combinations
2. Head-head-head combinations
3. Head-waist combinations
4. Wrist-head combinations
5. Wrist-head-head combinations
6. Wrist-waist combinations
7. Wrist-head-waist combinations
8. Wrist-head-waist-head combinations
9. Wrist-head-wrist-head combinations

And so on.

### **FORWARD-BACK ATTACKS**

Between the forward and back attacks there is often a “clash.” “Clash” is when the opponents are practically body to body. The handles of the swords meet. (Photo 5-1) This clash is ended by the attacker thrusting his hips up and forward, pushing the defender off. This is immediately followed by a head or wrist or waist attack.

1. Forward head strike - clash - backward head strike.
2. Forward head strike - clash – backward wrist strike.
3. Forward head strike – clash – backward waist strike

Alternatively, there may be a combination attack leading up to the clash, followed by a backward single or combination attack.

1. Wrist-head – clash – head
2. Wrist-head – clash – wrist
3. Wrist-head – clash – waist
4. Head-head – clash – head

And so on.

## **FEINTS**

Feints (ruses) are combinations where the first and/or second attack is muted in favor of the second and/or third. Any of the above combinations can be tailored into a feint by shortening the original attack(s).

“Ruses are of great usefulness. They are detours which often lead more surely to the objective than the wide road, which goes straight ahead. Animals have only one method of acting, but intelligent men have inexhaustible resources. You outwit your enemy to force him to fight, or to prevent him from it.”

Frederick the Great, “Instructions to his Generals,” 1747

Relatively simple rules govern most feints. They are by definition, deceptive. Feint high, attack low. Feint left, attack right. Sometimes, it may be high, high, low, or left, right, left. Feints are tricky. They take forethought and practice. Instinctively, people react to stimuli, i.e. an attack. Feints manipulate people’s natural instincts.

One very common feint is the head, waist attack. In this combination, the attacker starts out with a Mori-chigi (head strike) attack. This brings up the defender’s sword in defense. By raising his sword, he opens himself to the waist attack. A simple, and relatively reliable combination.

Another very common feint is wrist-head attack. People often reflexively move their hand away from a wrist attack, opening up a line of attack to the head.

Even your eyes can be used as a weapon to create the belief that you are going to attack one area, before you attack another.

Simply put, one cannot win without attacking. Since single attacks are usually either avoided or blocked by good fighters, there is a pressing demand to develop effective combinations and feints.



Unfortunately, neither books nor videos can effectively teach Kumdo. Kumdo is simply too complex and feedback is critical. To practice a technique wrong is to ingrain bad habits that may be difficult to change later on. Thus, because combinations and feints are more complex than basic movements and single attacks, a qualified teacher is really required to learn these techniques properly.

It is hoped, however, that a conceptual/structural outline of, and strategic need for, basic combinations and feints have been illuminated.

## **CHAPTER 6 - BLOCKS, EVASIONS AND COUNTERSTRIKES**

### **BLOCKS**

There are a wide variety of blocks in Kumdo. In the normal en-guard position your blade is on the right, touching against the opponent's blade. Recall Chapter 4, small movement wrist attack. In that technique, the attackers sword curves over (or sometimes under) the defender's sword on its' route to the wrist. Defending against this attack is a good place to begin the study of blocks.

The simplest block is a subtle inside snap against the opponents sword followed by an immediate attack. ("Inside means it originates closer to the inside - center - line of the body, moving towards the right "outside" of the body.) (See diagram 6-1) The simple goal is to stop an attack and clear the way for a counterattack.

This block is from left to right following the opponents circling over your blade. Blocks can also be done right to left, high to low, and low to high. Generally speaking, however, blocks move the opponent's blade away from the centerline of the defender's body. A block that attempts to move the opponent's blade across the defender's centerline, invites disaster.

All blocks however, must be subtle. "If you rely on strength, when you hit the enemy's sword you will inevitably hit too hard. If you do this, your own sword will be carried along as a result." (Musashi, M. A Book of Five Rings 1645)

This error (relying on strength) leaves you (wide) open to counterattacks.

In European fencing the principal is the same. Blocks are subtle, with the sword never leaving the rectangular outline of the body. The opponent's sword only needs to be diverted slightly to open a path for your blade. (Diagram 6-2)

Very advanced Kumdo practitioners can "beat" the sword of his opponent such that it falls (or flies) to the ground. (Photo 6-1) Even though this technique is powerful, the action is still small.

There is also the "press." In this block the sword is held against the opponents for an instant longer than might seem necessary, in order to throw the timing of the attacker off.

Perhaps the most common block seen is the overhead block used to stop the head attack. As with other blocks, it is only a preliminary to an immediate counterattack. (Photo 6-2)

### **EVASIONS**

There are two kinds of evasions in Kumdo: Body evasions and sword evasions.

Though the number of target strikes in Kumdo is limited, the number of potential evasions is almost infinite.

## Body Evasions

The most common body evasion seen is a tilting of the head to the side to avoid the head strike. This evasion is – like all things in Kumdo, extremely fast.

The second most common body evasion is moving the right hand back to avoid the wrist attack. This backward movement is almost always in preparation of a counterattack to the wrist or head.

This most common whole-body evasion is a backward step or two, which is then followed by immediate attack. Alternatively, stepping into an attack is not uncommon, usually resulting in “Clash” position (Chapter 5).

Kumdo is not like Wu-shu, (Chinese martial arts) however. In many styles of Chinese martial arts evasions involve twisting and bending the body this way and that. In Kumdo, the body stays straight.

“The sure way to win is to chase the enemy around in a confusing manner, causing him to just aside, with your body held strongly and straight.” (Musashi)

“In my strategy, I bear my spirit and body straight, and cause the enemy to twist and bend. The necessary spirit is to win by attacking the enemy when his spirit is warped.” (Mushashi)

## Sword Evasions

Sword evasions usually involve circling over or under the opponent’s blade. Moving the sword back away from the opponent’s sword is also seen (see above).

Evasions are virtually always immediately followed by counterattack, because once the opponent has missed in an attack he is almost always vulnerable.

## COUNTERATTACKS

Counterattacks are the highest art in fighting. True masters can decide when it is best to thwart an attack, weather in the beginning, middle or just before being hit. It depends, on the particular counterattack the master has in mind. Musashi’s advice is simple: “We must defeat him at the start of his attack...” However, this is not always the case. Sometimes it is best to allow the opponent to fully extend himself in an attack, such that he is wide open for a counter.

Some common counterattacks:

<i>Attack</i>	<i>Block or Evasion</i>	<i>Counterattack</i>
Head strike	evasion	Waist strike
Head strike	overhead block	Head strike
Wrist	block	Head strike

Wrist	block or evasion	Wrist
Waist	neither	Head strike

This last example relies on the defender anticipating the opponents attack, and being faster on the counterattack.

There are an infinite number of strategies that can be used in counterattacks. For example, you can feign an attack to draw out an opponent's counterattack. Then, block or evade that counter, and counter, the opponent's counterattack.

In concrete terms: feign a wrist attack, to draw out a head attack. Counterattack the head attack with a waist attack.

In Kumdo this sequence will take less than a second.

The complexity of counterattacks is mind-boggling. This subject is something best left to very advanced students and masters deserving an entire textbook itself. Hopefully, this chapter has at least touched on some major blocks, evasions and counterattacks that beginning and intermediate students can practice.

## References

Musashi, M. *A Book of Five Rings*, 1645

## CHAPTER 7 – COMPETITION

Kumdo competition in the training hall is called “*yonsup*.” For those who enjoy competition, this is sheer ecstasy.

Naturally, beginning students will get hit occasionally. Fortunately, the body armor takes most of the force. For example, some wrist strikes do sting a bit if the attacker doesn’t have a high degree of control. Again, fortunately, most Kumdo practitioners are highly controlled and pain is the exception rather than the rule. When advanced Kumdo people spar, bruises are not uncommon. However, great restraint is used with beginning and intermediate students.

The training hall’s Master (“*Quan-jam-nim*”) may occasionally wish to test his student’s resolve and limits. Kumdo can get pretty physical. Swords and bodies may go flying! But, for the real martial art enthusiast, this is when the real fun begins!

To begin competition, the students must have attained some degree of competency in all basic techniques. Then, the student must buy a “*Ho-gu*” or armor. The armor is rather expensive with the cheapest *Ho-gu* costing around six hundred dollars and the more expensive ones costing several thousand dollars.

### **Armor - HO GU**

There are four major parts to the *Ho-gu*.

*Ho myen* – Helmet/face-mask (*Photo 7-1*)

*Ho wan* – Thick gloves that protect the hand and wrist. (*Photo 7-2*)

*Gab* – The hard chest protector. (*Photo 7-3*)

*Gab sang* – a lower apron sort of affair that protects the middle and lower abdomen. People usually have their names written on their *Gab sang*, as is can be rather difficult to distinguish one person from another when entirely suited up. (*Photo 7-4*)

There is also a “scarf” (“*Mori Sugon*” - literally translated as “towel”) which must be properly folded and put on the head before putting on the *Ho Myen* – Helmet/face-mask. (*Photos 7-5 to 7-7*)

The *Ho Myen* (Helmet/face protector) must be strapped on tightly so that it doesn’t wiggle around on the head or become loose during sparring. The first time a person puts on the whole set of body armor (*Ho-gu*), they may feel a little disoriented – stiff and robot-like. However, after a few weeks of training in the *Ho-gu*, it fits like a glove and feels as natural as normal clothes.

## ENTERING THE FIGHTING DOMAIN

Like all things in Kumdo, there is a formal ritual guiding entrance to the fighting area.

First, one steps forward into the outer match area and faces the opponent. Then the opponents bow formally to each other. Each combatant then takes three large steps forward beginning with the right foot.

The opponents then draw their swords (“*po-ba”kal*”) and “square off” in the en-guard position (Jundan). (*Photo 7-8*)

(This is a little different from the way it is done in Japan. In Japan the competitors go into a deep squat when their swords are about half a meter distance from each other. They then rise, go into a fighting stance and begin competition.)

## FIGHTING

To score a point in Kumdo a combatant must execute a technique containing three essential qualities: *Gi*, *Cum* and *Che*.

*Gi* – Intrinsic energy; vital force; will; a powerful shout

*Kum* – Sword

*Che* – Body posture and movement

Kumdo competition is very fast. During Kumdo competition, even a blink can spell defeat. Competitors watch each others eyes. Though there will be many strikes, only those that are perfectly executed with simultaneously executed powerful *Gi-hap* (shout), perfectly placed sword strike, correct body position and smoothly flowing follow-through will earn a point. Matches often go into “sudden death overtime.”

Kumdo competition is both exhilarating and exhausting. The weight of the body armor and sword can seem enormous after sparring for only a few moments. But, because most Kumdo practitioners train at least five days a week, they are in superb condition.

Kumdo is one of the few sports in the world where women and men compete against each other in tournaments.

Kumdo Yunsup (literally translated as “training” but usually used to refer to sparring) is both the same, and very, very different from any other style of fighting. It is the same in that one must attack to win. It is different in that one may not move freely. A number of natural reflexes must be over-ridden to maintain good form.

Certainly, it is true that masters can win using counterattacks. They just wait for an attack, block or evade it, and counterstrike. Most people however, must attack to win. One can either rely on blinding speed or on clever fairs and combinations.

Natural reflexes that must be controlled include bobbing and weaving movements. Masters stand straight, with their swords in Jundan (en-guard) position. They absolutely do not ever wiggle or bounce around.

Likewise it is a natural reflex to block single and multiple attacks. Masters may block one attack, but then they virtually always counterattack. Allowing yourself to be suckered into a series of blocks means that your opponent is controlling you, a fatal error in fighting.

## **MATCH END**

At the end of the match the opponents again face each other and return their swords to an imaginary sheath. The sword return is called “*ko-ja-kal*”. A winner is then declared by the referee based on points scored. Basically the first person who scores either a) three points or b) is two points ahead, wins.

The opponents then take five relatively small steps backward, bow to each other and prepare to leave the competition area. After stepping out of the match area, they usually bow to the next contestant who takes their place.

Courtesy and good sportsmanship are required at all times in the training hall.

## **TOURNAMENTS**

Martial art tournaments in Korea are very well organized. Entrants must pre-register. The organization structure however is similar to tournaments worldwide with single or double eliminations leading to semi finals and finals.

As with most martial art tournaments there are usually individual and team competitions.

Fighting in, and or just watching a Kumdo tournament is an eye opening experience. The speed and precision of movement is awesome. The finals are truly unbelievable. No Kumdo student should miss the opportunity to at least watch a tournament.

## **CHAPTER 8 - KUMDO ASSOCIATIONS**

In Korea there are two main Kumdo styles, “Traditional Kumdo” and “Haidong Kumdo. Both traditional (mainstream) and Haidong Kumdo schools have national and provincial associations.

### **TRADITIONAL KUMDO**

The largest Kumdo Association in Korea is the Korea Kumdo Association (K.K.A.). This body is recognized by the International Kendo Federation (I.K.F.) as an affiliated organization. Thus, ranks earned by one of the provincial branches, i.e., Jeonbuk Kumdo Association (J.B.K.A.) are recognized in Japan and worldwide.

The I.K.F. has branches in Austria, Australia, Belgium, Belgrade, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Czech, Denmark, Finland, Germany, France, Hong Kong, Hungary, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, China, Romania, Singapore, Sweden, Switzerland, United States as well as a large number of other “non-affiliated organizations,” around the world. Thailand’s Kumdo Association falls into an Interim category, “Quasi-Affiliated.”

The mailing address for the I.K.F. is:

Jiro Kageyama, President

C/o Branch Office: NTT Building 3-2-13

Kudan-Kita, Chiyoda-ku

Tokyo, Japan

Tel: 03-3234-6271

Fax: 03-3234-6007

### **HAIDONG KUMDO**

Haidong Kumdo opened its first office in Seocho-gu, Seoul in 1983, though it was not first registered as a social organization until May 1989. In November 1996 the World Hai Dong Gumdo Federation was established as a corporate aggregate.

Since that time, they have chartered member organizations in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Spain, and the United States.

### **OTHER ASSOCIATIONS**

In addition to these associations, there are numerous other, much smaller organizations. For example, there is the “World Kum-Do Association” headquartered in Davenport, Iowa, USA.



Founded by Mr. Jun, Jong-Keun, this organization claims to have members in 15 nations. His resume and other particulars are posted on his Internet site.

The authenticity of these latter organizations is difficult to ascertain from their Internet sites. Presumably if they were recognized by the I.K.F. they would say so on their sites. No such mention is made. To ensure that someone's Kumdo rank is internationally recognized it is best to ensure one's school is I.K.F. or K.K.A. affiliated.

## **CHAPTER 9 - Cross Training**

Most Kumdo masters do only Kumdo. It is a complete art and science.

There is lively debate amongst sports physicians regarding the value of cross-training, however, most modern athletes do a variety of training exercises to enhance their ability in their primary sport.

### **Weights**

Scientifically applied weight training can double a person's strength in a few months. Strength, however, is not that important in Kumdo. Speed is. Interestingly, high repetition light-weight exercises can improve speed and endurance enormously.

Properly applied weight training can also reduce the probability of a variety of stress injuries significantly. Also, most physical therapy programs involve weight training to help recover from injuries. For the Kumdo practitioner, leg flexion/extension exercises and squats may help prevent repetitive stress injuries. Shoulder exercises properly applied may help speed and endurance in the use of the *Jukdo*. But, maybe not. As stated above, most Kumdo masters do only Kumdo.

### **Yoga**

Yoga is an ancient science that teaches students a scientific method of stretching and strengthening the entire body. Most Yoga schools also teach meditation and breathing techniques. Yoga is terrific for preventing injuries via balancing all body systems. It is worth noting that most Chinese systems of martial arts trace their roots to Bodidharma, who walked across the Himalayas from to bring Yogic stretches to Buddhist monks in China.

### **Jogging and sprinting**

Jogging helps develop endurance in leg muscles as well as cardio-respiratory fitness. Sprints help stimulate fast-twitch muscle development. Running is considered by most athletes as the mainstay of fitness development.

### **Other martial arts**

Tai Chi – Tai Chi teaches the student relaxation and meditation. Both can be useful to the Kumdo student.

Taekwando – Taekwando teaches flexibility, footwork, speed and martial strategy. These skills also can be useful to the Kumdo practitioner.

Karate – Whereas Taekwando focuses primarily on kicks, Karate focuses on punches. Theoretically at least, Karate training may help improve footwork speed and martial strategy skills, as well as shoulder and arm strength. All of these qualities can be useful to the Kumdo practitioner.

Judo – Judo was designed to be an internal style, based on subtlety, i.e. push when pulled, pull when pushed. Judo increases hand-to-eye coordination skills as well as timing and especially upper-body strength.

Fencing – Many strategies in fencing are similar to Kumdo even though fencers use one hand in training and competition. Perry-repost skills and timing are similar to Kumdo, even though body position and weapons are different. Both sports are based on speed, strategy and timing. In his book “The Tao of Jeet Kune Do, Bruce Lee borrowed heavily from fencing texts in regards to his writings on timing, i.e. “attacking on the half-beat.”

Dancing – Dancing more than anything teaches coordination and timing as well as flexibility and agility. All of these are useful to the Kumdo practitioner.

Swimming – Swimming is a great aerobic exercise that is much less stressful on leg and back joints than other sports. It is a great exercise for preventing injuries and is also very useful when recovering from injuries.

In the final analysis, however, the best training for Kumdo is Kumdo. In the 1980’s a classic sports medicine study was published in the United States titled: “Specificity in training means you get what you train for.” As the title suggests, this study found that though cross-training is good for building a foundation for athletic ability, training in one’s primary sport is most important. In order to prevent and recover from injuries cross training can be very valuable. Lastly, strategies used in fighting, i.e. attack, counterattack, feints, etc, are broadly applicable between fighting arts.

“To attain the Way of strategy as a warrior you must study fully other martial arts and not deviate even a little from the Way of the warrior. With your spirit settled accumulate practice day by day and hour by hour.” (Mushashi, 1645)

Mushashi, M. *Book of Five Rings*, 1645

## **CHAPTER 10 KUMDO – The Future**

### **A Timeless Art**

Kumdo will probably not change in the next 10,000 years. This is because it is a traditional art and traditional arts remain “traditional” by virtue of the fact that they do not change.

However, it is highly likely that Kumdo’s popularity will continue its’ explosive grow rate here in Korea and around the world.

At this time there are several thousand Kumdo-gwans in Korea, compared to 20 years ago, when there were only a few. Now there are several hundred thousand practitioners and this number will grow into the millions during the next 20 years given the current growth rate.

Kendo/Kumdo training halls can be found in the U.S.A., Canada and most European capital cities as well as Central and South America and all over Asia. Wherever Koreans go, Kumdo will follow. And, many non-Koreans are learning this art, though the numbers still remain small. This however will change as Korea and Korean people become more internationalized.

Because of the number of physical, mental, spiritual benefits mentioned in the Introduction and Chapter 2 (Philosophy and Gi) it is highly likely that more and more regular academic schools will begin offering Kumdo programs alongside more traditional curriculum.

### **A healthy, holistic alternative**

Today’s youth in most industrialized countries are becoming computer game zombies. Kumdo offers a practical alternative to the digital robotization of today’s students. Likewise, office workers, teachers, health care professionals, factory workers and laborers can benefit enormously from holistic Kumdo training and lifestyle.

Given current trends, it is highly likely that future generations well become even more divorced from the demands of the real world as electronic realities become increasingly seductive.

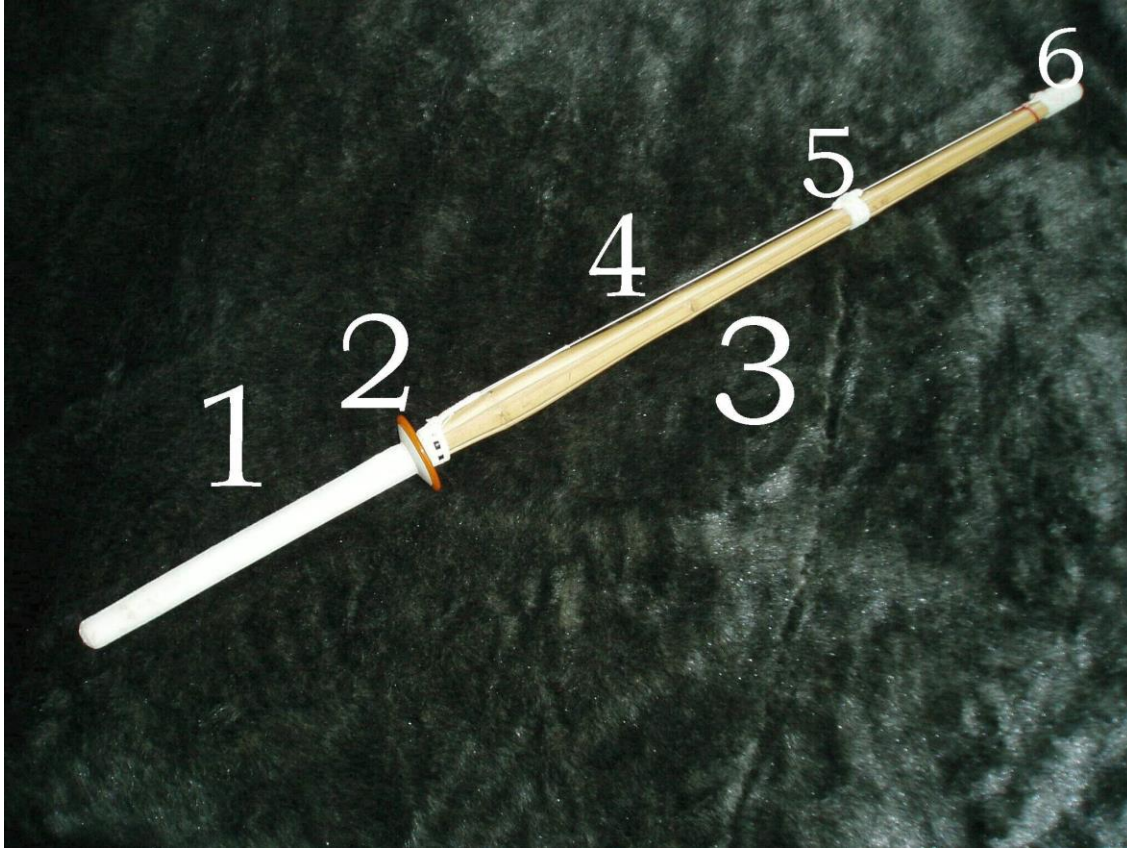
In addition to all these things, there is another benefit to Kumdo not mentioned elsewhere. This has to do with maturity and social bonding. Boys in today’s society often find it hard to define exactly when they become men. Kumdo offers a place where maturation can happen safely within a solid structure. A Kumdo-gwan is more than a training hall. It is also a community. People know each other, and help each other. Korea is a small country and there are no secrets. Kumdo is a direct route (path, road, street, way) to social integration and emotional maturity not found in other places. As mentioned in the Introduction, the sword cuts through all complexities.

## **Conclusions**

Because the physical, psychological and spiritual benefits of Kumdo are so innumerable, this modern sport with ancient roots provides a safe antidote to the growing deficits and illusions of the modern world.

## Appendix 1 Anatomy of a Jukdo

1. Pyong Hyuk – Pommel or handle
2. Koteun ee – Hilt
3. Kum – Blade part of the sword
4. Tung Chul - String along backbone of blade
5. Hoong Hyuk – Middle Skin – leather tie in middle of blade
6. Son Hyuk – Tip skin



## Appendix 2 - Gum-Do Vocabulary

Bamboo Sword: Jook do

Meditation: Mook sang

Preparation exercise: Jun-bi woon-dong

Big motion: Kun dong-jak

Small motion: Jak un dong-jak

Forward: Ap-ero

Back: Di-ro

Left: U-ro

Right: Cha-ro

Head strike, three motion: Mori chigi -- sam dong jak

Two motion: -- i-dong jak    One motion: -- il-dong jak

Wrist strike: Son-mok-chigi

Waist strike: Huri-chigi

Rest sword: Shi-u-kal

Fast motion: Parum-dong-jak

Hit and run: Mu-ri-chi-go-na-ga-gi

Draw sword: Pob-a-kal

Return sword: Ko-ja-kal

Free sparring practice: Yunsup

Mind/Spirit/Will/Centering/Passion: Jong Shin

Righteous/correct/honest/straight-forward/upright: Pa-ru-ge (바 르 게)

Counting in Korean language:

1 2 3 4 5    6    7    8    9    10

Hana, tul, set, net, tasut, yasut, ilgoop, yadul, ahop, yall

## **About Korean language**

There are really two Korea languages. First, there is the common language spoken by most people most of the time. It is the language of friends. Then, there is the formal Korean language spoken with older people and people of higher rank.

Virtually all books available on Korean language teach the formal – polite – Korean language. This is what you need to get by in a Kumdo-gwan (training hall). Foreigners living in Korea probably mostly learn common Korean language from their friends. Use of this idiom is inappropriate in the Kumdo training-hall.

It is highly recommended that those foreigners in Korea wishing to learn Kumdo learn at least some basic Korean vocabulary, i.e., hello, thank you, good by.

Fortunately, Kumdo people are tolerant and understanding. They are also helpful and patient teachers. So, even if your Korean vocabulary is extremely limited, don't be afraid to try to learn Kumdo. Many things can be learned in a Kumdo class, including Korean language.



## **Appendix 3 LIVING YOUR ART - An Interview with Korean Sword Master Park Yong Chon**

**Though the Japanese sword fighting art “Kendo” has gotten considerable attention in recent years, the Korean counterpart art, “Kumdo” is still relatively unknown.**

In any art, teachers are many, but masters are few. A stroll through Jeonju Kumdogwan (training hall) reveals little. The floors are polished. There is a rack of wooden and bamboo swords along one wall. Against the opposite wall there is long rack of dark blue and black Kumdo armored suits called “Hogu”. Stepping into the Masters office, however, one realizes this is the school of a champion. Gold medals and trophies from all over Asia and Europe are to be found on the walls and in a large glass case. Then, one wonders “who is this rare master?”

The son of a police officer and fourth of five brothers, Kumdo Master Park Yong Chon was born in the city of Jeonju, in the central region Province of Jollabukdo, South Korea.

He first saw Kumdo when he was in fourth grade. His father was a practitioner. The next year, young Park Yong Chon started training in the Police Hall called “Sang Mu Quan” under Master Jun Young Sul.

The young Park Yong Chon’s first competition was while in Middle School, and he describes himself as having been “tense.” By the third year of Middle School though, he won his first gold medal.

It was several years later in 1985 while studying Management at Jeonju University that he was selected to represent Korea in an international competition, specifically the Sixth World Kumdo Championships held in Paris, France. He took home a bronze medal. Not altogether bad for a first international competition.

After that, Master Park Yong Chon’s Kumdo career soared. For example, he had a run of 5 – no less – second place victories in the World Kumdo Team Championships, placing in the top ten during all of those in the individual competitions (’85, ’86, ’91, ’94 & ’97).

In 1995 and 1997 he was the first place winner in the SBS Kumdo Championships; he won the Flag of the President Championships and was twice winner of the All-Korea Championships ’94 & ’95.

He was a five time winner of the All-Korea Physical Tournaments, 1983, 1986, 1988, 1991 & 1995. During a 12 year period from 1985 to 1997 he competed with a delegation of the national team. From 1991 to 1997 he was Captain of the team.

Though he started teaching in 1992, he didn’t open his own school, the “Jeonju Kumdogwan” until December 20, 1997.

He is presently an 8th Dan in Kumdo and widely known in the international arena as a formidable Kumdo competitor. Also, he is profoundly respected for his great courtesy and gentlemanly character.

Asked who he thinks is the greatest Kumdo Master at this time Master Park responded: “There is no greatest master at this time because Kumdo is so wide and deep. So, there is no difference between first and second. The greatest master is the man who is training steadily.”

In regards to the most important principals in Kumdo training Master Park said that the “purpose of Kumdo is:

1. Learning spirit culture
2. Mind and body training
3. Technique training
4. Needs of the hard world of actuality
5. The most important aspect of Kumdo training is courtesy so it is good for the nation, parents, brothers and mutuality between people.

“... this is the spirit of Kumdo. The most important principal of Kumdo training is mind. The sword hits with the mind. Right mind and spirit are essential. In Kumdo it is important to have good training, but most important is mind and spirit.”

Asked what the word “Kumdo” means, Master Park responded, “”Kum” means “sword.” “Do” is “the road.” The training of Kumdo is walking the road.”

Asked about his plans for the future, Master Park said he wants to continue to live with Kumdo and Kumdo people. “Why?” “I love Kumdo,” he replied with an open and sincere smile.

Story by Greg Brundage

## Jeonju City

Jeonju City is both the ancient and modern capital city in the central region province of Jollabukdo. (*Photos A4-1 to A4-4*) There are about 600,000 residents.

Jeonju is the ancestral home of the founder of the Yi (Lee) Dynasty, Yi Song Gye and the city has a shrine, Kyonggijon which houses his portrait. There is a museum and a number of traditional teahouses in this culturally rich part of old Jeonju. Not far away is the old South Gate of Jeonju, called Pungnammoon. It is a beautifully well-preserved example of Yi dynasty design and engineering.

The primary industry of Jeonju is paper. Though China may claim to have made the first paper in history, Koreans can honestly claim to have the oldest *surviving* “intact” paper ever produced owing to superior paper processing. The paper museum in Jeonju is well worth the visit.

Another distinguishing characteristic of Jeonju is its' remarkable system of bike trails that can be found everywhere around the city. Jeonju is bisected by the Jeonju Chun, or River, which has beautiful bike trails along both sides.

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### **HAIDONG KUMDO**

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Since that time, they have chartered member organizations in Australia, Canada, China, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Spain, and the United States.

Traditional and Haidong Kumdo practitioners do not usually practice together. Ranks in Traditional Kumdo usually are very slow to attain. In Haidong Kumdo, however, students can usually get a First Dan in a year or two.

## Appendix 4 The Ancient Korean Hwarang Society

*and the*

The Hwarang Educational Institute in Kyongju

Training future leaders of Korea

Story by Greg Brundage

### HWARANG HISTORY

The ancient Greeks had their Spartans, later, in Europe there were the Christian Knights, and in Japan, the Samurai. All these groups had something very special in common. They trained boys to become supreme warriors.

The Korean Hwarang provided the state with well-trained elite warriors at least as far back as the wars of unification during the Silla dynasty in the mid-6<sup>th</sup> Century, predating the Samurai by several hundred years. Some of Korea's most famous generals and kings were products of Hwarang education. (See Sidebar 1)

It was under the leadership of King Chinghung (540-575) that the youth organization called "*Hwarang do*" originated. Literally meaning "flower youths" these groups trained children in military, philosophy, arts, as well as government and social institutions. As adults they become elite troops and government leaders.

King Chinghung's accomplished numerous conquests including the entire area upstream from the Han river in spite of pressures from Koguryo and Paekche kingdoms. (Joe and Choe 1997, 49)

Although the *Hwarang* were not part of the Army per se, they contributed enormously to the strength and vitality of the *Silla* army. The ever expansion oriented government aided in organization, recruitment and training of the youths. Spiritual beliefs of the *Hwarang* included belief in the Gods of *Sinkyo*: the *Ch'onji Simyuong* (God-light of heavens and earth) spirits of the holy mountains, Dragon kings of great rivers and seas, and ancestral spirits. *Hwarang* often secluded themselves in mountain retreats for prayer and "*suyang*" or mental cultivation. (*ibid*, 69)

The *Hwarang* also developed rules for human relations based on group and family-centered social life. During the time of King Chinpyong (579-631) a Buddhist Monk named Won Gwang Popsa wrote the Five Commandments for Mundane Life specifically for the *Hwarang*. They contained elements of Buddhism and Confucianism, such as serving one's sovereign with

loyalty, ones parents with filial piety, to associate with friends with sincerity, not to retreat in battle and not to destroy life, human or otherwise aimlessly. Humility and moral obligation were also emphasized.

Actual training of the *Hwarang* included martial skills like horsemanship, swordsmanship, javelin, stone throwing, football and climbing. "Through group discussions, appreciation of songs and music, pilgrimage to holy mountains, they fostered the magnanimity and infinitude of soul. They were expected to become brave soldiers and officers in war and loyal officials and leaders of government in peace." " (*ibid*, 70)

A quote from the Sorwon-nang:

"At first, knight Sórwón was made Kuksón - this is the beginning of the Hwarang institution. Thereafter a monument was erected in Myóngju, and the king had the people refrain from evil and do good, respect their superiors, and be kind to their inferiors. Thus the five constant ways (goodness, righteousness, decorum, wisdom, and fidelity), the six arts (etiquette, music, archery, horsemanship, calligraphy, and mathematics), the three teachers, and the six ministers came into use".

The Korean Hwarang system, however, was unique amongst warrior schools. For one thing, though warriors and leaders were trained there, the Hwarang school itself did not participate in wars. Graduates, like other young men, would become soldiers after their training.

**Whereas both European and Japanese warrior societies were class bound, the Hwarang had a pan-national, non-sectarian and non-class oriented structure. Though in the beginning, Hwarang were recruited from amongst the sons of nobility, later they accepted members from all levels of society.**

The Hwarang was also a "springboard" for upward social mobility. In addition to archery (*See Sidebar 2*), swordsmanship and unarmed fighting, ethics in the form of moral virtue, poetry and Buddhist philosophy were also taught. Historians agree that the essence of the Hwarang training revolved around self-sacrifice for the sake of the state.

Undoubtedly the psychophysical aspects of Hwarang training allowed them to fight fearlessly in the endless series of wars that typified the Silla dynasty. It was in 668 AD that the Silla Kingdom defeated *Baekje* and *Koguryo* Kingdoms, unifying the country. Hwarang were at the forefront of those battles for unification.

Five precepts of the Hwarang:

1. Loyalty to the monarch

2. Filial piety to parents
3. Amicability among friends
4. No retreat in war
5. Aversion to unnecessary killing

### **THE HWARANG EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF KYONGJU, SOUTH KOREA**

Conceived of in 1970 and finished in 1973, the Hwarang Educational Institute of Kyongju is unbelievably beautiful! The manicured gardens, classic architecture, solid curriculum, and the dedicated professional faculty and staff add up to one of the world's most exclusive classical military arts educational institutions. But, like the Hwarang itself, this school is not "exclusive" in terms of those who can attend.

**Looking around, one would naturally presume it is for the wealthy and privileged only. Not so! In fact, all first year high school students in Gyongsang-bukdo province are invited to spend four days here - free of charge!**

Years ago, it was open to the youth of Korea in general, however, due to its' extreme popularity, the institute had to restrict the student body to only provincial high school students.

On weekends, however, locals and visitors can tour the grounds, and even practice on the archery range if they are so inclined. The faculty and staff are very friendly! Warning: In traditional Korean archery, the targets are 145 meters away!

Most international sports competitions involving Korea are also aided by the Hwarang Education Institute. This includes the 1988 Olympics and various Asian Games.

The stated objectives of the modern Hwarang institute are to "train young students to inherit and develop the spirit of 'Hwarang' (Ancient Youths Leaders) and to bring up true and sensible 'New Hwarangs' who will glorify their nation in every respect."

The Hwarang Educational Institute is located in Kyongju City. Kyongju was the ancient capital city of the Silla dynasty. It is a city abundant in history, culture and arts. A visit to South Korea without stopping in Kyongju would be incomplete indeed!

### **Famous Hwarang trained military leaders included:**

- Admiral Yi Sun Shin who invented the famous armored "turtle" ships that saved Korea from Japanese invasion.
- Kim Yu-Shin who effectively unified Korea (595 – 673)
- Jukji a top Silla dynasty military leader serving under Kim Yu Shin (Seventh Century)

- Gwisan and Chuhan, known for their self-sacrificial deaths in the battle with Baekje in 602.
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Most Koreans agree that Korea's most famous ruler was Great King Sejong, 4<sup>th</sup> ruler of the Joson dynasty. A product of Hwarang education he was a brilliant inventor, and among other things created the modern system of Korean writing, Hangul. It is thanks to his efforts that Korea has a phonetic system of writing, rather than a character based system, like Chinese and Japanese. His advances in the arts and sciences are legion. He is also credited with inventing the water clock and sundial.

### **Korean Archery (kukkoong)**

Korean Archery (kukkoong) is an ancient art dating back to prehistoric times yet alive and well today. For more on this subject, see Thomas Duvernay's webside at [http://www.atarn.org/korean/IA\\_kr\\_1.htm](http://www.atarn.org/korean/IA_kr_1.htm).

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Translations of numerous Shilla dynasty documents including the Sorwon-nang, can be found at: <http://www.hwarangdo.com/hwarang.htm#wonhwa>

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