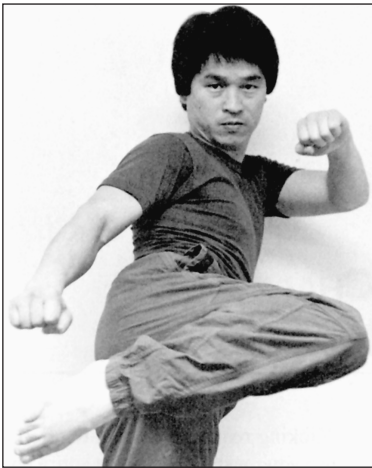




HAN MU DO FOUNDER AND MARTIAL ARTS SCHOLAR, KIMM HE YOUNG, POSES WITH MASTER LIM DONG KYU. MASTER LIM IS THE FOREMOST AUTHORITY AND TEACHER ON THE ANCIENT KOREAN TWENTY-FOUR WARRIOR TECHNIQUES.

Photo courtesy of Kimm He Young.



SANG H. KIM, RENOWNED AUTHORITY IN THE KOREAN STYLES AND HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT, TRANSLATED THE MUYE DOBO TONG JI. HERE HE EXECUTES A ROUND KNEE KICK (MURUP CHAKI).
Photo courtesy of Turtle Press.

Nowadays, the teaching curriculum of the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* is preserved by the Korean Kyongdang education organization based in Kwang Ju, South Korea and lead by folk martial arts expert Lim Dong Kyu. This organization aims to educate the youth using the physical, and intellectual military standards of the Choson Dynasty. It teaches the *Muye Eeshipsa Ban* consisting of 1204 techniques in the 24 specialties, including a sword with a length of 53” (1.35 meters) that weighs 5.5 pounds (2.5 kilograms) and lances that vary from 6.5 to 19 feet in length (2 to 6 meters).

THE “BOXING SECTION” AND MODERN INTERPRETATIONS

The task of translating the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* represented ten years of work for Sang H. Kim, a Tae Kwon Do, Hapkido and Junsado master who lives in Connecticut. As an authority in martial arts training, Kim admits that the book does not have enough details to precisely reproduce the forms that it contains.

In the boxing section (which bears the same “Kwon Bop” title as its forerunners), the manual provides names and some background information about older martial arts teaching. Among others, it states that fist art training is based on pre-established patterns (k., *hyung*), but it should be applied disregarding them. There are also tales about a Wudang Daoist master’s prowess, and the superiority of internal over external styles. After mentioning that there were eighteen types of footwork, Yi Dok Mu points out that there was a system organized into six patterns (k., *yuk ro*) and ten levels (k., *ship dan kum*).

In the introductory part, the manual describes the performance of numerous techniques. According to one of them: “*Du Mun* is performed by lowering the left shoulder and fist and punching upward while the right hand pushes out horizontally to the front and bends outwards.” After many similar instructions, the author concludes that: “the *yuk ro* is similar to *ship dan kum*. In general, *yuk ro* methods are used to develop bone strength in order to inflict immediate damage in a combat emergency, whereas the *ship dan kum* is for inducing a delayed reaction.”¹¹

After other instructions of a similar nature, the authors state that extreme emphasis in teaching a specific technique to overcome another (such as those found in the Okinawan *Bubishi*, “phoenix spreads its wings wins against dragon spits pearls,” explained as “if a person throws a short punch at you, trap the attack and gouge his eyes”) had taken all naturalness from practice, depriving it from its own essence, and turning those actions into nothing more than a game. When looking at the commented illustrations, the modern martial arts scholar will find some familiar positions such as “seven stars fist posture” (*chil song kwon se*, similar to “supporting block,” *momtong koduro bakkat mak ki*), “single whip posture” (*yodan pyon se*, similar to “vertical ascending punch,” *pande ollio sewo jirugi*), “crouching tiger posture” (*bok ho se*, similar to “mountain leaning side block,” *palmok santul makki*), “high block posture” (*dang du pose*, similar to “pushing concentration block,” *balwi mil ki*) and “ambushing posture” (*mae bok se*, a low and stretched position).

I should emphasize that these and many other positions have not reached the 20th century martial arts as a result of master-to-student transmission throughout generations, but modern organizations have included

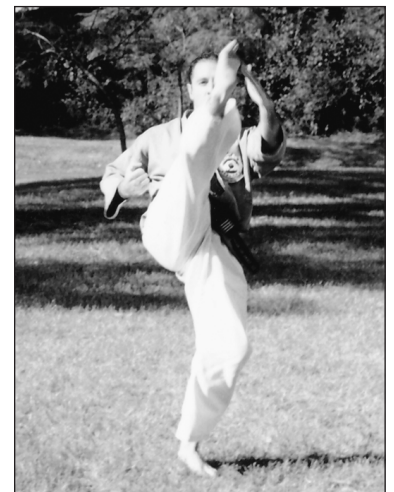
them in their forms, maybe sometimes even imitating ancient illustrations and thus “reviving them,” trying in this way to gain an ancestral pedigree disguising the fact that modern Tae Kwon Do has no direct relation with the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji*. The aforementioned techniques are superficially similar to the original, but their purpose seems to be different. The illustrated routines (k., *hyung*) in the manual are very skimpy in the use of kicks, mostly limited to a few mid-height front and fan (crescent) kicks, and the fist techniques are not similar or related to any modern Korean martial art style. The “genealogical” relation of the techniques shown in the manual with those currently practiced in Tae Kwon Do or Tang Soo Do seems to be, to a large extent, a product of wishful thinking.

Martial art manuals reveal different “trends” of the Chinese boxing systems that arrived to Korea. In the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji*, we can find the inward crescent kick, directed to the rival’s solar plexus, which is practiced hitting against the kicker’s opposing palm (k., *an pyojok chaki*, found in today’s Han Soo, Yoo Sin and Ul Ji Tae Kwon Do forms). This kick, of gymnastic value but questionable combat effectiveness, is very frequent in Shaolin styles, and was introduced to Okinawa karate from southern China. During the early 20th century, this kicking technique voyaged from Okinawa to Japan through *Ro hai* (j.) / *No pae* (k.) and *Sei san* (j.) / *Ship sam* (k.) (or j. *Han getsu* / k. *Ban wol*) routines, and from there to Korea, where it is currently performed at head-height. In other words, the presence of this technique in today’s Tae Kwon Do is not a result of genuine Korean ancestry; it comes from China in an odyssey which, as a relevant milestone, in most cases includes the Shotokan karate as practiced by Funakoshi (Gigo) Yoshitaka around 1940, the Japanese style upon which the great majority of the present formal “Korean” forms were built (Cook, 2001). While Chung Do Kwan, Moo Duk Kwan, Song Moo Kwan and Oh Do Kwan were influenced by Shotokan, Chang Moo Kwan was based on Toyama’s Shudokan, and Ji Do Kwan’s post-1950 technique was built on Yoon Kwe Byung’s Shito-ryu training. The softer and more flowing Chinese and indigenous Taek Kyon systems, although frequently credited as sources for Tae Kwon Do, did not provide any material technical influence on modern Tae Kwon Do and Tang Soo Do forms.

The recently deceased Grandmaster Hwang Kee, the founder of Moo Duk Kwan and pioneer of Tang Soo Do (who refused to use the Tae Kwon Do name), admitted that when he found the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* in the National Library of Seoul in 1957, a whole new world within the martial arts opened for him. The impact of this discovery was so strong that he decided to change the name of his Tang Soo Do martial art into “Soo Bahk Do” because the Su Bak appellative is used in the manual’s boxing section as the name of a bare-handed combat style. Hwang Kee was truly the first internationally renowned Korean martial arts exponent who paid serious attention to the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji*.



JUMPING DESCENDING FIST ATTACK (TWIMYO NERYO CHON KWON JIRUKI)—A TYPICAL MOO DUK KWAN FIGHTING STRATAGEM THAT COMBINES THE AGILITY, AGGRESSIVENESS, AND UNPREDICTABILITY OF KOREAN STYLES WITH THE LINEAR FIST TECHNIQUES CULTIVATED IN JAPANESE KARATE.



A HIGH CRESENT KICK (SANDAN AN PYOJOK CHAKI), FOUND IN THE ANCIENT KOREAN MARTIAL ART RECORDS AND INCLUDED IN FORMS OF MODERN TAE KWON DO, TANG SOO DO, KARATE AND SHAOLIN-DERIVED STYLES.

During the years following his discovery, Hwang Kee studied the Kwon Bop section and revived (as far as it was possible) a series of six routines called *Yuk Ro* and another series of ten routines called *Ship Dan Gum*, apart from the *Hwa Son* (k.) routine, which he officially presented in November 1982. The *Yuk Ro* techniques include forward stances (“bow and arrow,” according to the Chinese tradition) with circular simultaneous strikes to the front and back in a windmill action, horizontally as well as vertically, and sudden direction variations and weight shifts, pushes to the front with the palms and open-handed parrying movements. Master Hwang Hyun Chul, son of Hwang Kee and world-class technical authority in his own right, describes the routines recreated by his father from the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* as a combination of hard and soft movements of profound content.

The resemblance of many movements within these (presumed Korean) forms to northern China’s Long Boxing (ch. *Changquan*; k. *Jang Kwon*), which is considered the ancient predecessor of Shaolin, is remarkable. In addition, it should be noted that Hwang Kee included in his school curriculum a series of seven routines which he created called *Chil Song* (k.), generally translated as “seven stars,” or more precisely, “the seventh star,”¹² probably taken from the Chinese martial arts teaching that he learned during his stay in Manchuria.

Some critics doubt that Hwang Kee was ever in a position to learn a true Chinese style when, after 1931, Manchuria was a puppet state with the Japanese name of Manchukuo. However, Hwang Kee never hid the fact that he had studied a book on Japanese karate during the late 1930s and provided information to verify his Chinese martial art training. In this connection, he revealed his Manchurian master’s name (k. Yang Kuk Jin), and stated that he learned “steps method” (k. *seh bop*; ch. *pu fa*), “discipline method” (k., *ryon bop*, hardening), “twelve steps of spring leg” (k. *dham toi ship ee ro*, ch. *tam tui*, a basic Long Boxing form), and some *tae kuk kwon* (k.; ch., *taijiquan*). It is difficult to determine how many of these Chinese practices influenced Tang Soo Do, except for the circular and wide trajectories of the karate techniques he redesigned, and the heel-against-the-floor/toes-up mantis sweeping technique which Hwang preferred to the more popular Japanese *ashi-barai* sole sweeping style found in standard Tae Kwon Do (adopted, for instance, by General Choi in the Tae Kwon Do *Sam Il* and *Moon Moo* routines).

Furthermore, Hwang Kee’s inclusion of material from the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* was overshadowed by Moo Duk Kwan/Tang Soo Do’s precocious reputation as an effective combination of Japanese karate with Korean kicking skills. When Hwang Kee introduced techniques from the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* (and the information contained within them) to the style, Moo Duk Kwan had already made a name for itself and an important number of instructors had left the original (Tang Soo Do) nucleus, in many cases joining Tae Kwon Do groups. Hence, such additions did not reach or attract the majority of those practicing the Moo Duk Kwan style. In other words, these forms arrived too late to have substantial influence over the style’s already mature character. In any case, there is no doubt that Professor Hwang Kee must be credited as a precursor in the study of the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji*. The culmination of this effort was realized in his development of contemporary Soo Bahk Do Moo Duk Kwan.

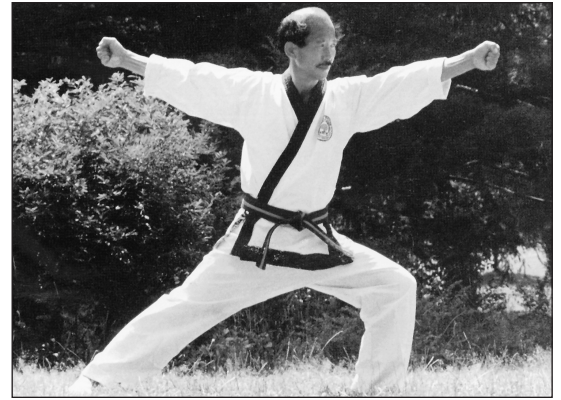
In 1999, Dr. Kimm He Young presented to the martial arts media his recreation of the illustrations and explanations of the book, the *Kwon bop bu hyung* (k.), consisting of 42 complex movements. According to Kimm, the first 28 movements are for solo practice and from number 29 on, a training partner is needed and the form is performed by two men, similar to practice methods used in Chinese styles and, their imitation, in Doshin So's Japanese Shorinji Kempo (j.). Henning (2000), a precise and thoughtful author, asserts that the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* illustrations are based on those of General Qi, except for the escape and seizing techniques, which might be either original, or more probably, derived from other sources, such as another Chinese manual. Dr. Kimm's movements lack the sudden focus (muscular contraction and snap action) found in Tang Soo Do and Tae Kwon Do, and his form does not include postures which have become common in modern karate-related martial arts, even though there are some techniques that can be recognized (front kick, inward crescent open palm kick, side mountain block, and various fist strikes). In this author's personal opinion, the way Dr. Kimm performs his routine seems to be very close to the original, since his personal background in Korean "softer" styles (Kuk Sool, Hapkido, Yudo) has prevented him from introducing more recent Japanese karate-like (abrupt) kinetic characteristics in his reconstruction of the old forms.

As we have already stated, the ample forward and backward strikes shown in the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* illustrations seem to follow the Chinese Long Fist technical guidelines. In respect to the characteristic of simultaneous multidirectional actions for which Long Fist is known, Adam Hsu (n.d.) comments:

No, it is not an exotic training in which the apprentice learns to knock two rivals at the same time, one smaller in the front and the taller by the rear. This is mental training and can be found in all the movements of the Long Fist forms... The tunnel vision is a variation of the single direction approach, overly exclusive and restricted. The apprentice's attention is reduced even more to a specific area such as the rival's fist that approaches him or to his own leg prepared to attack. However, when somebody hits with his foot in Long Fist, he must keep one arm ahead and the other arm behind in the exact position... As the apprentice moves to superior levels and starts to feel the movement as part of his body, he must learn to direct his attention to the torso, pelvis and legs.

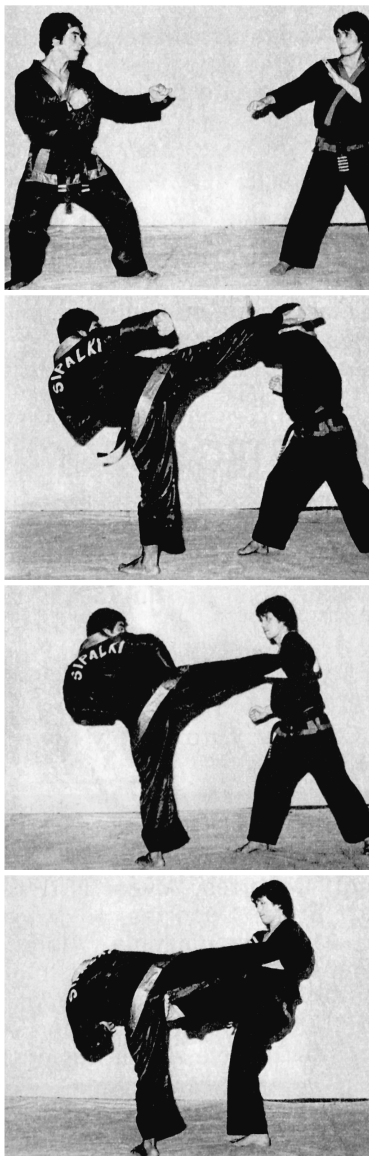
According to Hsu, by the time the student reaches a higher level, the wide and complex movements of Long Fist shall have given him "the ability to concentrate on his rival and, simultaneously, to be alert of his surroundings with a powerful multidirectional conscience."

These benefits, as well as the special capacity that the movements of Long Boxing have for preparing the apprentice for the use of weapons, may have recommended it to General Qi and Master Han Kyo as training for the military.



HWANG HYUN CHUL
PERFORMS A TWO-DIRECTION
FIST TECHNIQUE FROM A MUYE
DOBO TONG JI DERIVED HYUNG.
NOTICE ITS RESEMBLANCE
TO CHINESE LONG FIST.

*Photo courtesy of
Hwang Hyun Chul.*



SHIP PAL KI SEQUENCE BY

PARK JOON HYUN AND
PORTALEA IN 1980.

C-1) GUARD STANCE.
C-2) ATTACK WITH
ROUNDHOUSE KICK
(DOLLYO CHAKI).

C-3) JAM, TRAP, AND SECURE
THE KICKING LEG.

C-4) COUNTERATTACK
WITH A LOW CROSS
KICK TO GENITALS.

Photos courtesy of
Miguel Hladilo and
Yudo Karate magazine.

ABOUT THE EIGHTEEN TECHNIQUES (SHIP PAL KI)

It is noteworthy that in Hwang Kee's *Soo Bahk Do Dae Kam* manual (1978) there are two different lists of eighteen techniques. They are both described as "Ship Pal Ki" and neither coincides with the list of the *Muye Shinbo*. Even though one of Hwang's lists does show some similarity to the latter—such as, different types of lances and sabers for battle—in the descriptions by Hwang there are weapons such as the bow, crossbow, and whip. Any attempt to fully analyze such lists is very difficult, as in Hwang Kee's book they are in Chinese ideograms only, and many of such characters refer to old weapons that are no longer in use. We have identified only a few of them and we have not been able to find their meaning in Chinese-Korean dictionaries.

An additional series of Eighteen Techniques, also different from those listed in the *Muye Shin Bo*, has survived to our time. It is the series taught by Yoo Sam Nam, a Ship Pal Ki (which he has romanized as "Sipalki") martial art master who has lived and taught in Argentina for more than thirty years (Yoo, n.d.). Yoo includes the following specialties in his teaching:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Ho Sin Sul</i> : Self-defense | 10. <i>Chung Ion Do</i> : Sword
(<i>ion do</i> means "dragon sword,"
a name used in ancient China) |
| 2. <i>Kyo Yon</i> : Pugilism, one against many | 11. <i>Bang Pe</i> : Shield |
| 3. <i>Kwob Bop</i> : Pugilism, one against one | 12. <i>Ssan</i> : Belt /sash |
| 4. <i>Nang Kon</i> : Articulated sticks
(short and symmetrical) also called
<i>ssang jol kon</i> (c., <i>nung cha kung</i> ;
j., <i>nunchaku</i>) | 13. <i>Pyon Sul</i> : Whip |
| 5. <i>Dan Bong</i> : Short stick | 14. <i>Chang</i> : Spear |
| 6. <i>Bong</i> : Long staff, also called <i>jang bong</i> | 15. <i>Chong Kom</i> : Bayonet
(j., <i>ju ken</i> , literally "long saber") |
| 7. <i>Kom</i> : Saber | 16. <i>Jwan</i> : Brass knuckle |
| 8. <i>Dan Kom</i> : Short sword (knife) | 17. <i>Doki</i> : Axe |
| 9. <i>Ssang Kom</i> : Double sword (knives) | 18. <i>Kung Sul</i> : Archery |

What are the reasons behind the difference between Hwang Kee's and Yoo Soo Nam's lists and those of the *Muye Shinbo* digest? We must take into account that in Korea, after the publication of the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* in 1790, large scale battles against mounted invaders had lost importance as probable combat scenarios (Henning, 2000, states that many sections of the *Muye Dobo Tong Ji* had already lost all practical value by the time of its publication). Following the success of the campaigns against the Japanese invasions, and after that danger had been overcome, a decline and abandonment of military training was the norm in Korea, even though many former soldiers continued practicing martial arts within their families. Logically, most techniques designed to face mounted enemies were replaced by infantry weapons, techniques, and martial arts training concentrated on these things.

Battlefield combat training gave way to personal combat training, and other weapons became more important (i.e., short stick, double short stick, articulated sticks). Likewise, according to Suh In Hyuk, many Korean improvised arms—as the cane, rope, or fan—were developed or improved by the

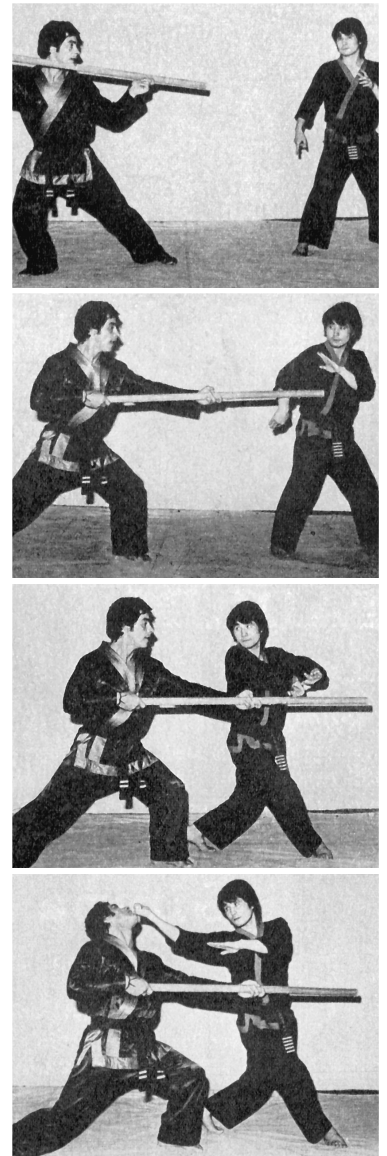
court's guards due to their need for effective combatives in places where no weapons were allowed. In 1958, after decades spent learning from his family and many other instructors, Grandmaster Suh In Hyuk, whose grandfather, Suh Myong Duk, had been a Royal Court instructor, organized the arts of the Kuk Sool Won (k., "National Techniques Academy") to preserve the Korean national martial culture that existed before the 20th century Japanese occupation. His approach was intended to rescue the Court's martial arts, Buddhist martial arts (which he went to temples to learn), and the folk martial arts (as the paradigmatic case of Yoo's family). Kuk Sool has movements and weapons whose continuity, circularity, and positions show an important Chinese influence.

We should note that other "small" or "personal" weapons (such as those used by bodyguards, policemen or martial artists outside the army), which were historically used in southern China, the Ryukyu archipelago, and Indochina, were also used in Korea. The available evidence credits China as their most likely origin, but it is not a clear matter. Those weapons include the articulated sticks (j. *nunchaku*), the side handled truncheon (j. *tonfa*) and the short trident (j. *sai*). In Okinawa, due to the prohibition of weapons production, police and palace guards imported those weapons from Fuzhou. Even nowadays many people wrongly believe that the efficient Chinese personal weapons are rural Okinawa tools, but this is true only for a few of them, such as the sickle and the oar.

In Korea, military activity stagnated in the isolation and emphasis of Confucianism during the 18th and 19th centuries. However, families in some villages preserved the old combat techniques. At the beginning of the 20th century, they were polished by those who knew them in order to transmit these fighting skills to their sons to protect themselves against Japanese oppression. This explains situations such as the Yoo family's (holders of the *Ion Bi Ryu* "flying swallow branch") Ship Pal Ki family tradition, that kept a core of centuries-old knowledge and its name (Ship Pal), and somehow managed to keep the number eighteen while including modern weapons (such as the bayonet) and discarding those that had become outdated.

Another beneficiary of the Ship Pal Ki martial legacy is Professor He Young Kimm, who learned Ship Pal Ki from his master, Kim Swang Sub, and Professor Baek Wu Hyon, chief instructor of Jun Mu Kwan of the Korean Association of Ship Pal Ki. The Eighteen Techniques taught in this Association are not described in this article.¹³

During the 19th century, these Ship Pal Ki techniques, originally developed for training troops in the use of weapons, maintained combat effectiveness as they were transformed into "familiar" arts, but were not absorbed by bare-handed martial arts of Taek Kyon or Su Bak, both which have been depicted as distinct, weaponless, combat disciplines. Taek Kyon mostly converted into a popular athletic kicking and tripping folk game which has survived until our days (Ouyang, 1997). Su Bak is a reportedly lost combat art that had turned into military sport before fading away during the Choson period. Such distinctions are elaborations of often repeated information lacking verifiable sources and therefore remain questionable. Although the Ship Pal



SHIP PAL KI SEQUENCE BY
PARK JOON HYUN AND
PORTALEA IN 1980.

D-1) GUARD STANCE WITH STAFF.
D-2) DIRECT STAFF ATTACK, AND
SIDE STEPPING CHECK DEFENSE.

D-3) PROGRESSION IN DEFENSIVE
MANEUVER CROSS STANCE
(*KYO CHA JA SEH*).

D-4) BACK-KNUCKLE
COUNTERSTRIKE
(*YI-KWON CHIKI*).

Photos courtesy of
Miguel Hladilo and
Yudo Karate magazine.