

The Chung Bong Poomse: True Korean Forms

written by:

Robert Frankovich

3rd Degree Black Belt

written: October 20, 1995

Tae Kwon Do Song Moo Kwan was one of the original eight kwans recognized by the Korean government in 1945. Song Moo Kwan, the Pine Tree School, was founded by Byung Jick Ro in Seoul shortly after World War II and was one of the kwans that followed in General Choi's attempt to unify the Korean martial arts under the name Tae Kwon Do. Grandmaster Ro had trained with the Shotokan Karate founder, Gichin Funakoshi. When Song Moo Kwan was first taught, Grandmaster Ro used the forms that were taught to him by Funakoshi. When the kwans began to appear, each had its own philosophy and teachings. One concept that made Song Moo Kwan different from the others is that they felt many of the techniques were being taught incorrectly because the hips were not involved enough while doing the techniques. After the unification of the kwans, Grandmaster Ro started to teach the poomse that had been developed by General Choi. These were used, and still are by some Song Moo Kwan instructors, until 1974 when a student of Grandmaster Ro designed the Chung Bong poomse. Master Jay Hyon had come to Minneapolis, MN in the early 1960's and established the Karate Center. Master Hyon developed the Chung Bong poomse, which he introduced to his students, and replaced the poomse of General Choi. It is still unclear if these poomse have become the "official" poomse of Song Moo Kwan, but even today the Grandmaster's son Hee Sang Ro teaches them at the dojang (gymnasium for training in the Way). These poomse have become a very valuable training method for many students, it is unfortunate Master Hyon only developed seven poomse before his retirement.

The Chung Bong poomse are quite widely different from the other poomse used by Tae Kwon Do schools for several reasons. These are: 1) the number of and percentage of kicks, 2) the type of kicks used, 3) introduction of new techniques, and 4) the variation in stances.

Chung Bong poomse have a large number of kicks in each pattern while keeping the number of movements similar to those of other poomse patterns.

The following chart demonstrates this information.

Form	Number of Movements	Number of Kicks	Percent of Kicks
Chung Bong One	21	8	38.0
Chung Bong Two	27	8	29.6
Chung Bong Three	23	12	52.1
Chung Bong Four	37	14	37.8
Chung Bong Five	39	16	41.0
Chung Bong Six	45	17	37.8
Chung Bong Seven	51	5	9.8
TOTAL	243	80	32.9

The Pyung-An/Hei-An set have only 31 kicks through 586 movements (5.29%) in 15 poomse, the Chon-ji set has 94 kicks through 736 movements (12.77%) in 20 poomse, the Taeguk set contains 45 kicks through 168 movements (26.79%) in 8 poomse, and the Pal-Gwe set (with Ki-Cho 1) has 25 kicks through 214 movements (11.68%) in 9 poomse (statistics taken from "Korean Forms" by Rick Clark in TaeKwonDo Times, November 1995). In comparison, the Chung Bong poomse average the same number of movements through seven patterns but contain a greater number of kicks per pattern for a larger over all percentage of kicks used.

The Chung Bong poomse are unique in that they introduce techniques sooner than their counterparts from other kwans. The time at which a student is required to learn a specific technique varies from one set of poomse to another. The Chung Bong poomse challenge a student from the start by requiring the three basic kicks be learned for the first poomse. This differs from the Taeguk poomse, which has only a front kick in the first poomse and does not introduce the side kick until the fourth and the round kick until the sixth. This slower progression can also be seen in the Palgwe poomse which introduces a front kick in the fifth poomse and the side kick in the seventh. The Palgwe poomse do not use a round kick in their formal training set. Also General Choi's poomse do not use a front kick until the third poomse, the side kick until the fourth and the round kick until the eighth.

In Chung Bong poomse, the kicks are not only introduced quickly, but there are variations used. This can be seen in Chung Bong One by having Front Thrust kicks done in the beginning of the pattern and Front Snap kicks done at the end. Although there are variations, the poomse keep with the belief of using the hips more effectively to throw the kicks. This includes using only a thrusting Side kick within the poomse. The reasoning behind this is that if a snapping Side kick would be used, a Round (or Roundhouse) kick would be more effective.

This is not to say that there are no similarities in the movements within the Chung Bong set to those in other poomse sets. In fact they contain the long and deep stances as seen in the Palgwe poomse and have the ability to be adapted for combat as easily as any of the poomse sets that are used today including the Taeguk poomse used by the World Tae Kwon Do Federation (WTF). These stances help in the physical development of the student and also teach how the hips become involved in techniques.

The Chung Bong poomse, also, use "intermediate" stances for moving into a follow-up technique. Variation in stances make these poomse a challenge to the student. Not only are many different stances used but some are unusual and modified. These modified stances allow the students to see how different strategies can be used and to help develop more flexibility in their movements. This flexibility allows each student to adapt techniques to compliment their strengths.

Modified stances are often used as "intermediate" positions for moving from technique to technique. A "half-front" stance is used in Chung Bong Four to help the student move from a defensive posture to an offensive one. This poomse has the student in a back stance executing a down block, then shifting forward to a half-front stance while performing a ridgehand with the lead arm and followed by a rear leg side kick then setting down into a front stance doing a reverse punch.

Another example of a modified stance can be found in Chung Bong Seven. The use of a stance similar to the "archer's stance" as found in some Chinese martial arts is used to

draw an opponent closer causing an over extension of the attacking technique and loss of proper positioning without the student moving beyond his range of effectiveness.

One of the other similarities to the poomse used by different kwans is the combat adaptability of the techniques in the poomse. Many of the techniques have been put together in such a way that they allow for very effective combinations when applied to combat and sparring situations. The Taeguk and Palgwe poomse have this quality, but as stated before are slower at introducing techniques to the student. The Chung Bong poomse present effective combinations from the beginning with Chung Bong One. Not only are the front kick/lunge punch combinations (which can be translated into front kick/jabs) at the start of the poomse but the rear leg round kick/lead arm extension/reverse punch (as described earlier with the modified stances), used latter in the poomse, is easily changed to a rear leg round kick/jab/reverse punch. This concept can be found all through the Chung Bong poomse while using a variety of techniques in combination.

Poomse are one of the most important parts of the Tae Kwon Do students training. It allows the student to learn and study techniques, to develop a greater understanding of them, and the best way in which to apply them. All serious forms training will benefit the student no matter which poomse set is learned. A student who understands the purpose of poomse training will be able to adapt the techniques to combat/sparring situations and the strategies to conflicts found in everyday life. Instructors who know their poomse will be able to help their students through any difficulties that they may encounter.

Often Tae Kwon Do students have not learned the origins of their kwans and have no knowledge of its history other than General Choi's advancements, if that. This seems strange when other arts such as Aikido tell of their origins and never forget the founder, O'Sensei, when material and techniques are passed on to the students. It seems that Tae Kwon Do has forgotten its inception and evolution. The martial arts can help people to grow and learn about themselves but if the histories and traditions are not taught, students will not develop the respect that has been passed from generation to generation. Without tradition and history, a martial art is only a collection of techniques.

The evolution of Tae Kwon Do will continue throughout its existence. What direction it will go is largely determined by how well the students have developed as generations pass. The development of new poomse sets will also occur. The quality of these new poomse will be dependent upon the depth of understanding the student has, the amount of effort put into developing them, the connection to the history and evolution, and current environmental factors. The factors that have lead to the creation of poomse now used will change, but it seems that may be the Chung Bong poomse set is the most advanced set to date by using ideas from the past and incorporating modern concepts.