

The Little Known Forms of Tae Kwon Do: The Chung Bong Poomse of Tae Kwon Do Song Moo Kwan

written by:

Robert Frankovich

2nd Degree Black Belt

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There have been many books published on Tae Kwon Do poomse (forms), but not all of the sets have been represented. One can find many books and articles written about Tae Kwon Do Moo Duk Kwan and the Palgwe poomse that are used with that school or on the poomse that were developed by General Choi and the birth of Tae Kwon Do. This is all well and good until you realize that these cover only a small part of Tae Kwon Do. Some of the original kwans (schools) have nothing written about them which can cause a student from these kwans to wonder if they are actually learning Tae Kwon Do or something that was made up on the plane from Korea.

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 Jik 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 that 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 set up 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 (training hall) after Master Hyon retired from teaching. These poomse have become a very valuable training method for many students, unfortunately Master Hyon only developed seven poomse before his retirement.

These poomse are very unique in the fact that they introduce techniques sooner than their counterparts from other kwans and that they use "intermediate" stances for moving into a follow-up technique. This is not to say that there are no similarities in these to other poomse sets. In fact they use 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 Taeguek poomse used by the World Tae Kwon Do Federation (WTF).

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 Taeguek 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 first uses 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. The kicks are not the only techniques that are introduced quickly, the blocks and hand strikes are also.

It was already mentioned that these poomse use the long and deep stances as seen in many Japanese martial arts. These stances help in the physical development of the student and teaches how the hips become involved in technique. Variation in stances make these poomse a challenge to the student also. 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 for use with their strengths.

Modified stances are often used as "intermediate" positions for moving from technique to technique. A "half-front" stance (figure 1) 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 doing a down block, then shifting forward to a half-front stance while doing 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" (figure 2) as found in some Chinese martial arts is used to draw an opponent closer causing an over extension of the attacking technique and lose of proper positioning of the attacker 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 Taeguek 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 forms training, if done seriously, will benefit the student no matter which poomse set is learned. A student who understands what the poomse are for 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.

Since the poomse are only as good as the instructor teaching them, all poomse are good by themselves. Even though a united Tae Kwon Do would be preferable to a politically splintered art, the origins of the first kwans should not be forgotten or ignored. The original kwans have given life to many of today's martial artists so the original versions of techniques should be brought forward also. Often Tae Kwon Do students have not learned the beginnings 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 where it came from and how it evolved. The martial arts can help people to grow and learn about themselves but if the histories and traditions are not taught, students will not be helped to learn the respect that has been passed from generation to generation. Without tradition and history, a martial art is nothing but a collection of techniques.