

Taekwondo Poomsae: The Fighting Scrolls

GUIDING PHILOSOPHY AND BASIC APPLICATIONS



KINGSLEY UMOH

Photograph by Ubong Umoh

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Guiding Philosophy and Basic Applications

By Kingsley Umoh



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Strategic Book Publishing and Rights Co.
12620 FM 1960, Suite A4-507
Houston, TX 77065
www.sbpri.com

ISBN: 978-1-63135-583-7

Book Design: Suzanne Kelly

Dedication

This book is dedicated to my parents, Akpan Johnny Umoh and Ekaette Akpan Umoh for their steadfast love and belief in me, to my wife Patricia and children Enobong and Sunil for being able to draw smiles from me even in my moments of frustration, and to the millions of others in the Taekwondo family who find the energy regularly to go through yet another day's hard physical training.

About the Author

Kingsley Ubong Umoh was only fourteen when he took his first step from being an ardent fan of the Hong Kong Kung Fu movies into the practical world of Taekwondo Jidokwan training in the early 1980s. As most inveterate martial artists would discover, the exciting world of flying kicks and somersaults was very different from the hardships of intense training so difficult that it would sometimes appear that the master was actively trying to discourage his students from continuing further classes.

Thus was taught the first lesson of perseverance and indomitable spirit. He counts himself fortunate to have trained variously with different instructors to achieve different perspectives which are important to round out one's knowledge of Taekwondo. To this day, it is his firm conviction that the serious student of the Korean martial arts must avail himself or herself the knowledge and wisdom of more than one teacher.

After graduating from high school, Umoh gained admission into the University of Ibadan in Nigeria to study medicine in 1984. He quickly located the university's Taekwondo club and restarted his training. To his surprise and chagrin, his yellow belt which had been achieved through a double promotion wasn't recognized in his new club and he had to join the ranks of the beginners. This was a blessing in disguise, as he was being taught important lessons in humility.

He continued to train regularly, always looking forward to the next class. During holidays while his peers were mostly engaged in other leisurely activities, he would continue his training at two separate clubs in Lagos, the old capital city. In no time, he developed more skills and became the senior student at his university club, even as others dropped out, ultimately achieving his first dan black belt in 1988.

Taekwondo was undergoing a revolution at this time with its inclusion into the Olympic Games, and like thousands of students he harbored dreams of competing at that elite level, but this was not to be his destiny. He soon graduated as a doctor in 1990.

His interest in literature was firmly established in childhood, as he was usually found devouring novels and encyclopedia. An example of his early interest in writing came when he created a manual of poomsae with the erstwhile aim of assisting his fellow university students which was never published. However, the germ of this idea remained buried within him until now.

As a junior medical doctor, the pressures of caring for the sick and raising a family deviated Umoh's attentions from a competition career in Taekwondo, aligning him on a different path. Rather than being a source of frustration, it opened new doors into his study of Taekwondo. He began to query his previous understanding of the martial arts, embarking on a road less travelled at that time.

This book is the product of research into the guiding philosophy and techniques of Taekwondo; an effort to broaden the scope of the serious student of the martial arts to achieve a fuller appreciation of training in all aspects of the Korean martial arts. It is a book he wishes he had written more than two decades ago.



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Acknowledgement

The journey of a thousand miles begins with the first step. To the following people I express deep gratitude for their untiring effort and assistance extended to me during the course of my Taekwondo journey.

Master George Ashiru of the Nigerian Taekwondo Federation, thank you very much for showing me the first step and for remaining a bright star that cannot be dimmed. A special acknowledgement goes to Master Famous Dally for holding my hand all the way, ensuring I had a firm footing in this remarkable Korean art of self-defense. I shall never forget Grandmaster Emmanuel Ikpeme and Benson, who gave me several valuable lessons for free. I have tried to follow in your footsteps.

In the second half of this journey, highest regards go to Masters Conrad Jenkins, Christopher Chok, and Paul Lindo of the Jamaican Taekwondo Federation as well as Master Steve Graham from the Cayman Islands for rekindling the fire inside me when I reached that crossroad in life. This book has come as a direct result of my rebirth.

Even at this late stage, I remain indebted to Grandmaster Hock Lye Ooi from Canada for being forthright in his answers to some difficult questions and for improving my Taekwondo.

To my children, Enobong and Sunil, I owe a lot of my insight into the hieroglyphics of the martial arts. They have served as eager models at all hours of the day, even as I worked out the various holds and locks concealed within the different poomsae sequences.

Special thanks to Jason Carpenter, Rory Young, Rochelle Clarke, Shavanory Green, Lanique Smith, Lipton Lee and Swashnair Dixon for sacrificing your time to assist me in the long hours it took to photograph the different techniques. I commend you all for refusing to complain despite the harsh weather, hard blows, and heavy falls.

Final thanks to the members of the Korea Taekwondo Association Poomsae Committee, without whom it would have been impossible to undertake the task of this book. Every time I discover a new application to a technique, I am reminded how much more there is to know, and can better appreciate the hard work that went into composing the various patterns.

To all students and practitioners of Taekwondo, I wish you greater wisdom as you continue the development of our martial art.

Taekwondo Poomsae: The Fighting Scrolls

CHAPTER I

Yin and Yang

The year is 1965, the Chinese Year of the Snake, and inside a corner of Southeast Asia several battles rage simultaneously. To be more precise, South Vietnam is locked in a series of deadly battles against determined rebels supported by its North Vietnamese enemy. The south is amply supported by arms and men from the United States and its allies, like the South Korean government. And blood flows like red wine from an uncorked bottle.

Millions of people are born that year in other parts of the world. According to Chinese horology, they are considered Snake people—intuitive, introspective, exciting, refined, and dark at the same time. Such people are blessed with the ability to read complex situations quickly and act with speed and when faced with a dilemma. The ability to judge situations correctly and confidently often lead many to become thinkers and philosophers.

Hundreds of miles away in another corner of Northeast Asia, the sun pours down its heated rays on Seoul, the capital of the Republic of Korea, and its government, ruled by General Park Chung-hee, the erstwhile strongman and friend of the White House. It is summertime and peace reigns in this part of the Korean peninsula.

The martial arts leader glances down on the papers in front of him, then adjusts his sixties-style glasses with their broad rims, squinting through them. He is Grandmaster Lee, a ninth dan black belt born in the Year of the Snake and a senior member of one of the *kwans* or martial arts gyms. Around him are seated other senior martial arts leaders, members of the testing committee of the Korean Taekwondo Association, facing nervous-looking candidates for the various ranks of the black belt. At this point, Taekwondo is still fragmented into at least nine separate *kwans*. It will take another decade to finally merge these competing styles into a uniquely Korean fighting style, and ultimately achieve success as the most popular martial art in the world.

Each candidate is expected to demonstrate two patterns appropriate for their intended rank to the committee. There are many styles of Taekwondo, most practicing different sets of *hyungs* or patterns, the majority of which originated from abroad in places like China and Japan. The list of patterns is long, made to accommodate and include the teachings of the nine *kwans*. The senior grandmaster looks down on his papers again.

Requirements for the first degree black belt:

Included in this list is General Choi, Hong Hi's *Hwarang Hyung*, celebrating the elite warriors of the ancient Silla kingdom of Korea, otherwise called the Hwarang. It is part of the twenty-four patterns or *tuls* created by one of the most important of modern Taekwondo's founders. The rest are of foreign origin.

The five Pyongan Hyungs or Pinan kata are: Chodan, Idan, Samdan, Sadan, and Odan. Pinan ("Peaceful Mind") is also known as Heians by the Shotokan in Japan but was developed from Channan, an old, forgotten Chinese form by the Anko Itosu, the great Okinawan Shorin-ryu master. These forms serve to gradually introduce more difficult techniques to the advancing student.

Naebojin Chodan Hyung is the first of the original three Okinawan Naihanchi kata series. Meaning "Iron Horse" or "Staying and Fighting," it stresses the development of fighting ki. It was popularized by another great Okinawan master, Choki Motubu, and its beginnings are buried in its Shaolin Kung Fu past.

Chul Ki Hyung Chodan is also known as Naihanchi kata or Tekki Sho, the later Shotokan version.

Ja Won Hyung or Jion, another Shorin-ryu kata, conceals a fierce fighting spirit within its smooth movements.

Requirements for the second degree black belt:

Naebojin Idan Hyung is the second in the Naihanchi or “Iron Horse” set of forms from the Shorin-ryu. Kima Idan Hyung and Shotokan’s Tekki Nidan are close versions of this Naihanchi kata.

Chong Moo Hyung is a creation of Choi, Hong Hi, naming it after Admiral Sun Shin Yi, Korea’s foremost naval tactician and one of the ancient world’s greatest.

Requirements for the third degree black belt:

Ul- Ji and Ge- Baek Hyung are named after important generals in old Korean history as part of the twenty-four Chang Hon tuls of Choi, Hong Hi.

Pal Saek Hyung, otherwise called Bassai, is one of four forms devised by an early Okinawan master named Kosaku Matsumora. Its name can be interpreted to mean “to penetrate the fortress” and it teaches various escapes, blocks, and counters to surmount an adverse situation and wrest victory.

No Pae Hyung or Ro Hai (“Sign of the White Heron”) is traced to Matsumora, who brought it from China. It featured a one-foot stance to symbolize a crane standing on a rock, and it includes sweeps and throwing techniques.

Another form on this list is Dan Kwon Hyung, with origins in Shaolin Kung Fu.

Yon Bi Hyung, otherwise called Wanshu in Okinawa, or Empi kata, Japan’s version, emphasizes nimble body motions and swift reversal of body movements similar to the flight of a swallow.

Requirements for the fourth degree black belt:

Naebojin Samdan Hyung is the third of the Naihanchi or “Iron Horse” forms beloved by Choki Motubu, who believed that mastering it allowed the practitioner to develop and excel in the martial arts. Kima Samdan Hyung is a version of this third “Iron Horse” pattern.

Am Hak Hyung or Jindo Hyung or Chinto, meaning “Fighting Techniques from the East,” is an advanced Shudokan karate kata of Shorin-ryu lineage, traced to Bushi Matsumura, the bodyguard to the Okinawan king, who in turn learned it from a Chinese seaman stranded on the shores of Okinawa. It makes extensive use of the one-legged stance of the crane and also teaches hand trapping and breaking.

Other patterns in the curriculum of the Shudokan founder Toyama Kanken are Ja Un Hyung, Jin Soo Hyung, and Chul Ki Samdan Hyung .

Sam Il Hyung is General Choi’s creation, containing thirty-three movements to symbolize the thirty-three patriots who planned the independence movement to resist the Japanese Occupation forces in 1919.

So Rim Jang Kwon Hyung is a version of the Shaolin Long Fist form.

Requirements for the fifth degree black belt:

Kong Sang Kun Hyung or Kusanku includes elements of techniques taught to Tode Sakugawa by Kusanku, the Chinese official to the Royal Court of Okinawa. It includes many grappling methods.

Kwan Kong Hyung is another form that originated from Kusanku’s teachings.

Ship Soo Hyung or Jitte in Japanese is a Shudokan kata meaning “Ten Hands” and it can also be performed with a weapon like the staff. It is said to allow one to perform the actions of ten men while facing attacks from multiple directions.

Oh Ship Sabo Hyung or Gojushiho (“Fifty-four Steps of the Black Tiger”) is a form practiced by the Shudokan of Toyama Kanken and contains a lot of techniques from Chinese Kung Fu within its seventy-

seven steps encompassing a range of circular theory techniques, and super-fast and slow attacks that utilize the neck movements of the crane and its beak.

Ban Wol Hyung is another form from the Shudokan's Shorin-ryu lineage.

The last one on the list is Pal Ki Kwon Hyung, also of Chinese origin.

He glances again at the nervous-looking candidates. This would be the last time any black belt candidate would be performing these patterns in front of him. They had been made obsolete almost overnight by the newer set of Hyung created by the Korean Taekwondo Association Poomsae Committee, and it was scheduled to be released in various training clinics the following year. These would subsequently be called Poomsae and would be based on the *palgwe* or eight kwae to reflect their Korean origin and pride.

Today in the group of senior leaders he has spotted only two or three of the masters tasked with the creation of these uniquely Korean forms. He knows each member well and his heart warms up at the thought of the coming changes that will rock the world of Taekwondo. At the moment the nine committee members are perhaps the most important men of Taekwondo. They are Hyun Jong Myun, the second headmaster of the Oh Do Kwan; Lee Kyo Yoon, the founder of the Han Moo Kwan; Kim Soon Bae, the third headmaster of the Chang Moo Kwan; Kwak Kun Sik, twelfth black belt graduate of the Chung Do Kwan; Park Hae Man, senior black belt student of Uhm Woon Kyu, headmaster of the Chung Do Kwan; Lee Yong Sup, the second headmaster of the Song Moo Kwan; Lee Chong Woo, the second headmaster of the Ji Do Kwan; Han Young Tae, senior black belt student of Hwang Kee, the founder of the Moo Duk Kwan; and Bae Young Ki, the third headmaster of the Ji Do Kwan.

Within his mind, he contemplates the finer points each candidate must demonstrate when performing each form; an expression of their understanding and ability to use the techniques as an effective training tool for fighting the external and internal battles.

The student must remain calm during the performance of the Hyung. He or she must begin and end each form on the same spot. He or she must execute each technique smoothly and completely before moving on to the next move. He or she must maintain the correct posture and balance when moving through the stances in each Hyung. The student must breathe deeply using the diaphragm, expanding the body by relaxing and uncoiling during inspiration. Then he or she must contract the body at the end of each technique during expiration, adding snap and explosiveness to forcefully release great energy in the execution of the technique. The student must use the correct speed and power according to the tempo of each form. He or she must maintain eye contact and concentration on an imaginary target. He or she must kihap vigorously to release the energy from the Danjun at the appropriate point in each Hyung. Finally, the student must know the meaning and philosophy underlying each Hyung.

Fast forward two decades, and the patterns are now fully Korean, are called poomsae, and start with the Taegeuk. They differ from the older Chinese and Okinawan forms chiefly in the mode of attacking the body's various vital points, relying heavily on the one strike-one kill philosophy of self-defense. *Taegeuk has no form, no beginning and no end...* declared the Samil Sinko, the Scripture of the Korean Race, the "Korean bible."

These words echo in his head, reverberating and releasing the distant faded memory of the old Buddhist monk who had taught him Kong Soo Do secretly in a monastery many years ago in what is present day North Korea. Then, it was still a single Korea under a brutal Japanese occupation. Even now, the monk's words are as crystal clear as when they were first uttered. "It is important to remember the philosophical trinity of the Taegeuk, Infinity, Um, and Yang."

Another set of nervous candidates await their turn to demonstrate their mastery of the new forms. Senior Grandmaster Park carefully studies the papers in his hands. He is a protégé of Grandmaster Lee, who passed away the previous year in his early seventies. He is also the head of four Taekwondo gyms in the downtown Chicago area which he started after emigrating to the U.S. in 1975.

Requirements for the First Dan Black Belt:

Palgwe Il Jang & Taegeuk Il Jang
Palgwe Ee Jang & Taegeuk Ee Jang
Palgwe Sam Jang & Taegeuk Sam Jang
Palgwe Sah Jang & Taegeuk Sah Jang
Palgwe Oh Jang & Taegeuk Oh Jang
Palgwe Yuk Jang & Taegeuk Yuk Jang
Palgwe Chil Jang & Taegeuk Chil Jang
Palgwe Pal Jang & Taegeuk Pal Jang

Grandmaster Park is the most senior of the examiners and has been accorded the privilege of heading the table. He looks up from his papers directly into the bright eyes of the teenage female second generation Korean-American aspirant for the third degree poom black belt who stands respectfully at attention only a few feet away. Faint beads of perspiration evaporate off her young face.

“What is the meaning of the Taegeuk?”

The answer pours out immediately. She is young and bright.

“The Taegeuk is the symbol of the universe or cosmos. It is a compound word used to represent the supreme ultimate, with Tae meaning ‘bigness’ while Geuk means ‘eternity.’ This is the supreme law that governs all the forces in our universe, including Taekwondo. In Taekwondo Poomsae, the Taegeuk is comprised of a female half, of forces of negative energy commonly called the Yin or Um in Korea, which represent passive, contracting, soft, yielding qualities. These are held in balance by the Yang or male half, of positive attributes such as active, expanding, hard, aggressive energy. These opposing yet complementary Yin and Yang forces are enclosed within one bubble or sphere as represented by the circle of the Taegeuk. The central sine-wave line that divides this circle creates a top half representing Yang, conventionally depicted in red color, and a bottom half of Yin in blue color. It shows the relationship between the opposing forces which are interdependent on each other, meaning that when Yin becomes dominant it will ultimately transform into Yang, and the opposite is true for Yang when it becomes Yin.”

The senior grandmaster’s eyes brighten as he listens.

“This sine wave line also represents the ki force or universal energy as a constant and shows how it circulates within every living being or inanimate object, transforming from positive Yang force to negative Yin force. Surrounding the circle are eight trigrams or Palgwe with opposing pairs directly across each other. These are composed of combinations of either straight bars representing Yang or divided bars representing Yin. The Palgwe represent the ‘Law or Command’ of the Taegeuk and are specifically placed opposite each other to indicate the different possibilities the Taekwondo student may face at each point in time.”

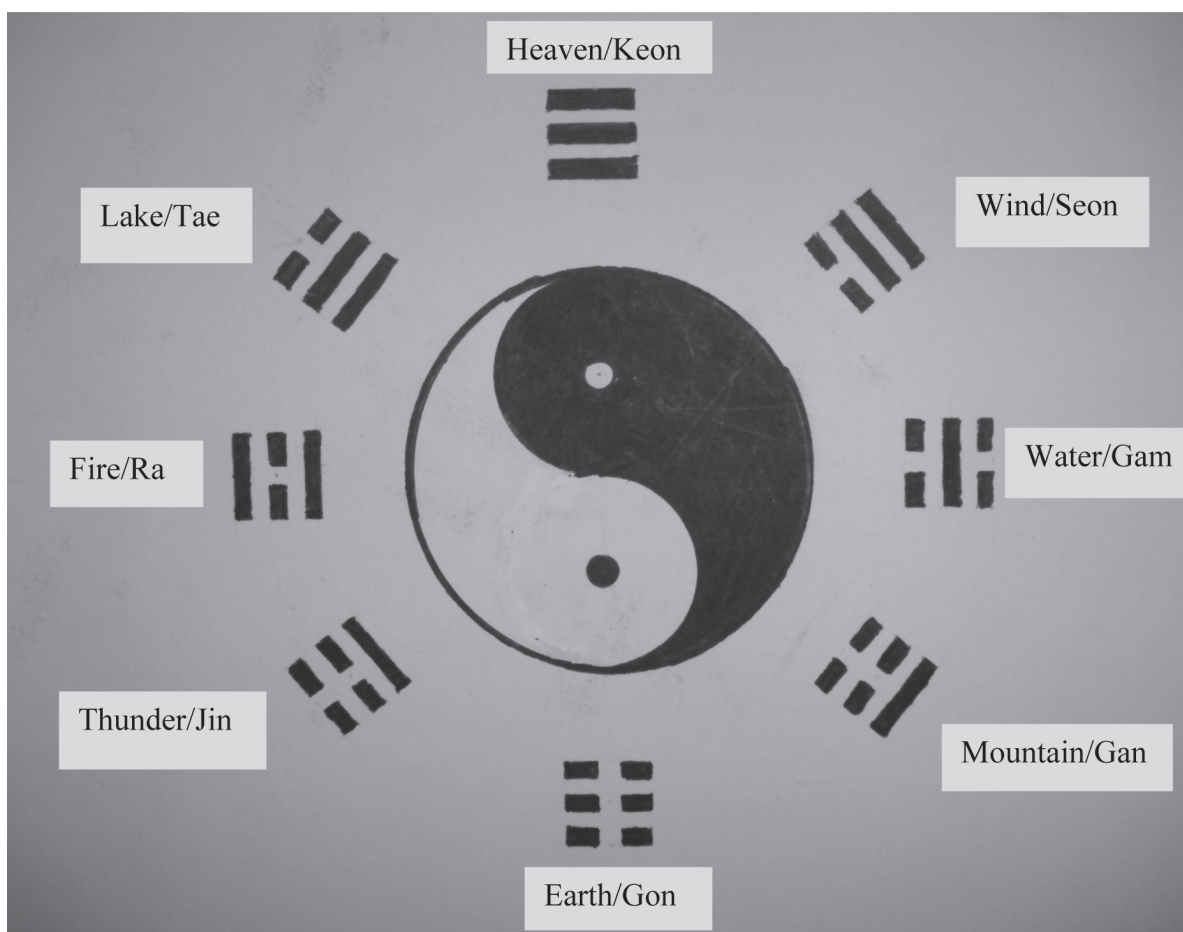
She is confident in her knowledge.

“The arrangement of the Taegeuk was set out by the great Korean philosopher Sinsi Bonki, a son of the fifth emperor of the Hwan-ung Dynasty around 35 B.C., who claimed to have glimpsed the rituals of Heaven, receiving afterward the eight kwae. Deeper meaning of the relationship between the Yang and Yin forces and the trigrams are taken from an equally ancient text known as the Book of Changes called the Joo-Yeok in Korea or the I’Ching by the Chinese.”

The senior grandmaster presses her further.

“What do you know of the Book of Changes?”

“This was compiled 5,000 years ago in China by the Zhou people. It was written during the Shang Dynasty at a time of great upheaval. The ruling family had forfeited Heaven’s Mandate to rule on account of their great corruption. King Wen of the Zhou was seen fit to receive the mandate and he led an army with his son Wu the Martial to overthrow the Shang Dynasty and install a new dynasty lasting 800 years.



PICTURE 1
Palgwe Trigrams of the Taegeuk

The Joo-Yeok is useful as an oracle to divine answers to various problems. It is all encompassing and consists of sixty-four hexagrams which are created by a doubling of the trigrams in varying combinations.”

A faint smile appeared on his lip. Many years ago he had also studied the texts. It was compulsory reading in his family and its words were vague and opaque then and made for difficult reading. Now there was greater clarity and wisdom with his old age.

I'CHING OR JOO-YEOK (BOOK OF CHANGES)

HEXAGRAM 1—Creative Force (Il Jang)

“Creative Force.

From the source, creating success.

Constancy bears fruit.”

The movement of heaven

Is full of grand power.

Thus the superior man

Makes himself strong and tireless.

Il Jang as the first Taegeuk pattern represents the symbol of Keon, meaning the Heaven and Yang. Heaven is the father, found in the south, and symbolizes the beginning of the creation of all things in the universe. It is the realm between autumn and winter when the buds set and the seeds fall to the fertile soil.

HEXAGRAM 58—Opening (Ee Jang)

“Opening.
Creating success.
Constancy bears fruit.”
Lakes resting on each other.
The image of the Joyous.
The superior man joins with his friends
For discussion and practice.

Ee Jang as the second Taegeuk pattern symbolizes the Tae or lake with its inner firmness and outer softness. It is also the youngest daughter, the joyful spirit of the fertile south east and of the autumn. Tae can be both soft or deceptively calming on the surface and hard with strong undercurrents below.

HEXAGRAM 30—Clarity (Sam Jang)

“Clarity.
Constancy bears fruit.
Creating success.
Raising female cattle is good fortune.”

Sam Jang as the third Taegeuk pattern symbolizes the Ra, meaning hot and bright, the spirit of hot enthusiasm. It is the middle daughter living in the east. This is the region of the midsummer. It encourages the trainee to harbor a sense of justice and ardor for training. Ra is represented by fire, which can burn both slow and controlled or fast and uncontrollable.

HEXAGRAM 51—Shock (Sah Jang)

“Shock, creating success.
Shock comes, fear and terror.
Laughing words, shrieking and yelling.
Shock spreads fear for a hundred miles.
Someone does not lose the sacred ladle and libation.”

Sah Jang as the fourth Taegeuk pattern symbolizes the Jin which represents the great power and dignity of thunder. It is also the eldest son, emerging into the field and starting to grow. Thunder is in the northeast and represents the spring. Thunder as the symbol of the fourth pattern is well known to exist in two forms: the initial one being the phase of gathering energy, followed by the second phase where the mighty energy is released.

HEXAGRAM 57—Subtly Penetrating (Oh Jang)

“Subtly penetrating, creating small success.
Fruitful to have a direction to go,
Fruitful to see the great person.”

Oh Jang as the fifth Taegeuk pattern represents the Son, meaning the wind. This has mighty force and calmness according to its strength and weakness. The wind is the eldest daughter, gentle and submissive, belonging in the southwest, in the late spring and early summer. The phenomenon of the wind is also universally recognizable in two forms, existing as a gentle force or exhibiting great devastation as a hurricane. This duality is retained in the fifth poomsae.

HEXAGRAM 29—Repeating Chasms (Yuk Jang)

“Repeating chasms.
There is truth and confidence.
Holding your heart fast creates success.
Movement brings honour.”

Yuk Jang as the sixth Taegeuk pattern represents the kam or water, meaning incessant flow and softness. It is the middle son found in the west. It is also symbolic of midwinter. The sixth pattern is represented by the water symbol which is present in lakes, streams, rivers, and seas. Water once it starts moving flows in two directions, forward and backward or retreating, to and fro, to make wave action.

HEXAGRAM 52—Stilling (Chil Jang)

“Stilling your back,
Not grasping yourself.
Moving in your rooms,
Not seeing your people.
Not a mistake.
Mountains standing close together.
The image of keeping still.
The superior man does not permit his thought
To go beyond his situation.”

Chil Jang as the seventh Taegeuk pattern represents the kan or mountain. This means ponder and firmness. It is the youngest son, confident and of independent spirit, belonging in the northwest and late winter approaching spring. The seventh pattern is represented by the mighty mountain which is majestic in its solidity or unyielding nature, yet may become yielding when it is split by a volcanic eruption.

HEXAGRAM 2—Earth (Pal Jang)

“Earth.
From the source, creating success.
The constancy of a mare bears fruit.
A noble one has a direction to go.
At first, confusion.
Later, gains a master.
Fruitful in the southwest, gaining partners.
In the northeast, losing partners.
Peaceful constancy brings good fortune.
The earth possesses receptive devotion.
The superior man carries the world
With his strength of character.”

Pal Jang is the last Taegeuk pattern before the black belt, and represents Kon, which symbolizes earth and Yin. This is the mother and is found in the north .It stands for the root and settlement, the beginning and the end, the harvest time of late summer and early autumn.

The qualities of Yin and Yang are abundantly exemplified throughout the different Taegeuk and Palgwe patterns. The first poomsae is represented by “Heaven,” implying only Yang qualities (offense, fast, powerful, hard, attacking, challenge, direct, strike, releasing energy, unyielding, linear, to separate, advancing, originating in the pores of the skin) or forces represented in the four extremities.

The eighth poomsae manifesting as “Earth” embraces the opposite and complimentary values of defensive, slowness, speed, softness, retreating, response, evade, grapple, gathering energy, yielding, circular, unite, and withdrawal. It is manifested in the lower orifices, or forces moving within the five solid organs of the heart, the lungs, the liver, the spleen, and the kidneys.

According to the Book of Changes, the creators of the Kwae are the two main forces, the Creative or Father and the Receptive or Mother. Father is “Keon” and “Heaven,” while Mother is “Kon” and “Earth.” A deeper examination of the Palgwe explain the creative roles of Keon as the Father and Heaven , and Kon as the Mother or Earth .

All three sons including the Thunder, Water, and Mountain are created from the Mother.

Mother seeks for the first time the power of the male in the trigram of “The Arousing” and receives the Eldest Son “Thunder.” The change from Yin to Yang occurs at the lowest bar. Next the Middle Son “Water” is created in the trigram of “The Abysmal,” when Yin changes to Yang in the middle bar. Keon passes on the linear attack trait to its offspring Water trigram in Taegeuk Yuk Jang. Similarly, this is not a strong Yang trait and the poomsae remains unchanged with Yin energy.

Then follows the Youngest Son “Mountain,” in the trigram of “Keeping Still,” where Yin changes to Yang in the upper bar. Keon imparts the hard unyielding principle to its offspring Mountain trigram in Taegeuk Chil Jang. Since this is not its most important element, Kan energy remains Yin in this poomsae.

It is the grappling quality or Hap, where one adheres to the opponent, that is the most important trait from Kon the Mother or Earth trigram. This is found in the first four steps of Taegeuk Chil Jang, Yuk Jang, and Oh Jang.

The most important trait from Keon is techniques that force away the opponent contained within the first four steps of Taegeuk Ee Jang, Sam Jang, and Sah Jang respectively, which are enough to emphasize their Yang nature.

The Father is the origin of the remaining three trigrams of the Palgwe. The male seeking for the first time the power of the female receives the Eldest Daughter, “The Wind,” in the trigram of “The Gentle” when the upper bar changes from Yang to Yin.

In the trigram “The Clinging,” the Middle Daughter (Fire) is created when the middle bar changes to Yin. Kon again imparts the circular flowing trait to the Fire trigram of Taegeuk Sam Jang, which is still insufficient to change its energy to Yin.

The Youngest Daughter (“Lake”) is created in the trigram of “The Joyous” when the lowest bar changes to um. The Yu or soft yielding trait in the Lake trigram of Taegeuk Ee Jang doesn’t change it from Yang, as this isn’t the most important Yin characteristic.

The techniques of Taegeuk and Palgwe Il Jang are easily suited to a person with a large and powerful frame who disposes his or her opponent easily with overwhelming force. On the other hand, a smaller or weaker person will find the soft, yielding techniques of Taegeuk and Palgwe Pal Jang very useful to deflect attacks from a more powerful opponent adapting and using his or her strength to defeat him.

In any fight, there is no guarantee that one will always be the bigger, stronger fighter. Thus the practitioner should be adaptable, using tactics that exploit the opponent’s perceived weakness. Victory will usually belong to the more skilled fighter.

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