

PEOPLE & EVENTS OF TAEKWONDO'S FORMATIVE YEARS

DAKIN BURDICK, M.A.



DON BURNS, SIXTH-DAN
TAEKWONDO INSTRUCTOR,
AWARDS A SECOND-DAN
RANKING TO HIS
DAUGHTER, JENNIFER.

The rise of *taekwondo* is an extraordinary tale. Founded only forty years ago, it has grown so vigorously that it has become one of the most popular martial arts in the world. During its formative years, taekwondo was nearly indistinguishable from its parent art, Okinawan *karatedo*. The Korean *kongsudo* (empty hands way) and *tangsudo* (Tang [Dynasty] hands way; Tang Soo Do) of the late 1940's became the *taesudo* (kick fist way) of the 1950's. In the 1960's, taesudo was renamed taekwondo and thereafter received the official support of the South Korean Government, developing into a uniquely Korean martial art. The building of the *Kukkiwon* and formation of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) in the 1970's

largely finalized the system of modern taekwondo. The internationalization of taekwondo begun by General Choi Hong-hi in the 1960's was continued by the WTF in the 1970's, which resulted in the introduction of taekwondo into the 1988 and 1992 Olympics as a demonstration sport. In 2000, taekwondo will become the second Asian martial art (the first being judo) to become an official Olympic sport.¹

Of course, most literature on taekwondo describes the art as "thousands of years old," but this is simply not so. Most of the martial arts practiced in Korea before the nineteenth century were merely reflections of Chinese martial arts. The three most common pieces of evidence for the antiquity of taekwondo—the tomb murals of Koguryo Kingdom, the statue of *Kumkang-Yuksa*, and the *Muye dobo tongji* (*Illustrated Manual of Martial Arts*)—actu-

ally show that early Korean martial arts were largely derivative of Chinese martial arts.

First, Koguryo Dynasty (37 B.C.-668 A.D.) tomb murals do indeed show martial arts being practiced, but these murals are now located in modern Manchuria, not Korea. This of course is a mere technicality, since the Koguryo Kingdom included much of both northern Korea and Manchuria, but it is also true that the Koguryo Kingdom was heavily influenced by the Chinese. In fact, Koguryo was the easternmost outpost of Han Dynasty China (206 B.C.-220 A.D.),² and the martial arts depicted in Koguryo tomb murals closely resemble those in the tomb murals of the Eastern Han, located in what is now eastern China. This suggests that the form of Koguryo era martial arts emerged because of Chinese cultural influence, rather than independent development by the future Koreans. Second, the statue of *Kumkang-Yuksa* at Sokkuram, which is often cited as the figure of an ancient warrior practicing taekwondo, is in fact a Buddhist guardian figure found throughout East Asia, and thus cannot be said to be unique to Korea either. Last, and most conclusively, the *Muye dobo tongji* of the 1790's describes Chinese tactics and martial skills including *quanfa* (fist law, or fist method), quotes classical Chinese sources, and was written by a scholar famed for his erudition in classical Chinese. Indeed, it seems nearly identical to the *Jixiao Xinshu* (*New Book for Effective Discipline*, 1561) by the Chinese General Qi Jiguang (1528-1587). Thus, the three pieces of evidence most often cited as supporting the existence of an ancient form of taekwondo actually support the opposing viewpoint and demonstrate that Korean martial arts imitated Chinese martial arts until at least 1800.³

THE INDIANA UNIVERSITY
TAEKWONDO CLUB GIVING
A DEMONSTRATION FOR
THE SPECIAL OLYMPICS.

All photos courtesy
of Dakin Burdick.

The most popular martial art in Korea prior to the nineteenth century was *kwonbop* (Mandarin, *quanfa*). *Kwonbop* entered Korea through its close association with China, especially through the Koguryo Dynasty, as already mentioned. When Koguryo King Kwanggaeto sent warriors to aid Sinra (Silla) against Japanese pirates, they also trained Sinra warriors who later became the core of the famous warrior band, the *hwarang* (flower boys). The *hwarang* are often described as the finest warriors in Korean history, but they trained in *kwonbop*, a Chinese martial art. The Chinese martial arts achieved their greatest fame during the Tang Dynasty and, as a result, *kwonbop* is sometimes referred to as *tangsu* (Tang hand). Incidentally, this fame was also reflected by Okinawans, since *karate* originally meant “Tang hand” before Hanshiro Choma (1896-1945) changed the characters to “empty hand” in 1905. A third term for Chinese martial arts in Korea was *subak* (striking hand), although *kwonbop* remained the most popular of the various terms (Draeger, 1974, 3:127; Chun, 1976:45; McCarthy & Parulski, 1984:3; Hassell, 1984:58-61; Higaonna, 1985:19; Young, 1993:46, 48, 50; Della Pia, 1994:68).⁴

The only uniquely Korean martial arts before the twentieth century were *ssirum* and *taekkyon*. *Ssirum* was a form of wrestling that became popular as a sport by the thirteenth century. It is still practiced in Korea, but had no obvious effect on the development of taekwondo. *Taekkyon* appeared in the early 1800's, about the same time that the Chinese martial arts became less popular, and in its modern form is an art emphasizing circular kicking, leg sweeps, and leg trapping followed by a throw. There does seem to be some link between modern *taekkyon* and taekwondo, since both arts have circular kicking (e.g., roundhouse kicks, spinning kicks), but any influence that *taekkyon* may have had upon taekwondo's development was not evident in the techniques of the latter until the 1960's.

Koreans in the late nineteenth century valued scholarship, not athleticism and, by 1900, there was little serious interest in the martial arts of either China or Korea, except perhaps as games for children to play at festivals. Interest in *taekkyon* was further reduced because it was popularly associated with thugs and criminals. By 1945, there were only two masters of the art left, so few people had the chance to study the art at all. It was not until Song Dok-ki and Song Hwan gave a *taekkyon* demonstration in 1958 at a birthday party for Republic of Korea (ROK; South Korea) President Yi Sung-man (aka. Lee Sung-man and Rhee Syng-man) that there was a resurgence of interest in the art. This renewal of interest preceded taekwondo's development into a more circular style, which took place in the late 1960's and early 1970's. This suggests that taekwondo's transition may have been in part due to the recognition of *taekkyon*'s circular traditions (World Taekwondo, 1977:38-39; Traditional Taekyun,

WOMEN'S COMPETITION
DURING THE 1993
U.S.T.U. NATIONALS IN
MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL.
ERIN PATTISON AT TOP.



1977:30-31; Draeger & Smith, 1981:76; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:380; Kim, 1992:60-61; Young, 1993:44-69).⁵

On the other hand, Japanese occupation of Korea from 1894 to 1945 had an enormous impact on the Korean people. Japan originally entered Korea in 1894. China came to Korea's aid but was defeated in the Sino-Japanese War (1894). When Japanese agents murdered Queen Min in 1896, King Kojong sought protection at the foreign legations, and the Russian legation sheltered him from the Japanese for nearly a year. Japan later defeated Russian claims to the area in the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), at which point the U.S. tacitly recognized Japanese control of Korea with the Taft-Katsura Memorandum (1905). Japan then reduced the Korean Army and took over the government. The Korean emperor was forced to abdicate in 1907 and, in 1910, Korea was officially annexed to Japan. Segregated Korean and Japanese public schools were established, with the Koreans receiving an inferior education. There was little attempt by the Koreans to revolt, except for the assassination of Japanese Prince Ito Hirobumi in 1909 and the disastrous Declaration of Independence in 1919, in which the Japanese army killed thousands of Korean demonstrators. As the years passed, Japanese control tightened further. The Japanese language rather than Korean was taught in the schools and many Koreans raised in that era still cannot read Korean. During the Second World War, over half a million Koreans were taken to Japan to work, primarily in mining and heavy industry. Sixty thousand of these died in Japan during the war. Back home, Korean women were forced to serve as “comfort women” (prostitutes) for the Japanese Army. By the time freedom finally arrived in 1945, the Koreans had little love for the Japanese (Fairbank, 1978:618; Dower, 1986:47; Mulling, 1989:87-88; Clark, 1994:42).

The fifty year occupation by the Japanese greatly influenced Korean martial arts. Japanese educational curricula were imposed in all Korean schools, which meant that before the Japanese banned the practice of fighting arts in Korea in 1909, all Korean boys were taught the sportive forms of *judo* and *kendo*. The Japanese ban on the martial arts in 1909 was not able to suppress their practice completely. In fact, Park Yeon-hee (1988) and Han Bong-soo believe that the ban actually increased their practice, which moved to the Buddhist monasteries, a traditional place of refuge for out-of-favor warriors. Despite its unsavory association with young brawlers, *taekkyon* continued to be practiced at youth festivals (*tan o nol*) until the art was outlawed in 1920. Among its practitioners were Song Dok-ki (1893-1987) and Han Il-dong. According to Hancock (1994:17), Hwang Kee (b. 1913) studied *taekkyon* with “family friends” and *subakki* with “an uncle.” Oyama Masutatsu (1923-1994; born Choi Yong-i) also recalls studying *chabi* (aka. *taiken*; a combination of *kenpo* and *jujutsu*) in a Korean primary school in 1932, as well as from a North Korean farm hand who also taught him “Shaolin gongfu” on his father's farm (World Taekwondo, 1977:38-39; Choi, 1972:19, 513; Draeger & Smith, 1981:74; Park, Park & Gerrar, 1988:3; Barry, 1988; Choi, 1993). Lee Nam-suk (b. 1925) and a few of his friends began training after discovering a few martial arts books in Chinese that the Japanese had failed to destroy. Lastly, Kim Ki-whang (1920-1993) was able to begin judo in Korea in 1931, despite the Japanese ban.⁶

Of course, the ban on fighting arts did not include members of the Japanese Army stationed in Korea and several important martial artists began their careers there. About the time of the Russo-Japanese War, Koizumi Gunji studied *kenjutsu* and *jujutsu* in Korea at a school run by Yamada Nobukatsu. In 1918, Koizumi started what is now the oldest judo club in Britain, the Budokwai. Many years later, Yamaguchi Teruo began learning karatedo while stationed in Korea (Koizumi, 1960:17; Ivan, 1984:44-45).

Nor did the ban include Koreans training in Japan. At least nine Koreans trained in Japan: Choi Yong-shul, Yung Ge-ka, Cho Hyung-ju, Lee Won-kuk, Ro Pyong-chik, Choi Hong-hi, Choi Yong-i, Kim Ki-whang, and Yun Pyung-in. Choi Yong-shul (1890-1986) claims to have trained for many years in *Daito-ryu aikijutsu* under Takeda Sokaku, although his claims are not recognized by the followers of Ueshiba Morihei, the founder of *aikido*. Choi later returned to Korea and taught *yusul* (*jujutsu*), which one of his students, Jae Ji-han, later called *hapkido* (the way of collecting energy). The other eight Koreans trained in karatedo.

Yung Ge-ka was the head instructor of the *Kanbukan* (Korean Martial Arts Hall) in Japan, which was later renamed the *Renbukan* (Training Martial Arts Hall) under Nakamura Norio. Cho Hyung-ju (b. 1907) moved to Japan, changed his name to So Nei-chu, and trained in *Goju-ryu karatedo* under Miyagi Chojun in high school, becoming a karatedo instructor in 1939. According to Hancock (1994:17), Lee Won-kuk learned *Shotokan karatedo* while attending school in Japan. Ro Pyong-chik studied at a Japanese university during the Second World War, during which time he also studied under Funakoshi Gichin (1868-1957) and earned his first *dan* (black belt rank) in Shotokan karatedo before returning to Korea in 1944.

Choi Hong-hi (b. 1918) and Choi Yong-i both went to Japan in the late 1930's, earned their second dan in karatedo before being drafted into the Japanese Army in 1943, and later became famous karate experts. Choi Hong-hi went to Japan in 1938, earned his second dan in karatedo at Tokyo University, and then taught at the Tokyo YMCA. After the war, he returned to Korea and later became known as the "father" of taekwondo. Choi Yong-i went to Japan in 1937 to study at a boy's military academy and later at Takushoku University in Tokyo. He studied karatedo at Funakoshi Gichin's Shotokan dojo, served in the Japanese Army, and then trained in *Goju-ryu karatedo* for two years under So Nei-chu. He went on to become one of the most famous karate practitioners in the world, although Japanese immigration laws had forced him to take a new Japanese name. The name he chose was Oyama Masutatsu and he became famous as the founder of *Kyokushin-kai karatedo*, who fought bulls with his bare hands.

Kim Ki-whang began judo in 1931 and earned his first dan from the Kodokan five years later. He went on to study karatedo at Nihon University in Tokyo, where he captained the team and was nicknamed "Typhoon." He later spent two years "studying kenpo and gongfu in China," probably as one of the draftees of the Japanese Army.

Yun Pyung-in (1918-c.1953) was raised in Manchuria and studied *quanfa* there before also attending college at Nihon University. He trained there with one of the faculty members, Toyama Kanken (1888-1966), who also

happened to be the founder of *Shudokan karatedo*. Before Yun returned to Korea, Toyama recognized him as a fourth dan in his style.⁷

The Japanese ban on martial arts in Korea was lifted in 1943, first for judo and then for karatedo and Chinese martial arts. For the two years before Japan's surrender, the martial arts enjoyed a new popularity in Korea. The actions of Korean martial artists in Korea in those days remains largely unknown (Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:128).

At least four Japanese martial arts remained popular in Korea after liberation, albeit under their Koreanized names. Koreans continued to study *yudo* (judo), *kumdo* (*kendo*), *yusul* (*jujutsu*), and *kongsudo* (karatedo). The Korean Yudo Association was founded in October 1945 by Lee Mum-suk and Han Jin-hee; the Korean Kumdo Association (KKA) was organized in Seoul in 1948. The KKA became affiliated with the Korean Amateur Sports Association on November 20, 1953, and in the same year the Korean Yudo College was founded with Dr. Lee Je-hwang as its first president. Both *yudo* and *kumdo* remained virtually unchanged from their Japanese namesakes. On the other hand, *yusul* and *kongsudo* have changed greatly since Korean liberation. *Yusul* developed into *hapkido* and all of its derivatives (*kuksul*, *hwarangdo*, etc.), while *kongsudo* would eventually go through the greatest changes of all, developing into *tangsudo* and *taekwondo*.

The various schools of *kongsudo* retained much of the style of karatedo for many years, including the various karatedo kata. Many *tangsudo* schools today still retain the karatedo forms. As late as 1965, Choi Hong-hi (the "father of taekwondo") was still teaching *Shorin-ryu* and *Shorei-ryu* forms (including *Heian 1-5*, *Empi*, *Rohai*, *Bassai*, *Kusanku*, *Jion*, *Tekki 1-3*, *Hangetsu*, and *Jitte*) along with his own forms, called the *Chang Hon set*.⁸ "Taekwondo is identical to Japanese karate," asserted Cho [Henry] Sihak in 1968. Cho also noted that "some of the Korean public still use the 'karate' pronunciation in conversation" (Introducing, n.d.; Cho, 1968:17, 19; *Black Belt*, 1977:68-69; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983: 404; Choi, 1993, 1:35).

All authorities are agreed that at least five schools of karatedo appeared in Korea in the two years following liberation. According to John Corcoran, the Chongdokwan, Mudukkwan, and Yunmukwan were the first to surface, but were quickly followed in 1946 by the Chidokwan, Changmukwan, and Sangmukwan. Hwang Kee (1978) says that the Mudukkwan, Yunmukwan, Changmukwan, Chongdokwan, and Sangmukwan were all "in existence" at the end of the Japanese occupation. All of these schools were located in Seoul, with the exception of the Sangmukwan, which was first located in Kaesong but later moved to Seoul. At least two of these schools—the Chongdokwan and Changmukwan—were founded by Koreans who had studied karatedo in Japan.

Lee Won-kuk (Lee Won-gook) founded the Chongdokwan (True Path Hall) after his return from Japan in January 1944. Lee's school was located in Yong Chun, Seoul. When Lee retired, Son Duk-sung took over the kwan, which would become one of the largest and most important of the kwans. Son recalls that there were many gangsters and American soldiers in Seoul after World War II and, as a result, "fighting was rampant." The schools helped the police and anyone with a black belt was given "an honorary badge."⁹

Hwang Kee (aka. Hang Ki-chang) founded the Mudukkwon (Martial Virtue Hall) on November 9, 1945. A railway worker, Hwang is said to have studied Chinese martial arts (*guoshu*)¹⁰ while working on the Japanese railroads in Manchuria in 1936 and after. Robert Shipley (1975) believes Hwang “probably studied a hard style of karate similar to Shorin” as well. This is supported by Hancock (1994), who notes that Hwang claimed Yamaguchi Gogen “as a personal friend.” Yamaguchi, nicknamed “The Cat,” was the founder of Japanese Goju-Kai karatedo and was also in Manchuria in 1939, so Hwang could have studied with him at that time. Yamaguchi was a Japanese intelligence officer stationed near the Russian border and Hwang also was near the Russian border during at least one point in his travels (he has mentioned being at the town of Manchuli). From an examination of his later writings, Hwang certainly seems to have been much more influenced by Japanese karatedo than by Chinese *guoshu*. The basic forms (*pumsae*) of tangsudo are nearly identical to the Shotokan karatedo forms. They include the three Kijo pumsae (based on the three Taikyokyu kata), the five Pyong-Ahn pumsae (based upon the five Heian kata), and “Basahee” (*Bassai*). On the other hand, the advanced pumsae are named after Chinese styles, including *Taigukkwon* (Great Absolute Fist; Mandarin, *Taijiquan*) and *Jangkwon* (Long Fist; Mandarin, *Changquan*) (Macuch, 1975:27; The Founder, 1976:29-31; World Taekwondo, 1977:32; Dailey, 1982:26; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:124, 378; Hancock, 1994:19-20; Reed, 1994:36-39).¹¹

Besides these two famous schools, there were four other early schools about which little is known. Both Corcoran and Hwang agree that Chun Sang-sup founded the Yunmukwan in 1945, but all we know about Chun is that he was lost during the Korean war.

Corcoran and Farkas say that Pyang Yon-kue (aka. Byang Yun-gae, or Byong Yun-kwei) founded the Chidokwan in 1946, while Hwang simply states that it existed before the Korean war. Yun Pyung-in (aka. Yoon Byung-in) established a club at Kyung Sung Agricultural High School in Seoul on September 1, 1946. Yun then founded the Changmukwan teaching what he called *kwonbop* (fist law) at the Seoul YMCA. Yun may have had some training in Chinese quanfa (fist law), which he taught under its Korean name of *kwonbop*, but it is more likely that he taught the Japanese style of Shudokan karatedo, in which he was a fourth dan. The reason for this possible deception is that many of the Korean YMCA members had been members of the independence movement during the occupation and certainly they would have insisted that no foreign art be taught at the gym. On March 5, 1947, a second club was opened at in the Communications Ministry and taught by Lee Nam-suk (b. 1925). When Yun was listed as missing during the Korean war and later declared legally dead, Lee gained control of the school. Yun’s surviving instructors built a central *dojang* (school; *dojo* in Japanese) in Seoul on October 5, 1953, with Lee Nam-suk elected as its second president.

Ro Pyong-chik (aka. No Byung-gik or Roh Yung-chik) founded the Sangmukwan in 1944 after earning his first dan in karatedo in Japan and then returning to Korea. He first tried to open classes in an archery school in Kaesong, but this attempt failed. He tried again in May 1946, this time opening his own *dojang*, which was quickly forced to close because of the onset of

the Korean war. At the end of the war in 1953, he finally opened a successful school in Seoul.¹²

At least eight other schools appeared around the time of the Korean war (1950-1953). These schools included the Odokwan, Hanmukwan, Kangdukkwon, Kangmukwan, Chongmukwan, Chongkyongkwon, and the Kukmukwan. Hwang Kee claims that these were all present before the start of the Korean war, while Corcoran claims that the Odokwan and Sangmukwan were both founded in 1953-1954. The Odokwan was founded in 1953 and the Kangdukkwon was founded in 1956 (proving Hwang partially in error) but several sources claim that the Sangmukwan was founded in Kaesong before the Korean war (proving Corcoran was also partially incorrect) (Macuch, 1975:27; World Taekwondo, 1977:32; Hwang, 1978:14; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:124; Corcoran, Farkas & Soebel, 1993:128; Dussault, 1993b:23). Therefore, the time that most of these schools appeared can as yet only be approximated as the late 1940’s or early 1950’s. Most of the new kwans were offshoots of the original five. The Hanmukwan developed from the Yunmukwan and was founded by Lee Kyo-yoon. The Kangdukkwon, Kangmukwan, and Chongmukwan were all associated with the Changmukwan; while the Chongkyongkwon, Kukmukwan, and Odokwan were all associated with the Chongdokwan.¹³

Martial arts in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK; North Korea) probably disappeared after the communists took control in the 1950’s. They were certainly gone in 1981 when Karl Nicoletti visited the DPRK with a demonstration team led by Choi Hong-hi and Chuck Sereff. Nicoletti reported that “the martial arts in general, and taekwondo in particular, are virtually unknown in North Korea” (Sharrah, 1981:76-79, 95; Amos, 1983:37, 83). The only martial art he could discover was an informal form of unarmed combat called *kuksul* (national art) that was practiced by the military. Private instruction in the martial arts would tend to support resistance to the state and, like the Japanese before them, the communists did not allow such resistance. Official discouragement of private martial arts was definitely a pattern in the DPRK’s neighbor, Communist China. Nigel Sutton has reported (Sutton, 1993:106-107, 110) that private martial arts in the People’s Republic of China (PRC) were largely reduced because the communists believed that “in our socialist society we do not need to fight or to be able to defend ourselves.” In fact, at least one martial arts teacher in the PRC was “beaten to death by a crowd armed with clubs, who urged him to use his *gongfu* to defend himself.” The loss of North Korean arts is regrettable, since they would have provided an excellent source of comparison for the development of taekwondo in South Korea.

It was during the Korean war that the first serious efforts were made in the ROK to organize the various styles of kongsudo (Korean karatedo) under a single national organization. The first conference to discuss unification took place in 1946, but it was not until the 1950’s that the Korea Kongsudo Association was formed. Chung claims the association was founded at Pusan in 1951, with Chi Cho-ryon as its leader. Frankovich (1995)

AUTHOR DAKIN
BURDICK PERFORMS
NIPPOCHEN NIDAN,
A KOREAN VERSION
OF THE SECOND
TEKKI FORM FROM
SHOTOKAN KARATE.



claims the date was May 25, 1953, and that “this association did not elect a president.” Frankovich lists the vice president as Cho Young-joo (a *yudo* stylist), with Ro Pyong-chik (Sangmukwan founder) as the executive director. The various directors were Hwang Kee (founder of Mudukkwon), Chong Woo-lee (Chidokwan), Pyang Yon-kue (Chidokwan), Hyun Jong-myung (Chongdokwan), Lee Nam-suk (Changmukwan), and Kim In-hwa (yudo). Ro Pyong-chik was established as “the master instructor” and as “the chair of the rank promotion committee” (Korean Taekwondo, 1972:26; Chung, n.d.). Eventually, dissension set in and the association dissolved. Still, the movement had made an impression, for Shipley tells us that the Chongdokwan continued to describe its art as kongsudo until about 1962 (Shipley, 1975:74).¹⁴

Another contender for leadership of kongsudo was the Korean Tangsudo Association, which Hwang Kee founded in 1953. Hwang’s first manual was published in 1950. According to Shipley (Shipley, 1975:74), the style taught by the Mudukkwon was first called *hwasudo* (flowering hand way), which was changed to tangsudo in the early 1950’s to reflect “Korea’s long cultural brotherhood with China.” Hwang discovered a copy of the *Muye dobo tongji* in 1957 and began to study it extensively, using it to link tangsudo to the pre-occupation martial arts tradition of subak. This combination made tangsudo quite successful, as did a tournament that Hwang sponsored on September 18, 1958, between the teams of the national railway in honor of the sixtieth anniversary of the railway (the Seoul Railway team took first place). By 1960, the Korean government had registered tangsudo as “the Korean traditional martial art” (Korean Taekwondo, 1972:26; Chung, n.d.; The Founder, 1976: 30-31; Hwang, 1978:14, 30; Della Pia, 1994:69).¹⁵

A third contender for the leadership of kongsudo was Choi Hong-hi’s taekwondo. As mentioned before, Choi had been sent to Kyoto in 1938 for an education. Just before he left Korea, he fell afoul of a professional wrestler who promised to tear him “limb from limb” if he ever saw him again. Choi (1993, 1:39, 241) has explained that after this event, “I resolved to become a black belt holder in karate while I was in Japan.” He studied Japanese karatedo, eventually earning his second dan at the University of Tokyo. He then taught the art at the Tokyo YMCA until he was drafted into the Japanese Army. While stationed at Pyongyang in northern Korea, Choi was implicated as “the planner of the Korean Independence Movement, known as the Pyongyang Student Soldier’s Movement” and interned at a Japanese prison camp for eight months. He was sentenced to seven years in prison, during which time he taught karatedo to both jailers and prisoners. Choi was freed when the war ended in August 1945, after only a few months of imprisonment by the Japanese. His sentence probably helped his subsequent career in the Korean Army, which he joined in January 1946 as a second lieutenant. He became a company commander of the Fourth Infantry Regiment in Kwangju, where he taught karatedo to both Koreans and Americans. According to Choi:

I began to teach karate to my soldiers as a means of physical and mental training. It was then that I realized that we needed to develop our own national martial art, superior in both spirit and technique to Japanese karate.¹⁶

– Choi, 1993, 1:39

Choi rose quickly through the ranks and retained his interest in unarmed combat. He taught martial arts to both Koreans and Americans stationed at Taejon in 1946-1947. By the time Choi became the martial arts instructor for the American Military Police School in Seoul in 1948, he had achieved the rank of major. One year later he was a colonel, visiting the Ft. Riley Ground General School in Kansas. It was during this visit that Choi gave the first public demonstration of kongsudo (Korean karatedo) in the United States (Choi, 1972:514; Park, Park & Gerrar, 1988:4).

The Korean war increased attention on Korean martial arts and gave a further boost to Choi’s career. President Rhee Syng-man watched a thirty minute demonstration by Korean masters in 1952. He was so impressed by Nam Tae-hi’s¹⁷ demonstration of breaking thirteen roofing tiles that he questioned Nam’s superior, Choi Hong-hi, about the arts and then ordered all soldiers to receive training in kongsudo. Lee Haeng-ung (founder of Songahm Taekwondo) later recalled that “there was an instructor shortage” in Korea in the early 1950’s, and “it was hard to find a dojang,” probably both because of the youth of the art in Korea and because many instructors were in the military. Various military units trained in kongsudo distinguished themselves in the war, including the Korean Twenty-Ninth Infantry Division (formed by Choi in 1953) and the Black Tigers, an elite unit involved in espionage and assassination missions behind enemy lines. Many lives were lost in the conflict. Chun Sang-sup (founder of the Yunmukwan) and Yun Pyung-in (founder of the Changmukwan) were both listed as missing in action. Chong Woo-lee took over control of the Yunmukwan, while Lee Nam-suk took over the Changmukwan. Covert operations in the DPRK continued after the war and once again Korean martial artists (including Lee Haeng-ung) took part (Choi, 1965:297; World Taekwondo, 1972:26; Dailey, 1982: 24; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:124; Park, Park & Gerrar, 1988:4-5).

Choi Hong-hi founded the Odokwan in 1953, supported by Nam Tae-hi. The new school was based upon the principles used by the Chongdokwan, which Choi also commanded in late 1954. After Choi fell into disfavor in the ROK in the mid-1970’s, official histories of the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF) began giving Nam Tae-hi—whom Choi called “his righthand man in 1954”—sole credit for the founding of the Odokwan (Choi, 1965:297; World Taekwondo, 1977:32; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983: 124, 360; Park, Park, & Gerrar, 1988:4-5; Choi, 1993, 1:244-246).¹⁸



AN ATTACK WITH
A LEAD HOOK KICK
GETS BLOCKED.

The taekwondo movement began in 1955 when a conference of masters assembled on April 11 to again attempt to unify kongsudo. According to both Choi and Son Duk-sung, the conference chose the name of taekwondo (foot fist way). Aside from Maj. Gen. Choi, the other members of the board were Yoo Hwa-chung, Son Duk-sung, Gen. Lee Hyung-kun, Cho Kyun-kyu, Sen. Chung Dae-chun, Han Chang-won, Chang Kyung-rok, Hong Soon-ho, Ko Kwang-rae, and Hyun Jong-myung. Both Son and Choi claim credit for invention of the name “taekwondo.” Choi claims he chose the name because of its similarity to *taekkyon* and because the names *tangsudo* and *kongsudo* “connoted Chinese or Japanese martial arts.” On the other hand, Son claims that he was “directly responsible for searching out and popularizing the original name of taekwondo.” Choi claims the name was chosen on April 11, 1955, while Son claims it was chosen at the first meeting of the Chongdokwan board of directors on December 19, 1955 (Choi, 1972:19, 515-516; Son & Clark, 1983; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:128; Simpkins & Simpkins, 1992:44-52; Choi, 1993, 35, 37, 244-247).¹⁹

Despite the evidence given by Choi and Son, it is this author’s belief that taekwondo was originally called *taesudo* (foot hand way). Both Hwang Kee and Ro Pyong-chik (through Frankovich), as well as Kim Soo (through the Dussaults) give “taesudo” as the early name for the art that came to be taekwondo. Kim Jong-rok of the Kukkiwon also supports this view by stating that the Korean Taekwondo Association (KTA) was originally “the Tae Soo Do Association.” Also, Shipley recalls (1975:74): “The earliest organization that I personally experienced using this name [taekwondo] was the

ERIN PATTISON BREAKS
TWO BOARDS WITH A
FLYING SIDE-KICK.



Chongdokwan association around 1962 (they had previously gone under *kong soo do*.)” Since the head instructor of the Chongdokwan was Son Duk-sung, his use of the name “kongsudo” seven years after he supposedly introduced “taekwondo” is paradoxical. For this reason, “taesudo” will be used instead of “taekwondo” during the discussion of the next few years, even though Choi and Son (both important authorities of the era) do not acknowledge the use of “taesudo” (Hwang, 1978:14; Kim, 1992:61; Dussault, 1993a:49; Frankovich, 1995).

Contention among the schools continued for several years following the 1955 meeting. For a time, Hwang Kee’s Korean Tangsudo Association was quite successful and Hwang’s efforts to connect tangsudo with the older art of subak seemed to have paid off. After a July 1959 meeting, the Korean Kongsudo Association and the Korean Tangsudo Association merged to form the Subakdo Association with the aim of petitioning the Korean Amateur Sports Association (KASA) for membership. They hoped that renewed solidarity would win admittance since the Subakdo Association “contained all of the original kwans in one united group.” The KASA rejected their petition (Chung, n.d.; Frankovich, 1995).²⁰

After Hwang’s failure, General Choi emerged as the new leader of Korean karatedo. His style of taesudo derived much of its power through its association with the military. All Korean men were required to serve three years in the military and the military taught taesudo, not tangsudo. The Korean Taesudo Association (KTA) was founded in 1959 with the help of General Choi. After its rejection by KASA, the Subakdo Association turned to Choi Hong-hi for political support. A conference between the two groups took place in September 1959, which resulted in the creation of the KTA. When Cho Hee-il (b. 1940) joined the army in 1961 as a fourth dan in tangsudo, he became a taesudo instructor and learned the *Chang Hon* forms designed by General Choi. As a result, he is known as one of the foremost taekwondo instructors. The influence of the military had always been quite strong in the martial arts community and Choi reaped the benefits of that influence. In addition, the impact of the ROK military was about to become even stronger (Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:313).

On May 15, 1961, a military *coup d’etat* ousted the Second Republic and placed General Park Chung-hee in charge of South Korea. At the end of 1962, Park became the president of the Third Republic and he was reelected in 1967 and 1971. In 1972, he dissolved the National Assembly and suspended the Constitution. He then expanded his powers and was elected president of the Fourth Republic at the end of the year. He was reelected in December 1978, but was assassinated in 1979 by the head of his own intelligence agency. Park reigned as a dictator over the ROK for eighteen years and his military background had an enormous impact upon taekwondo’s development.

Following the *coup d’etat*, the KTA met on September 14, 1961 to elect General Choi Hong-hi as its new president, since Choi’s support of the *coup* had garnered him much influence with the new military government.²¹ Hwang Kee and Pyang Yon-kue (founder of the Chidokwan) protested the decision and left the organization permanently. The Chongdokwan, which was by then

“the largest civilian gym in Korea,” also fought unification under the KTA, instead supporting Hwang Kee’s organization, the Korean Subakdo Association (Choi, 1972:19, 515-516; Shipley, 1975:74; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:128, 404; Son & Clark, 1983; Park, Park & Gerrar, 1988:5; Man of the Year, 1990:79; Dussault, 1993b:20).²²

Resistance proved futile. The KTA became a KASA affiliate on June 25, 1962 and in January 1964, it joined the Korean Athletic Association. On October 24, 1962, taesudo also became an official event in the forty-third annual National Games of the ROK, although the KTA did not establish match rules until November 3 (these rules would be amended four times by 1967). Many instructors rejoined the KTA in 1962 when the KTA decided to retest all black belts to establish national standards, an action that seemed ominous given the obvious support of the Park government (Korean Taekwondo, 1972:15, 19, 27; Choi, 1972:19, 515-516; Shipley, 1975:74; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:128, 404; Son & Clark, 1983; Park, Park & Gerrar, 1988:5; Man of the Year, 1990:79).

Hwang Kee remained the most visible opponent of the KTA and, as a result, he was often harassed by KTA supporters. The KTA attempted to have the Mudukkwon’s charter with the Education Ministry revoked, but Hwang won the case under the Korean Supreme Court. According to Robert Shipley (1975:74), Hwang’s house was also “partially burned by ‘persons unknown’” as a result of his resistance to the taesudo movement. Hwang moved to the U.S. in May 1974, where he continued to teach tangsudo (Korean Taekwondo, 1976:29; Man of the Year, 1990:79).

National unification of taesudo was accompanied by a drive for its internationalization. Taesudo demonstration teams visited South Vietnam and Taiwan in 1959, and the art was then established in the United States (1959), South Vietnam (1962), Thailand (1962-3), Malaysia (1962), Hong Kong (1962-3), Canada (1964), Singapore (1964), West Germany (1964), Italy (1965), Turkey (1965), and the United Arab Emirates (1965). Choi Hong-hi, then a retired two-star general and ambassador to Malaysia, had himself introduced taesudo to Malaysia in 1962.

Internationalization efforts became even more fervent after the 1964 Tokyo Olympics. On August 5, 1965, the KTA was renamed the Korean Taekwondo Association and, in that same year, Choi Hong-hi led a “Good-Will Mission of Taekwondo” on a tour of fourteen countries. The Tokyo Games also inspired KASA President Min Gwan-sik in 1966 to propose that a training center be built to prepare Korean athletes for international competition. President Park assented. In response, the International Taekwondo Federation (ITF) was founded on March 22, 1966, with Choi Hong-hi appointed as president. Under the ITF, taekwondo was spread to the Netherlands (1965), Taiwan (1967), the United Kingdom (1967), and elsewhere. The year 1967 marks the apex of General Choi’s career in Korea, since it was in that year that he invited Oyama Masutatsu, by then one of the most famous karateka in Japan, to come to Seoul to discuss eventually changing Oyama’s Kyokushin-kai *karatedo* to *taekwondo* (Hwang, 1978:14; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:373; Mulling, 1989:89; Choi, 1993:35, 40, 252-253; Corcoran, Farkas, & Soebel, 1993:128; Kim, 1992:60-61; Frankovich,

1995).²³

Taekwondo continued to gain in importance in Korea in the 1970’s. Construction of the Kukkiwon, the taekwondo headquarters in Seoul, began on November 19, 1971, and the building was inaugurated on November 30, 1972. On February 14, 1972, taekwondo became a part of the official curriculum of Korea’s primary schools. It entered the middle school curricula on August 31 and, on December 5, the National High School and Middle School Taekwondo Federation was established, followed by the National Collegiate Taekwondo Federation on December 28, 1972 (Korean Taekwondo, 1972:27; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:404).

A schism between Choi Hong-hi and the KTA appeared in 1973. Choi planned to move to Toronto in 1974 and take the ITF headquarters with him. KTA President Kim Young-wun was dismayed by this move, because he believed that the international headquarters of taekwondo should remain in Korea. As a result, Kim severed the KTA’s ties to the ITF and supported the formation of a new organization, the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF), which was founded during the First World Taekwondo Championships held at the Kukkiwon from May 25 to May 28, 1973. The first WTF meeting was on May 26, and the organization was officially established on the last day of the championships. Choi responded by having J. C. Kim host the ITF’s World Taekwondo Championships in Montreal in 1974, marking his determination to compete with the WTF in Seoul (Korean Taekwondo, 1972:27; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:130, 329-330, 338, 380, 404).

The distance between the ITF and WTF widened with the years. Choi Hong-hi publicly denounced ROK President Park Chung-hee in September 1977, claiming that Park was “using taekwondo for his political ends.” Choi also made several peace overtures toward the DPRK and, in 1981, he took a demonstration team of sixteen black belts to that country for ten days. While there, he met with not only his brother (whom he had not seen for more than twenty years) and one of his aunts, but also President Kim Il-sung, who gave such audiences only on very rare occasions. Choi is responsible for the spread of taekwondo to the DPRK, and works for the re-unification of Korea. As a result of his work with North Korea, some South Koreans regard him as a traitor (Sharrah, 1981:76-79, 95; Choi, 1993, 259).



These then, were the formative years of taekwondo, which began as kongsudo. Nearly identical to the Japanese karatedo learned during the occupation of Korea, kongsudo developed new nationalistic paradigms in the 1950’s, including Hwang Kee’s tangsudo and Choi Hong-hi’s taekwondo. Hwang tried to link tangsudo with the Chinese-influenced art of subak, while Choi tied taekwondo to the indigenous art of taekkyon. For many Koreans, both subak and taekkyon represented the purity of the land before the Japanese invasion. With the 1961 military coup, Choi’s dream took precedence and, by 1973, taekwondo had spread across the world and flowered into a unique kicking style.

Many Koreans dislike admitting their debt to the Chinese and Japanese martial arts, because they feel that their earlier dependence invalidates the current standing of taekwondo. Their reasons are unfounded. First, if taekwondo was invalidated by its debt to China, then so would Okinawan kenpo and Japanese karatedo, both of which likewise stem from Chinese quanfa. Taekwondo's position as an important martial art is secure. While it is true that taekwondo was once simply Korean karatedo, it has since evolved into a uniquely Korean form under the guidance of the WTF and other organizations.

Secondly, much of the karatedo now practiced in the United States began as kongsudo. Atlee Chittim studied kongsudo in Korea in 1948 and joined the U.S. Karate Association when he returned home, eventually sponsoring entry of the "father of American taekwondo," Rhee Jhoon, into the United States in 1956. Another of Rhee's students, Allen Steen, is called a "pioneer of American karate" by John Corcoran, although Steen was trained in kongsudo. Steen's students have included such notables as Pat Bursleson ("the 'grandfather' of open tournament fighting in America"), Skipper Mullins (an "American karate champion"), Fred Wren (another "American karate champion"), and Mike Anderson (an "American karate pioneer"). Ernest Lieb studied kongsudo under Chun Il-sup and went on to become the first chairman of Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Karate and then the president of the American Karate Association. It is obvious from all these examples that Korean instructors were largely responsible for the rise of karatedo in America and therefore merit the respect of their fellow karateka (Buonocore, 1974:47; Corcoran, 1977:47-55; Yates, 1982:34-35; Corcoran, Farkas, & Soebel, 1993:304, 307, 358, 382). Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, taekwondo's meteoric rise to fame and its *de facto* position of prominence are themselves validations of its techniques.



ENDNOTES

¹ All Korean terms (except for the names of people) have been standardized to the McCune-Reischauer Romanization system; however, because Via Media Publishing Company has limited typesetting capabilities, diacritical marks are omitted in the Romanization. Japanese terms are Romanized according to the Hepburn system, while Chinese terms are Romanized according to Pinyin. Personal names are given according to Asian traditions, with surname first.

² Emperor Wu Di established the commandery of Lolang at Pyongyang in northern Korea in 108 B.C. Lolang remained a successful Chinese outpost until 313 A.D. (Fairbank, 1978:63).

³ Chen Wangting (c. 1597-1664) drew heavily from the *Jixiao Xinshu* and used those techniques to create the *Lao jia* (Old Family) system of taijiquan. General Qi's work, which is called the *Kiko Shin Sho* in Japanese, was also one of the main sources for the discussion of Chinese martial arts found in Mao

Yuanyi's *Wubeizhi* (1621). According to Patrick McCarthy, Mao's work is one of the two *Bubishi* texts revered by Okinawan karate masters, thus linking Chinese martial arts in China (*Jixiao Xinshu*) to arts in Korea (*Muye dobo tongji*), Japan (*Kiko Shin Sho*), and Okinawa (*Bubishi*) (Korean Taekwondo, 1972; Asian-Pacific Congress, 1975:153; Hwang, 1978:11, 16; Henning, 1981:174-175; China's Sports, 1984:47; Suzuki, 1984:13; DeMarco, 1992:13-14; Choi, 1993:30; DellaPia, 1994:62-71; McCarthy, 1995:26-27).

⁴ Draeger and Smith note that there were two schools of subak: the Sorim Temple and the Songkae (named after Chang Song-kae). This is a reference to the division between external styles (Kor., Sorim Temple = Man., Shaolin Temple) and internal styles (Kor., Chang Songkae = Man., Zhang Sanfeng, the legendary founder of internal styles) of China (Draeger & Smith, 1981:75).

⁵ Description of the art is from personal experience, as a member of the Indiana University Taekkyon Club, which was taught by Do Ki-hyun for a year and a half beginning in 1987. The club records are in my possession, although Dr. Linda Gray was the only black belt to be promoted by Mr. Do.

⁶ In 1983, Corcoran gave Kim Ki-whang's starting date in judo as 1935. In 1993, he gives it as 1931. I have followed the later work (Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:365, 380; Corcoran, 1993:57).

⁷ Several questions here arise from Corcoran's work. Corcoran gives Oyama's Korean name as "Yee Hyung" while Jay Gluck gives it as Choi Yong-i. I followed Gluck's spelling, since Corcoran also places Choi Hong-hi's name in the wrong order, listing his biography under the name of "Hi Choi-Hong" and referring to him as "General Hi." Secondly, Corcoran says that Kim was "a black belt in judo, karate and aikido" by the time he returned to Seoul. Lastly, Corcoran claims that "later," Kim "was one of the original founders of the Chung Do Kwan," although he came to the U.S. in 1963 as a Mudukkwan instructor (Gluck, 1962:9, 12; World Taekwondo, 1977:33; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:70, 329-330, 338, 365, 380; Dussault, 1993a:48; Corcoran, 1994:57; Hancock, 1994:18-19; Frankovich, 1983:128).

⁸ *Chang Hon* (Blue Cottage) was Choi Hong-hi's pen name and was the name for the ITF forms introduced by Choi.

⁹ Corcoran states (Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:124) that the Chongdokwan was founded in 1945, but this is probably incorrect. Ted Macuch claims (Macuch, 1975:27) that the kwan was actually founded as "an 'underground' gymnasium" in 1942 by Lee Won-kook, Son Duk-sung, and Won Ku-am, and that the Chongdokwan taught tangsudo. Hancock goes even further (Hancock, 1994:19-20), saying that Lee "reportedly operated a martial arts school, unofficially, as far back as 1933" (Chung, n.d.; World Taekwondo, 1977:32; Simpkins & Simpkins, 1995:46).

¹⁰ *Guoshu* (national art) was the term used by Chinese Nationalists to describe Chinese martial arts in the 1920's and after.

¹¹ Shipley was chairman of the Hawaii Tang Soo Do Federation in 1972, and trained in tangsudo at Osan Air Base, Korea, from 1960 to 1964 (Chuck Norris, Richard Reed, and Edward Sell also studied at Osan at that time). Macuch's history again differs from other authors. He claims that Hwang Kee founded the Mudukkwan in 1949 with the help of Chung Soo-hong (aka.

Choong Soo-hong) (Shipley, 1975:72-73).

¹² There is much confusion over these lesser-known kwans. First, Corcoran and Farkas confuse the names of Chun Sang-sup and Ro Pyong-chik (his family name is pronounced “No”), which they give as “Sup-Chun Sang” and “Jik-No Byung.” Second, the same authors also create two kwans—Chidokwan and Jidokwan—from one. *Chi* and *ji* are variant Romanizations of the same characters. Corcoran and Farkas also say that the Chidokwan was founded in 1946 by “Yon Kue Pyang” while the Jidokwan was founded in 1953-1954 by “Gae Byang Yun,” exposing the error as a simple rearrangement of Pyang’s name. Third, Myung Kwang-sik was a member of the Korea Hapkido Association and is said to have later “found a Hapkido Yon Moo Kwan.” It remains unknown whether this means that Myung’s Yunmukwan was linked to Chun’s Yunmukwan. Fourth, I have depended heavily upon Frankovich for information on Ro Pyong-chik, since Frankovich uses Ro’s own notes, translated by Ro Hee-sang, the grandmaster’s son. If Frankovich’s evidence is correct, the information of several other authors is not.

Macuch gives the year of the Sangmukwan’s founding as 1947 (Frankovich say it was founded by at least 1946) and Hwang says the school had moved to Seoul by 1950 (Frankovich says it was 1953). Lastly, Macuch gives various other information, probably spurious. He claims that the Yunmukwan was founded by Chung Sang Dom Yun, Byun Kwai, Lee Jun-woo, and Pae Yung-ki and that the Changmukwan was founded in 1948 by Yun Pyung-in and Lee Nam-suk. Macuch’s statements lack corroboration and are listed here just to be thorough (Macuch, 1975:27; Myung, 1976:14-15, 298; World Taekwondo, 1977:32; Hwang, 1978:14; Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:124; Anthony, 1983:36; Mulling, 1989:87; Dussault, 1993a:47-48; Dussault, 1993b:20; Frankovich, 1995).

¹³ According to the Dussaults, the Kangdukkwon was founded by “Park Chull Hee” (Dussault, 1993b:23).

¹⁴ Hyun Jong-myung would later attend the 1955 meeting that would lead to the founding of taekwondo. Chong Woo-lee took over the Yunmukwan after the death of its founder, according to Corcoran and Farkas. One problem with Frankovich’s data appears here, in that he claims that the name taekwondo was adopted by the Korea Kongsudo Association at the suggestion of General Choi Hong-hi (Corcoran & Farkas, 1983:124; Frankovich, 1995).

¹⁵ Frankovich disagrees with Hwang, saying that Ro’s notes show that Hwang left the Korea Kongsudo Association in November 1958 to establish his Korean Tangsudo Association (Frankovich, 1995).

¹⁶ As late as 1972, Choi claimed to have learned taekkyon as a boy from Han Il-dong before heading to Japan. He also described the art he taught to the troops as taekkyon. Nowhere in his recent fifteen volume work (1993) does he mention training in or teaching taekkyon. Choi probably claimed a knowledge of taekkyon to gain acceptance for the Japanese art of tangsudo in nationalistic post-war Korea. After he denounced the South Korean president in 1977, Choi no longer made these claims and began describing the art as karatedo. His reversal brings similar claims by other Korean martial artists into serious question (Hwang Kee, for example) (Choi, 1965:295-296; Choi, 1972:513-514; Choi, 1993:39, 241-242).

¹⁷ Nam Tae-hi was stationed at Ft. Benning, GA, in 1952 for radio communications training.

¹⁸ Frankovich claims that the Odokwan was led by Hyun Jong-myung although he admits that Choi Hong-hi was its president. Hyun seems a central figure here, since Choi himself notes that Hyun was present at the 1955 meeting that led to the naming of taekwondo (Frankovich, 1995).

¹⁹ Frankovich supports Choi’s claims (Frankovich, 1995).

²⁰ Hwang states that the Subakdo Association was incorporated on June 30, 1960 (Hwang, 1978:14).

²¹ Che Myung-sin was the first president of the KTA. In 1965, Choi claimed that he was vice president of the KTA in 1957 (two years before it was supposedly formed) and was elected president in 1960, not 1961 (Choi, 1965:297; Choi, 1972:19, 515-516; Frankovich, 1995).

²² Lee Nam-suk was appointed general director of the KTA in August 1961, but resigned in January 1962. Lee again became general director in 1967 and then vice president from 1969-1972 (Korean Taekwondo, 1972:15, 19, 27).

²³ Frankovich says that Ro Pyong-chik was president of the KTA from 1966 to 1967 and served as the chairman of the Rank Promotion Committee from 1962 to 1969 (Frankovich, 1995).

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