

# **Korean Politics vs. Taekwon-Do in 1966-2002**

*The Organisational History of The International Taekwon-Do Federation in the Context of Korean Political Division, and How to Protect Your Institution Against Political Appropriation*

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HELENA HANHIKANGAS: *Korean Politics vs. Taekwon-Do in 1966-2002: The Organisational History of The International Taekwon-Do Federation in the Context of Korean Political Division, and How to Protect Your Institution Against Political Appropriation*

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### **Abstract**

This study brings together East Asian Studies and History Research in the context of Sport and Martial Art History of Taekwon-Do, more precisely the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF). It explores the organizational history of the ITF and aims to provide new sources and point of views for the present research field, which has been dominated by Taekwondo Studies linked with the South Korean WT Taekwondo, the sport organization also known as the Olympic Taekwondo. The ITF splintered in three identically named ITF groups in 2002. In the light of this study, North Korea was behind the splintering. It had attempted since 1980, when Taekwon-Do was introduced to North Korea by the ITF and the ITF leader General Choi Hong Hi, to get the ITF fully under their control. However, only after the death of the lifelong leader and president, Choi, did North Korea gain a fraction of it under their control. But the core of the ITF remained intact, aiming to protect its status as a constitutional, legal and nongovernmental sport, and martial art institution. The third ITF group, led by Master Choi Jung Hwa, the son of Gen. Choi, seems to have fallen victim to North Korean hybrid interference strategies, which enhanced the splintering of the ITF. With this study I explore the political reasons behind this splintering, and the political co-opting of an international sport and martial art institution. This study will demonstrate that members of sport organisations, although private citizens, can protect their organisations even from the harshest state-level political co-opting when collaborating with each other actively, and that the structures of these sport organisations have the ability to facilitate such task, especially if they are well taken care of.

**Key words:** Taekwon-Do, Taekwondo, International Taekwon-Do Federation, ITF, Choi Hong Hi, Cold War, Hybrid Interference, Red Scare, Front Office, North Korea, South Korea.

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## Abbreviations and Terminology

**태권도.** The way how Taekwon-Do and Taekwondo and other versions of the art are written using Korean Hanja. The name ‘태권도’ commonly translates as ‘태’ a foot or kick, ‘권’ a fist or punch, and ‘도’ meaning a way, or a path (referring to the spiritual and philosophical aspect of the art). The name ‘태권도’ can thus be translated as a way of the foot/kick and the fist/punch. Romanised, depending on the governing organisation, as Taekwon-Do, Tae Kwon Do or Taekwondo. Also, ‘跆拳道’, the way Taekwon-Do was written in Korean Hanja lettering.

**Taekwon-Do.** Korean art of self-defence, a sport and martial art governed by the ITF. The last syllable separated from rest of the word with a hyphen to emphasize the philosophical aspects of the martial art.

**Taekwondo.** Combat Sport represented by WTF/WT, whole world written together.

**Tae Kwon Do.** A combat sport/martial art/self-defence/ that as a discipline is not directly affiliated to ITF nor WTF/WT. Technical structure can originate from as early as c.1955 when gen. Choi began teaching Taekwon-Do to his soldiers, or from 1966 onwards when the ITF was founded, or after 1973 when the WT/WTF was founded. Usually independent, local or national level groups and clubs, international level organisation usually loose.

**Taekwondos.** A plural form used within this study to refer to both disciplines, ITF Taekwon-Do and WTF/WT Taekwondo simultaneously, often including also the independent Tae Kwon Do groups

**TKD.** Used to shorten the name **Taekwon-Do**, **Taekwondo**, **Tae Kwon Do**. Used also as a neutral abbreviation to refer to all all taekwondos regardless of the governing federation or their chosen romanisation of the name ‘태권도’.

**ITF - International Taekwon-Do Federation (국제태권도연맹).** International umbrella organisation and governing body of a combat sport and martial art called Taekwon-Do (태권도), a Korean Art of Self-Defence. Founded in 1966 in Seoul, South Korea, by General Choi Hong Hi. The federation breaks into three ITFs in 2002 (const.ITF., NKITF, CJH ITF).

**const.ITF - Constitutional ITF.** Refers to the International Taekwon-Do Federation which is predominantly defined as the ITF which defended the constitutional and legal processes of the international governing body of a discipline called (ITF) Taekwon-Do, during the splintering of the ITF in 2002. Currently headquartered in Lausanne, Switzerland.

**NKITF - North Korea controlled ITF.** Refers to the North Korea controlled International Taekwon-Do Federation, currently headquartered in Vienna, Austria. Emerges during and immediately after June 2002 when General Choi passed away.

**CJH ITF. Master Choi Jung Hwa's ITF.** Refers to the International Taekwon-Do Federation led by Master Choi Jung Hwa, the son of gen. Choi Hong Hi, founder of the ITF. Currently headquartered in West Drayton, Middlesex, UK. Emerges in January 2002.

**Dan.** Refers to the nine black belt levels, or grades, used in ITF Taekwon-Do. It takes usually a minimum of 4 years to achieve a black belt. Before the black belt, there are 10 colour belt levels, called kup.

**Tul. A Pattern.** Meaning the predesigned technical forms of ITF Taekwon-Do. In WTF/WT they are called Boomsae and in Karate, Kata.

**GM. A Grandmaster.** A 9<sup>th</sup> degree black belt degree (9<sup>th</sup> dan). Highest rank in ITF Taekwon-Do. Allowed to grade Instructors also to Master level grades, and jointly with a board of other Grandmasters, to promote new Grandmasters. It takes approximately 40 years to achieve.

**Master or Master Instructor.** An ITF senior instructor from seventh to eight-degree black belt level (7<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> dan). Takes approximately a minimum of 20 years to achieve. Allowed to promote students also to Senior Instructor level.

**Instructor.** An ITF Instructor from fourth to sixth degree black belt degree level (4<sup>th</sup> - 6<sup>th</sup> dan). Takes approximately a minimum of 10 years to achieve. Allowed to promote students to the next level independently up to 2<sup>nd</sup> dan. Has possibility to become an ITF International Instructor by participating to an ITF International Seminar (called presently the International Instructors' Course, the IIC), after which they are considered official ITF Taekwon-Do Instructors and direct members of the ITF.

**Assistant Instructor.** A black belt degree holder from 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> degree (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> dan). Not granted to organise gradings independently.

**WTF and WT. World Taekwondo Federation and World Taekwondo.** Governing body of a combat sport called Taekwondo. Founded in 1973 in Seoul, South Korea. Headquarters, Seoul, South Korea. Shares the same name with ITF Taekwon-Do but otherwise is a different discipline. Known also as the Olympic Taekwondo. In 2014 changed its name to WT, World Taekwondo.

**KTA - Korea Taekwondo Association.** Founded 1959 in Seoul, South Korea. Gen. Choi was its first president. WTF/WT dates its founding to 1961.

**AETF - All European Taekwon-Do Federation.** Current headquarters in Lublin, Poland. Continental federation of the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF). Initiated in 1979.

**NA - National Association.** National level governing body of ITF Taekwon-Do, usually led by a Country Director, who represent the NA in the ITF Congresses. The ITF is formed around and by the different NAs and their representatives

**NKTKDA - North Korean Taekwon-Do Association, meaning Korean Taekwon-Do Committee (조선태권도위원회).** National governing body of ITF Taekwon-Do in North Korea. Founded c. 1980-1987.

**IAPT - International Association for the Promotion and Popularisation of the Original Taekwon-Do.**

**OPTA- Original Taekwon-Do Promotion Association (to replace IAPT).**

**JITF - Japan ITF. National Association of ITF Japan.**

**KTFJ, Korean Taekwon-Do Federation Japan, a sub-National Association of ITF Japan,** meant only for the Ethnic Koreans.

**IOC - International Olympic Committee.**

NOTE ON LANGUAGE: To avoid confusion, I will use the titles the ITF Members discussed in this study had prior to the 2002-splinter. Grandmasters excluded, most of them have gained higher grades after the 2002-splinter. Meaning, if an ITF Master Instructor gained a title of a Grandmaster after the 2002-splinter, the person will still be referred to as a Master in this study. In addition, to facilitate the use of Korean language sources, I have added Korean translation in Hangeul (in paragraphs) to names when appropriate, and where a Korean translation was available. I will refer to the Korean members of the ITF using the Romanised version of the name most commonly in use in the ITF related source materials. In case of South Korean politicians and researchers (and a like), I have attempted to use the most common Romanised version of their names available.



## 1 Introduction

In this study, I examine the reasons behind the current splintered state of the International Taekwon-Do Federation, or ITF (국제태권도연맹, founded in Seoul, South Korea, 1966).

Taekwon-Do is a Korean art of self-defence, formed, initiated, and named by General Choi Hong Hi in post-war South Korea by 1955. Since his death in 2002, there are now three<sup>1</sup> different International Taekwon-Do Federations (ITFs), all claiming to be legitimate and the due heir of the art's legacy. There are – even by the most careful estimation – dozens of smaller Taekwon-Do federations and groups, which have further splintered from the initial three ITFs in the past two decades. Prior to 2002, the ITF had remained largely intact since its establishment. Even when members left the federation, there was always only one, common ITF, led by General Choi. In 2002, however, North Korea moved forward forcibly to gain control of the ITF. The attempted coup failed to control all of the ITF, but it did manage to gain a section of it.

In the light of this study, it is clear that North Korea began its operation to gain control over the ITF in early 1980. This study also shows a striking contrast in North Korea's presence before and after the death of the ITF's lifelong leader and president, gen. Choi. This study reveals that there were organisational structures and people present in the ITF that created barriers to protect it and resisted North Korea's attempts to use the ITF for its own objectives. Without the presence of these structures and members, there would have been nothing preventing the whole of ITF becoming controlled by North Korea once gen. Choi passed away and question about ITF's new leader emerged. However, it was not strong enough to resist a state-level political operation, as members consisted only of private citizens, and thus the ITF began to splinter. Also, ITF's structures were still underdeveloped in many parts of the world, offering less protection in these places. Furthermore, the federation and its members were aware that Master Choi Jung Hwa's exit from the ITF in early 2002 left a power vacuum in its leadership. This problem was resolved by nominating a Senior Vice President, Mr. Russell MacLellan, to take the position of the ITF President, gen. Choi, were he to become incapacitated. Regardless of this predisposition, North Korea pressed on to

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<sup>1</sup> I will define the three ITFs as follows, listed in order of appearance in 2002: the ITF led by gen. Choi's son, Master Choi Jung Hwa, based in Harlington UK (CJH ITF), the ITF based in Lausanne, Switzerland (Const.ITF), and an ITF controlled and led by North Korea, based in Vienna, Austria (NKITF). The other existing Taekwon-Do groups of post-2002 splinter, do not claim to be legally the ITF. All have also adopted slightly different names than the ITF. Therefore, this study treats them as independent (and/or neutral) Taekwon-Do groups, assoc. or federations.

hastily appoint Mr. Chang Ung as the new president. In this study I will examine what kind of a federation the ITF was, when it splintered in 2002, and what caused it to become splintered.

### **1.1 In this thesis, I answer the following research questions**

1. Taekwon-Do's political use. Since its founding in 1966, is there evidence of the ITF's political use or connectedness, and by whom?
2. The ITF as an international organisation and as a governing body of Taekwon-Do. Who and what had the ITF become by the time it splintered into three same named federations in 2002? What were the characteristics of its organisation, member-base and leadership? What do these reveal about ITF's political use or connectedness?
3. The splintering. Why would the ITF splinter so violently, if it was already controlled by North Korea before the death of gen. Choi? Is it possible that North Korea was not able to control it fully earlier? What does the splintering reveal of the politics and apoliticism within or around the ITF?

With this study, I wish to share the available ITF sources to facilitate future research on the ITF. I wish to create a timeline and historical context, from the ITF's formation until its splintering and the immediate aftermath. I wish to demonstrate how the ITF was structured as an international governing body of a Korean Martial Art and Sport (Taekwon-Do). With this research, I wish to bring more transparency to research on all the taekwondos (TKDs).

### **1.2 Sources**

This study's main sources are the ITF's official publications, correspondences and other documents directly linked to the federation and gen. Choi. With these I hope to discover how the ITF appears when it is observed through its own materials. Thus, this study makes a clear distinction between internal ITF sources and external ones, so that the official line of the ITF and/or General Choi can be distinguished. These materials are approached with careful source criticism, viewed in their historical context, and then placed accordingly into their chronological order. This methodology of rigorous documentation of sources and consistent historical and temporal contextualization, is used to manage the growing disinformation evolving around the ITF. As archaic as this kind of a chronological approach to research is, it has proven vital in distinguishing attempts to influence historical records and false information surrounding the ITF especially during the last year before it splintered. Focusing

on a documented timeline, allows distinguishing, when and where an event *per se* took place instead of where it was *claimed* or *denied* having taken place. For example, it allows defining when, where and how the ITF presidents were elected – or not elected, as it sometimes happens in the organisational history of the ITF and with its many presidents.

### 1.2.1 Unpublished primary sources of pre-2002 ITF

The main body of the unpublished sources used are the available ITF Congress Minutes of 1988-2002, the ITF Constitution of 1988, the ITF Newsletters of 1985-2002, a variety of ITF correspondence shared among the members until the end of 2002 and the official website of the ITF ([www.itf-generalchoi.com](http://www.itf-generalchoi.com)), in use c.2001-2003. To access the ITF website as it once was, I have used the Internet Archive (WayBack Machine). The materials used include open letters and emails between the ITF Core-Leaders, official ITF news reports, Master and Grandmaster listings, Country Director listings, and ITF's news and updates.

When applicable, the ITF-related primary sources found on the online portals were validated through the ITF archives in the possession of the ITF Secretary General's office in Lublin, Poland; the archives of the All European Taekwon-Do Federation (AETF, founded as ITF Continental Federation in 1979, current HQ in Lublin); and the archives of National Association ITF Poland. The materials of these archives are official documentation that the ITF accumulated and shared with its members after moving its headquarters to Vienna. The archives contain also earlier materials from c.1979 onwards. From all three archives, supplementary documentation has been collected. These sources mainly consist of collections of letters, faxes, emails, receipts, and different contracts made between the ITF office in Vienna and received by AETF or POLITF. With careful source criticism, the originality of these documents has been validated. These archive materials demonstrate that the sources used for the study were shared with at least with one ITF National Association. These materials also demonstrate that the information shared by the ITF, reached its members and that the online materials used in this research were accurately part of ITF's official communication with its members.

These archives are thus associated with the ITF presently headquartered in Lausanne Switzerland. This means that they derive from the ITF group that defended the constitution and legal processes of the ITF during the time of its splinter (discussed below). I was granted full access to these sources without any detectable control. A vast amount of ITF-related documentation has been secured in this location.

The ITF Newsletter is the longest running, continuous official communication tool between ITF and its members/National Associations around the world, published since 1985. ITF sent these Newsletters at least to the offices of the ITF National Associations and to their senior members around the world. Through it, the ITF shared needed, official information with its members and to create a sense of membership. In the receiving end it formulated a general idea about who were part of the ITF, how it worked and who formed its main body.

The North Korean controlled ITF office in Vienna has not been visited for two reasons. I gained the needed materials already from Lublin. Secondly, as they are now controlled by the North Korea, documents contained there cannot be presently validated to be official ITF materials as North Korea does not allow its organizations independence from state control. I have however explored the Newsletters and other materials shared on their official website as well as used the letters and ITF Congress minutes shared by them. I believe this to be agreeable as this work aims to study what was *de facto* communicated to the members and is thus not interested of possible secret files and hidden documents kept from them.

The value of the materials' used, is that they allow exploring the different discourses between the ITF leadership and ITF members. It reveals what kind of an image ITF was creating about itself – whether intentionally or unintentionally. With this approach to sources, I hope to give an equal voice to all the present ITFs, after all, these were sources once common to them all.

### 1.2.2 Published primary sources of Pre-2002 ITF

The published primary sources are the ITF teaching manuals, called the ITF Encyclopedias, published between c.1959-1995 and the three volume auto-biography called *Taekwon-Do and I (TKD & I)* written by Choi (vol. 3 available only in Korean, published postmortem, potentially manipulated content). As there are several editions of the Encyclopedias, I invite the reader to explore the attached bibliography where they are listed. Thanks to many ITF colleagues and friends, it has been possible to view the many different editions of these manuals which has made it possible to document changes in them. Furthermore, written and video format interviews and other documentation of ITF members have been explored.

Lastly, the Korean and Japanese language newspapers and journals, as well in other languages, have been used to document events around the ITF.

### 1.2.3 Sources and data of Post-2002 ITF – sources directly relating to 2002 splinter

Sources of the post-splinter ITF are treated separately from the earlier data. This is because the federation's splintering and the leadership divergences caused the available sources to become dispersed and multiplied almost overnight. The sources from here on originate from each group in question who had their own interests to defend, and the materials cease to be common to all. They largely derive from the websites of the different post-splinter ITFs.

Again, Internet Archive has been used to view their websites at the time of the events. Next, they were validated through the AETF/POLITF Archives. The same strict source criticism is in use here as in pre-splinter materials. Please see the bibliography for detailed list of these websites.

### 1.2.4 Other materials used

Publications and other materials of former ITF leaders or Pioneers are also explored. Depending on their content, they are treated either as pre- or post-2002 splintering literature. Materials relating to the Overseas Koreans democratic and unification movements, family reunion, and the Zainichi are limited due to complications in finding credible sources and research on them. I have addressed this problem by combining information from different sources: English abstracts in Korean language scientific articles, old photos, videos, blog writings, and social media (e.g., archives of Toronto University, Centre for Research Libraries [CRL], Open Archives of Korean Democracy Foundation [Kdemo]). Once placed together, it is possible to construct a bigger picture of the Overseas Korean Democratic movements gen. Choi was involved with.

Former ITF Secretary General and a long-time ITF Under Secretary, then a Master, Mr. Thomas MacCallum's highly anticipated book has not yet been published during making this research. It is expected to be revealing of the ITF's history. He has not been available for comments and the book's content is unknown to me. It is expected to be published any day.

### 1.2.5 Initial Informal discussions

The ITF is still silent. Only few attempts for interviews have materialised. But most of all, we have lost many of the Taekwon-Do Pioneers, former ITF leaders and legends during the time writing this study. Also, many of those I hoped to interview for this study are in too poor health to participate. At least ten of those I wanted to interview passed away. My condolences

for all those affected. I hope their histories will be preserved, documented, and shared as they are all valuable to Korean and Martial Art history.

Thus, I have decided not to continue with these interviews as it was not possible to create a balanced setting where all ITF groups were equally represented. Instead, I have used initial informal discussions. They have mainly taken place with members belonging presently to the same ITF as I. These are members who have gained minimum a black belt during gen. Choi's era. With few exceptions, all were 4th dan International Instructors or higher during the researched period, and most had leading positions on National, Continental or in ITF leadership. Proximately all have experience of c.40 years or more in Taekwon-Do. These individuals together represent or have represented all three ITFs. To mention few of the countries I have gained contact with: Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Poland, UK, The Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Italy, Canada, Japan, Vietnam, Argentina, USA, and Puerto Rico. As these are only initial discussions, I only use them to give indication for possible future research, and to explore whether a certain event can be documented with their help. Hence, they were not per se used to validate or confirm information. On top of this, I have used semi-constructed interviews in case of Finland, Italy and Poland.

For email exchanges, some information has been gained from Canada, relating to the chapter 3.5. With Japan the discussions have been profound and incredibly informative, and they have helped me constructing parts relating to Japan, in particular chapter 6.3. Discussions in other form (face to face, messages and phone calls) have also taken place. Contacts in Italy, have help me in gaining access to some of the rarest Taekwon-Do publications and countless of other historical materials, as well as to understand the events of the 2000s. In Holland, there are two who have opened their personal archives for materials which has also helped me to validate sources already in my possession, both have also helped me greatly to confirm the events during the 1990s and early 2000s. With Denmark, the discussions have helped me in identifying and comprehending the former ITF leaders. With US discussions have also been fruitful, helping me to clear the timeline of the 2002 and to also understand Puerto Rico and its Pioneers. Lastly, long, vibrant, and informative discussions have taken place with my Scotland contact and these discussions have been particularly helpful in creating the chapter 6. To protect the privacy of my informants, I will not share further details of their personas.

The events transpiring from the Rimini 2001 ITF Congress onwards are reflected also against my own personal experiences when as a neo-blackbelt and young national team athlete I got

to witness the whole sporting structure around me to crumble into pieces. This personal experience affects this study in the following ways. First, it facilitates the use of sources as I knew from where to begin my search for them. For instance, knowing about the existence of the ITF related websites in use at this time, remembering the overwhelming amount of email correspondences between the members, knowing the ITF Newsletters from this time, and the ITF events I, my seniors and teammates participated in. Memory of them has helped me relocating many sources. Being present in the ITF during this time, has also facilitated in distinguishing the ITF leaders of the time: many of the names discussed in this study are familiar for me already at least from the early 2000s. But most importantly, my personal experience in the ITF has helped recognising disinformation as it is harder to mislead someone who has personally witnessed these events. Hence, the personal connection to this topic helps noticing discrepancies in the sources, which otherwise could easily lead the reader astride. I have tried my best to react to these situations by attempting to “look deeper” into the ways the document has been created (when, where, and by who, and what are the possible motivations behind it), hence to study it in its historical context and to find factual context to what is being said.

### 1.2.6 Literature Review

In the recent years, studies addressing ITF Taekwon-Do have begun to emerge. Yet, only a handful of researchers have made the ITF Taekwon-Do and General Choi more recognised among academics and by doing so, created room also for my study.<sup>2</sup> When the taekwondos’ modern roots and their relation to Japanese Karate are acknowledged, it attends to result that General Choi and the ITF are included in the studies. These works have slowly begun to create a field of research also for the ITF Taekwon-Do. Regardless of which ‘태권도’ group is addressed, independent and transparent research without political interference or biases has been rare. Therefore, just by looking into the available research, the political use of the different taekwondos starts to become evident as will be noticed in the following.

The political biases originate partly from the South Korean universities, where research is written predominantly through the so-called Taekwondo Studies. They are commonly taught in several South Korean Universities, in the faculties of Sport Science. In these faculties, the South Korean Olympic Sport Taekwondo, governed by World Taekwondo Federation (WTF),

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., Capener, 1995, 2016, 2019; Moenig, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, etc. Johnson, 2018, 2019, 2020; etc.; Kang, 2005; Ahn et al, 2009. See bibliography for more.

meaning the present day World Taekwondo (WT)<sup>3</sup>, is taught as a physical discipline (e.g., their Olympic Athletes train under them). Due to the dominance of WTF/WT Taekwondo, consequently, proficiency and a deeper knowledge on ITF Taekwon-Do has been lacking. This is partly due to the ITF's decades long exclusion from South Korea. This exclusion and ignorance still reflect in today's research especially in terms of limited understanding and use of ITF related primary sources (yet alone of its vast oral tradition). Somewhat absurdly, the NKITF storyline has become the dominating version of the ITF Taekwon-Do research. At the same time, especially the constitutional ITF in Lausanne has largely been omitted from these studies, while the Master Choi Jung Hwa's ITF group has also received attention.<sup>4</sup> These studies therefore attend to over-simplify ITF history due to poor use of sources and possible pressure from the WTF in charge of these faculties.

The first research in South Korea addressing the ITF and questioning the ancient roots of Taekwondo – based on Capener (2016) and Moenig (2012, 2015) – was an unpublished MA dissertation of Yang, Jin-Bang<sup>5</sup> from 1986. Based on Capener and Moenig, the second time that the modern root of Taekwondo was addressed in South Korean academia occurs in 1990 when a former philosophy professor at Korea University, Kim, Yung-ok published his own work, also crediting Yang's dissertation. Soon after his book was published, it was censored, describing well the difficulties that studies acknowledging the factual history of the taekwondos face in South Korea.<sup>6</sup>

Steven Capener (1995) is the first one to write about the discrepancies in taekwondo history in English.<sup>7</sup> He reveals that his article also caused a controversy. In his later article (2016), he connected the motives to a wider political setting where he noticed a “nationalist project to invent a tradition for taekwondo”, continuing that “such myth-making is possible even in the face of strong empirical evidence ... due to an anti-intellectual and anti-empirical nationalism (...)”<sup>8</sup>. Also, Udo Moenig and Kim Minho (2016) express similar concerns in their article,

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<sup>3</sup> N.B., in 2017 the World Taekwondo Federation, WTF, changed its name to World Taekwondo, acronym ‘WT’, to avoid association with vulgar popular abbreviation, “WTF” meaning “what the fuck”.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., Johnson and Moenig, although discussing the ITF, have largely ignored the role of Const. ITF in their history narratives.

<sup>5</sup> Yang, Jin-Bang is a professor at Yongin University, elected as Korea Taekwondo Association (KTA) president on 17 Dec 2020; Morgan, 2021; “Yang Jin-bang elected to run Korean martial arts body”, *Yonhap News Agency*, 17 Dec 2020.

<sup>6</sup> Capener, 2016, pp.65-66; Moenig, 2012, p.22; See Bibliography for Yang, Jin-Bang, 1986; Ok, 1990.

<sup>7</sup> Moenig, 2012, p.22-23; See bibliography for Capener, 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Capener, 2016, p.61.



stating that taekwondo research still keeps following the “*portrayal of taekwondo history as described by the taekwondo establishment*”.<sup>9</sup>

An article from Ahn, Jeong Deok et al., (2009), states that it is imprecise to claim that taekwondo does not have any Korean identity and that origins alone would construct cultural identity.<sup>10</sup> The researchers indicate that “*If Choi is seen as the origin of taekwondo, there would be limited pride in taekwondo as a Korean traditional martial art and preserving the historical cultural continuity.*”<sup>11</sup> This shows how research on ITF still attaches itself to the nationalistic pride in the contemporary South Korea.

As an example of the nationalism driven Taekwondo Studies, Yong In University’s Taekwondo Department’s program objectives from 2014 are rather self-explanatory in preserving what was seen as traditional culture: “*The objective of this program is to train instructors with firm ideology for nation*”. The department’s characteristics being: “*The department of taekwondo (...) has been exerting itself in order to maintain the honour of the suzerain country*”.<sup>12</sup>

In addition to the evidently nationalistic premises of these studies, what is also striking is their limited use of primary sources even when easily accessible. This results in difficulties in understanding and analysing the ITF, General Choi and Taekwon-Do.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, some research attends to begin from the present towards the past causing a situation where historical analysis derive from the standpoint of one federation, mainly the North Korea controlled ITF (NKITF). Because of this, otherwise fine works forget to include into their analysis the fact that ITF did really break in three pieces, and that the forces present in each one of them now does not equal the same “material” present in the common, pre-splinter ITF. When the const. ITF and those groups residing outside the main ITFs, are included to the analysis, it is possible to see the plurality in the ITF.<sup>14</sup> Now this is forgotten, and the analysis becomes imprecise and side-lined.

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<sup>9</sup> Moenig and Minho, 2016, p.132.

<sup>10</sup> Ahn, 2009, p.1726-1727.

<sup>11</sup> Ahn, 2009, p.1728.

<sup>12</sup> Quotations from Yong In University website, derived through Internet Archive, see bibliography: OLD Yong In University website.

<sup>13</sup> Capener, 2016, uses only one publication of Choi from 1972. Moenig, 2015, uses only four ITF publications; Moenig and Minho, 2016, uses two publications of Choi and one popular work that includes ITF in more detail. Ahn, 2009, using three publications of Choi, including vol. 1 of his autobiography. Johnson’s works have been more balanced and I address them in the following.

<sup>14</sup> See for example: Capener, 2016; Johnson, 2018; Johnson and Vitale, 2018; Moenig and Minho, 2016, 2021.

In his 2018 article John A. Johnson focuses how both, North and South Korea have used taekwondos “*as a form of soft diplomacy*”<sup>15</sup>. Johnson addresses the 2002 splintering of ITF and acknowledges that the ITF headquarters were then occupied by NKITF and North Korean staff members. He also refers to the conflicts after Choi’s death and acknowledges that the ITF has remained fractured in three afterwards. Furthermore, he discusses how WT and Olympic Committee conduct their diplomatic efforts with the NKITF. However, Johnson’s work pays little attention to explore what it means for Taekwon-Do Diplomacy that it is only NKITF that collaborating with the WTF, and not the others. In many cases his study suffers from the afore mentioned one-sidedness of sources (the article is almost fully based on one person’s interviews).<sup>16</sup> Johnsons later article from 2020, addresses more firmly the splintering of ITF suggesting that NKITF is not any longer a non-governmental and politically independent organization stating that “*ITF overseen by DPRK citizens does not represent all ITF and practitioners*”.<sup>17</sup> Regardless of the few, small issues, Johnson’s works have laid a foundation for ITF research, and made also this research possible.

In his book Brian Bridges (2012) addresses the political history of sport and how politics has affected sport in both Koreas. Bridges makes a rare exception by addressing ITF history in a rather balanced way. He distinguishes the opposing forces acting inside the ITF and discusses even the long trials between the ITF and the NKITF over the federation’s legal status after the death of General Choi. He identifies how NKITF saw the succession rather as unilateral agreement, whereas constitutional ITF saw a formal election of the new president as the defining factor of the legal status of ITF.<sup>18</sup> I argue similarly in this study.

To understand the reasons why South Korea has such a problematic relationship with ITF and why North Korea has so forcibly aimed to control it, I will tie my research further to the studies addressing sport and nationalism between the two countries. Here, Udo Merkel provides some important references with his 2010 article where he argues that the two taekwondos can be seen as geopolitical tools that actively provide discourses for the inter-Korean politics.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Johnson, 2018, p.1637.

<sup>16</sup> Interviewees in question: Johnson, 2018, pp.1637, 1642, 1651; Johnson also addresses the 2001 split of Choi Jung Hwa. Johnson, 2018, pp.1650-1651, 1656.

<sup>17</sup> Johnson, 2020, p.1188.

<sup>18</sup> Bridges, 2012, pp.119-120, 133.

<sup>19</sup> Merkel, 2010, p.2469.

The following has helped my understanding in how sports were perceived in South Korean society until Choi's exile to Canada. Masaki Tosa (2015) writes that in the 1960's, that the "*father of modern sport*" in South Korea, President Park Chung-hee, used sports to "*enhance*" national pride. Sports were seen as a sign of national power and as means of "*confrontation against North Korea*".<sup>20</sup> Article of Ha Nam-Gil and J.A. Mangan from 2002 – with an evident nationalistic spirit from the authors themselves – paint a similar image of Park and his sports. Here Park is portrayed as iron-bodied "*admirer of the martial mentality*", a marvellous uomo universale championing "*the martial frame of mind*". To President Park, Sports were an "*extension of the political value of the martial spirit*" which could be used to defend the South Korean nation.<sup>21</sup> Yet, both articles ignore the existence of the taekwondos – even the WTF Taekwondo, the national sport, and thus the most nationalistic sport in the country. It is ignored even if the topic of these studies is nationalism and sport in South Korea. But by doing so, they perfectly reveal how nationalistic sentiments often appear in academic context when discussing – or not discussing – the taekwondos.

Regarding the DPRK's sport and politics, in an article from Lee, Jung-woo and Allan Brainer from 2009, communism, nationalism and political propaganda are examined in the context of the country's sports. It reveals what ITF meant and still means for the country: "*in the DPRK, taekwondo does not simply refer to a martial art; it is an ideological sporting practice that underpins the notion of Chosun minjok cheil jui ("Korea is best" nationalism)*".<sup>22</sup>

Also, on a more global level, sports create means to endorse national identity and nationalism. For example, Mangan et al. (2013) and Cha, Victor D (2008), highlight how politics and sports have conjoined globally, and how in East Asia sports expose geopolitical apprehensions and political rivalry.<sup>23</sup> Although taekwondos are not per se discussed, its wider themes of nationalism in sports help to apprehend why the different taekwondos continue being disputed and why both Koreas identify with different version of the art.

Lastly, Moenig et al. (2021) on gen. Choi: "...his alliance with the brutal North Korean regime should be considered his greatest failure, and for this reason, history is unlikely to be

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<sup>20</sup> Tosa, 2015, p.6; Eunah Hong writes about nationalism in South Korean sport in a very similar way and includes Choi in the story taekwondos, Hong, 2011; Also, Won and Hong, 2015 AND Mangan et al., 2013.

<sup>21</sup> Ha and Mangan., 2002, Quotations from p.227-228.

<sup>22</sup> Lee and Bairner, 2009, p.402.

<sup>23</sup> Mangan et al, 2013, Cha, 2008; Also: Allison, 1986; *The Global Politics of Sport*, 2005; Arnaud and Riordan, 1998; Levermore and Budd, 2004; Merkel, 2009.

kind to him”.<sup>24</sup> Based on Moenig et al, “Choi was in real life neither heroic nor ethical as widely propagated. (...) “[H]e was in fact a very deceiving and corrupt individual (...) [who made] questionable moral choices”.<sup>25</sup> The article then moves on to address gen. ”Choi Hong Hi’s Questionable Moral Record”<sup>26</sup> stating that he “was simply an opportunist who betrayed the South Korean regime primarily because of love of power (...) and for this reason, historical judgement of his record is unlikely to be kind to him”<sup>27</sup>.

Firstly, it is hard to fully comprehend why such ethos on moral questions in a scientific paper published in a sport history journal. Secondly, in science moral judgements by rule follow historical evidence but now the condemnation comes first while referenced, fact based, documented and verifiable research on gen. Choi awaits. Thirdly, the three professors’ judgements on gen. Choi’s persona are mainly based on a journalistic, popular work of Alex Gillis<sup>28</sup> and tales of a self-claimed authority of Taekwon-do history, decorated with a doctoral degree from North Korea, Mr. George Vitales. Unfortunately, neither one’s sources nor references meet the standards of academic research. Using Gillis (2008) or Vitales as the main sources to bring credibility to a study is as convincing as using Wikipedia sources for a doctoral thesis. Their references simply do not stand a closer scrutiny: the more scandalous the claim, the weaker the reference, if it exists at all. For this reason, I have left Gillis’ work to minimum in this study, regardless of how influential and ground-breaking his work was and is among the ITF practitioners. For the same reason I have left out the unverifiable claims of “one of the most prominent ITF members in present times” as Moenig et al refer to Dr. Vitales. Surely, Mr. Vitales can tell tales about the ITF as anyone else, but he simply has no authority to speak on behalf of the whole of ITF. Also, his self-claimed “knowledge” needs to be approached with science-based source criticism and also his words need to be viewed in their context if we want to remain scientific. For instance, during the studied period of this research, until 2002, he does not appear in any meaningful way in the ITF, other than having visited North Korea in 1980. Most certainly he is absent of the ITF’s leadership. Hence, I am not sure on what his status as one of the most “prominent ITF members” is factually based on.

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<sup>24</sup> Moenig et al, “The Founder of the International Taekwon-Do Federation (ITF) Choi Hong Hi: An Exploration of Fiction and Fact”, *The International Journal of History of Sport*, vol 38, no 17, 2021, p. 1832.

<sup>25</sup> Moenig et al, 2021, p. 1836.

<sup>26</sup> Moenig et al, 2021, p. 1843.

<sup>27</sup> Moenig et al, 2021, p. 1850-1851.

<sup>28</sup> Alex Gillis, “*A Killing Art: The Untold History of Tae Kwon Do*”, 2008.

Presently, What research evolving around the ITF most desperately needs, is documented, fact based, verifiable research that does not lose historical context. The research field needs critical works that are critical also towards their use of sources. I sincerely hope that the sources presented in this study, will help the future studies on Taekwon-Do to move forward.

### **1.3 From Taekwon-Do legends to history – for the reader**

The history of the art can be traced approximately to mid 1950s. No earlier historical evidence dating prior to Korean War exists. The name and beginning of the art can traced to 11th April 1955 when General Choi Hong Hi organized a meeting in Seoul attempting to unite the country's separate martial art groups under one Korean name. General Choi's motivation to Taekwon-Do can be described as a desire to turn the country's various martial arts originating mainly from Japan and China into something ethnically, historically and culturally Korean, developed by Koreans themselves. Thus, politics surrounded Taekwond-Do's history from the very beginning.

In fact, and somewhat contrary to the common believes, the reader should be aware that without General Choi, a Korean martial arts called Taekwon-Do or Taekwondo would not even exist. Furthermore – and once again somewhat contrary to the common believes, none of the taekwondos is thousands of years old Korean martial art but a modern one, formed after the Korean War by General Choi in order to create a martial art tradition for the country. Once again, as shown already above in the literary review, this decades long exclusion of gen. Choi from the histories of the different taekwondos had political motivations. In the following we look deeper into the reasons behind the exclusion and defaming of gen. Choi and the International Taekwon-Do Federation he was leading.

In the subsequent chapters I will first describe the initial formation process of the ITF in South Korea where it was first based in 1966-1972, and then follow the history of the ITF in Toronto, Canada, from 1972-1984/1985, and then its relocation to Vienna, Austria, where it finally became splintered in 2002. My study will begin from the immediate years leading to the formation of the ITF in 1966. The earlier Taekwon-Do history in the post-war South Korea is thus discussed only briefly. Although, this study begins abruptly some years after the beginning of Taekwon-Do history, it does begin from where the ITF, the topic of this study, is founded.



*Image 1 Gen. Choi Hong Hi (left in army uniform) and Cpt. Nam Tae Hi (second from the right), teaching ROK Army soldiers, an early photo of Taekwon-Do history taken at ROK Army Military District Command Sport Centre, on 29th March 1956. Photo credit: National Archives of Korea.*

## 2 The International Taekwon-Do Federation in Seoul – 1966-1972

In the post-war South Korea of c. 1955-1959, based on General Choi Hong Hi's Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedias, interviews, and memoirs, he visioned with some nationalistic premises, that South Korea required its own, indigenous, martial art. His writings echo of a desire that Taekwon-Do was to be a Korean cultural creation that was Korean at heart: created by Koreans for Koreans to introduce them cultural consciousness, militarism, and national pride. Furthermore, he accounts of building moral civilization through Taekwon-Do, to discourage the stronger from dominating the weaker, to bring coherence to the chaotic post-colonial and post-war society of South Korea.<sup>29</sup> Gen. Choi also writes how he aspired that by introducing Taekwon-Do, the ROK Army would not have to use Japanese Martial Arts any longer for their close-combat training. His writings describe how after the long destructive period in Korea, it was essential to create a cultural practice that could restore the national pride of Koreans. By using Taekwon-Do, also (South) Korea could eventually be known for its indigenous Martial Art just like Japan and China were.<sup>30</sup> Lastly, the art was about unification of the Koreas. Or as Lee Ki Poong (이기봉, 1986-1960), a Speaker of the House of South Korean Parliament, writes in his Preface to gen. Choi's first Taekwon-Do Textbook of 1959: "[Taekwon-Do] is an effective martial art for our people, who are at the forefront of unification by crushing communism, to train their spirits and improve their physical strength."<sup>31</sup>

### 2.1 KTA and International Taekwon-Do Federation established

Around the same time, in 1959, Korea Taekwon-Do Association (KTA), a national level governing body of Taekwon-Do in South Korea, was launched and gen. Choi became its first president. After serving as the KTA's president, 1959-1961, he was removed from his army position to serve as an ambassador to Malaysia, leaving his position in the KTA. But after some five years, he returned to South Korea and by 1966, retook the lead of the KTA. But the next year he was already forced to resign. Yet, he managed to close the 1965 Taekwon-Do Goodwill Tour, organised to promote the art around the world, and in 1966 he published his

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<sup>29</sup> "Part II, Fighting Arts Special: Interview with Gen. Choi Hong Hi, President of the International Taekwon-Do Federation", *Oriental Fighting Arts*, Sept. 1974, p.36.

<sup>30</sup> Moenig, 2012, pp. 58-60; Moenig, 2015, ch. "A new name for the art..."; Kang and Lee, 2009, ch. 2 section 4; Choi, *Taekwon-Do Textbook*, 1959, p.11-34 (in Korean); Choi, *Encyclopaedia of TKD*, 1984, vol. 1, pp.39-40, 45-67, 88-89; Kimm, "General Choi Hong Hi, A Tae Kwon-Do History Lesson", 2000, p.47.

<sup>31</sup> Choi, *Taekwon-Do Textbook*, 1959, p.8. (in Korean).

first English language Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedia. The other martial art leaders of KTA still could not agree on using the name Taekwon-Do, nor were able to accept to gen. Choi's as their leader. Then, partly as a reaction to the difficulties with the KTA, but also partly due to a need to address the growing number of overseas practitioners, gen. Choi, on 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1966 in Seoul, established the International Taekwon-Do Federation, commonly referred to by its acronym the ITF. The ITF was to become Taekwon-Do's central body, to promote and govern the art called Taekwon-Do on an international level.<sup>32</sup>

Soon after inauguration of the ITF, in July 1966. Choi published his Korean language Taekwon-Do Teaching Manual for the use of South Korean Army. In this book Gen. Choi writes similarly as in his Textbook from 1959, that his mission was not only to teach Taekwon-Do, but also to unite the Koreans:

*...our soldiers will not only nurture the military spirit by thoroughly educating all the soldiers of this essential Taekwon-Do, but also nurture a strong army through mental and physical training of individual soldiers to enhance the military's combat power and will to unify the South and North Korea with the fighting spirit which is never to retreat from a war and is never to give up under any difficulties. I am confident that our soldiers will become a cornerstone of the achievement of world peace.*<sup>33</sup>

As before in his Textbook of 1959, once again Choi attached his is desire to unify the Koreans to Taekwon-Do.

## **2.2 Taekwon-Do Exiles South Korea and WTF Taekwondo supplants**

With new international governing body based in Seoul, the ITF, gen. Choi continued internationalising Taekwon-Do. But as President Park became increasingly autocratic and as sports became growingly instrumental for his nationalistic aspirations, he began quickly nationalizing the South Korean sport organizations.<sup>34</sup> This was making it harder for General

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<sup>32</sup> Choi, *Taekwon-Do and I* (from here on *TKD & I*), vol.2, pp.106-113; Kang and Lee, 1999; Moenig, 2015, ch. "Existing forms...". The ITF founding countries: South Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, USA, West Germany, Italy, Turkey and UAE (to UAE during the 1965 Goodwill Tour through the demonstration in Egypt).

<sup>33</sup> Choi, *Taekwon-Do Manual*, 1966, Introduction, p.2. (in Korean)

<sup>34</sup> Rozenfeld, 2021, p.7; Ha and Mangan, 2002, pp.214-239; Bridges, 2012, pp.36-39; Tosa, 2015, p.6; Park and Ok, 2022, pp.4-5.



Choi to lead the ITF as a non-governmental organisation, as he repeatedly accounted in his memoirs, Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedias, and interviews.<sup>35</sup>

In this tense political setting, from 1968 onwards Choi began to plan an escape from South Korea which he feared had grown politically too dangerous for him. He later recalls these preparations were made in secret and finalised by spring 1971. But only a year later, in early 1972, he finally exiled to Canada and took the ITF Headquarters with him.<sup>36</sup> Also many other Korean martial artists migrated abroad at this time.<sup>37</sup> And as it occurred, only some months later, in November 1972, President Park obtained de facto dictatorial rights by the declaration of Yushin Constitution. South Korean political climate turned indeed difficult to many.

Gen. Choi accounts that Canada was chosen as the new base because of its location between Europe and Asia, as well as for the easy access to US and to Central and South America. But also, because it had a relatively neutral stance in the Cold War. Canada's geopolitical location made it easier to lead an international organisation.<sup>38</sup> Since 1968, with the lead of the new Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Trudeau, Canada was aiming to find a mediating role in the Cold War, pursuing constructive engagement with Communist countries rather than exclusion. Furthermore, Canadian citizenship did not particularly restrict travel to Communist Bloc as was the case with South Korea. Hence, once gen. Choi gained a Canadian passport, he was free to introduce Taekwon-Do in countries previously unreachable to him.<sup>39</sup> He further describes that Canada was also chosen as the above reasons made it a good seat for the Korean Unification movement, of which we will soon discuss more.<sup>40</sup>

What facilitated this sudden exile, were some of the General's closest instructors who already resided in Canada, namely Masters Park Jong Soo (박종수) and Choi Chang Keun (최창근).<sup>41</sup> Also several of Gen. Choi's other Korean Pioneers, who I define as blackbelts who worked or trained with him at least since the inauguration of the ITF, had either relocated abroad or remained there. To mention some of the instructors who left South Korea: Han Sam Soo, Park

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<sup>35</sup>E.g., the interviews of gen. Choi: "Korean President Criticized", *Albuquerque Journal*, 27 Jun 1976; Pyette, "Taekwon-Do? World looks to Ontario", *The Globe and Mail*, 15 Jan 1988; Kimm, "General Choi, Hong Hi: A Tae Kwon Do history lesson", *Taekwondo Times*, Jan 2000. Research: e.g., Moenig, 2015, ch. "Existing forms..." AND ch. "The Formation of Modern taekwondo".

<sup>36</sup> *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.205, 209-212, 218.

<sup>37</sup> Moenig, 2012, p.61; Moenig and Kim, 2020; Madis, 2003; Rozenfeld, 2020.

<sup>38</sup> *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.218.

<sup>39</sup> Communist Countries also had travel restrictions towards South Korea. Ahn, Byung-joon, 1980.

<sup>40</sup> *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.218.

<sup>41</sup> *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.209, 211.

Jung Tae, and Park Jung Taek, immigrated to Canada; Rhee Ki Ha, Park Sun Jae and Kim Kwang Il found their homes in Europe; Yun Young Kyu relocated to Australia and Nam Tae Hi, Han Cha Kyo, and Kong Yung Il to US.<sup>42</sup> Having the ITF headquarters abroad in Toronto made it possible for gen. Choi's instructors to continue working abroad. More research, however, is needed to understand if it also provided the members an escape route from the political situation of South Korea.

One of gen. Choi's above-mentioned pioneers, Master Choi Chang Keun (C.K. Choi), later accounts that the ITF General Meeting organised in Toronto in 1972, saw the largest presence of instructors and masters coming from all over the world than ever before.<sup>43</sup> It depicts how the ITF members were in favour of the new headquarters in Toronto. Gen. Choi was not left alone to lead the ITF. Unfortunately, the ITF membership numbers of the era can only be estimated as reliable sources to document these figures have remained unreachable for me. However, some indication is provided by a map shared by a former ITF Vice President, GM Charles Sereff (USA), documenting the distribution of instructors dispatched abroad a few years earlier in 1969. This source documents the total number of dispatched instructors to 152 in 24 countries around the world at that time.<sup>44</sup>

Master C.K. Choi states in his book (2007) that in the 1970s, the ITF was represented around the world by total 68 notable masters and instructors: 24 in US, 13 in Canada, 14 in South America, 9 in Europe, and 4 both in Australia and in Southeast Asia. He only lists the most well-known, highest ranking Korean instructors who were namely responsible of launching Taekwon-Do teaching in each country – the lower ranking instructors, or clubs, were left unmentioned.<sup>45</sup> These two sources indicate that in the early 1970s, many of gen. Choi's high-ranking Korean instructors continued in the ITF after the move to Toronto, although a number of those instructors listed earlier, were not any longer with him.

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<sup>42</sup> Data collected from: *TKD & I*, vol.2; *Condensed TKD Encyclopaedia*, 1995, pp.747-758; Choi Chan Keun, 2007, 88-103; [www.itfkd.sport](http://www.itfkd.sport), "International Instructor Courses", <https://itfkd.sport/blog/history-of-the-iics/> AND <https://itfkd.sport/courses/international-instructors-courses/>, seen 24 May 2023; club/assoc. websites and official websites of the NAs of each pioneer (containing e.g., biographies, personal histories); social media accounts of the above pioneers, and their club/assoc.

<sup>43</sup> Choi, Chang Keun, 2007, p.114.

<sup>44</sup> No further source details available in [www.historyoftaekwondo.org](http://www.historyoftaekwondo.org) where the image is shared (seen 13 Jun 2020), thus to validate the image has not been possible. However, const. ITF shares the same image on their website, resulting that at least C.K. Choi, Vitale and const.ITF consider the image valid.

<sup>45</sup> Choi, Chang Keun, 2007, pp.95-96.

But then, after the ITF exiled from Seoul, a new competing international governing body of ‘태권도’, the World Taekwondo Federation (WTF<sup>46</sup>), was founded in 28<sup>th</sup> March 1973, in Seoul. It was formed from the KTA with the ferocious support of President Park and his regime. Already in 1971 President Park’s regime had nominated Kim Un Yong (김운용, 1931-2017), aka “Mickey Kim”, a former ambassador and a Director of Presidential Protection Forces who was in a high commanding role in the Korean National Intelligence Service (KCIA), to lead the KTA. Then in 1973, he became the president of WTF with even greater support from the government. With the result that the ROK government now had control over both, the KTA and the WTF.<sup>47</sup>

The leadership of the WTF was constructed by martial artists who thus far had opposed gen. Choi’s idea to create a new Korean martial art called Taekwon-Do (those who supported gen. Choi’s ITF had no such need as they already had an international federation). As discussed, several of gen. Choi’s instructors had remained abroad or left the country by the time ITF exiled. Taekwon-Do’s strength resided abroad and it was not finding the same popularity home as abroad. Prior to Toronto, Taekwon-Do had faced constant resistance in South Korea. Research describes this resistance to partly stem from of the other Korea based martial art leaders who preferred to use their Korean Karate versions instead the Taekwon-Do introduced by gen. Choi. The studies have also described that the resistance of these martial art leaders was due to gen. Choi’s dominating leadership methods. They have further described that gen. Choi’s liberal and democratic based thinking caused resistance in South Korea as it was in conflict with President Park authoritarian leadership methods.<sup>48</sup> It is expected that the ITF instructors were not easily gaining positions in the WTF or were unwilling to collaborate. Those who joined, had learned their martial arts somewhere else than from gen. Choi. The WTF therefore represented other kind of Korean martial art traditions than Taekwon-Do. Also Master C.K. Choi claims similarly: “*The W.T.F. was formed by Korean Tang Soo Doo and Kong Soo Doo masters and instructors in 1973, with the support of Korean government*”<sup>49</sup> Or as Master Han Sam Soo puts it: “*South Korea decided to call themselves World Taekwondo Federation, just to kill the general's organisation*” (...) “*WTF should have used a different*

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<sup>46</sup> N.B., in 2017 the World Taekwondo Federation, WTF, changed its name to World Taekwondo, acronym ‘WT’, to avoid association with vulgar popular abbreviation, “WTF” meaning “what the fuck”.

<sup>47</sup> Moenig, 2012, pp.96-98, 181; Moenig, 2017, p.1330-1333; Madis, 2003 p.15; Kang and Lee, 1999, ch. 3, section 2.

<sup>48</sup> See e.g., works of Moenig, 2012, 2015; Johnson, 2018; Johnson and Lewis 2021; Ahn et al, 2009; and Kang and Lee, 1999.

<sup>49</sup> Choi Chang Keun, 2007, p.119.

name. It's like calling a beer a whiskey, saying it's the same alcohol.”<sup>50</sup> However, with controversy, the WTF did not choose to call their art Taesoodo or Tangsoodo or any other name. Instead, the WTF began calling also their art ‘태권도’, deciphered as Taekwondo. To put it bluntly, the WTF swiftly and intentionally stole the already international brand of Taekwon-Do that gen. Choi and the ITF had created.<sup>51</sup> Conversely, a number of the senior martial artists who had quarrelled for years with gen. Choi, migrated abroad after facing problems to run their martial art schools successfully under WTF.<sup>52</sup> These disputes, however, did not prevent the WTF to gain quickly more popularity, also abroad.

Hence, 1972-1973 is when the first evident federation level splintering occurred. This led to two international governing bodies of ‘태권도’ to compete for the their then and future members. This separation created a setting where WTF Taekwondo was free to search for its own historical narrative and its own technical composition. Likewise, Gen. Choi’s was free to do the same. Resulting, that from henceforth, the two taekwondos began developing apart.



Image 2 On the left, poster of the first WTF/WT Taekwondo World Championships, held in Korea, 1973. On the right, poster of the first ITF World Championships, held in Toronto, 1974. Source: [www.itfkd-sport.com](http://www.itfkd-sport.com), Our History. Seen 24 Jun 2023.

<sup>50</sup> Walters, “Pioneering Grandmaster looking to bring tae kwon do unity”, *Jamaica Gleaner*, 4 Oct 2015.

<sup>51</sup> E.g., Moenig and Minho, 2016; Capener, 2016; Kang and Lee, 1999. N.B., The WTF Romanised the name as Taekwondo (all syllables written together). N.B., It went against gen. Choi’s idea to emphasises the ‘Do’, the spiritual and philosophical aspect of the art, thus ‘Do’ is written separately from the body of the word.

<sup>52</sup> Moenig, 2012, p.97; Kang and Lee, 1999; Also, Moenig and Kim, 2020.

### 3 Taekwon-Do, Overseas Koreans and Toronto – 1972-1980

From Canada, gen. Choi continued internationalising Taekwon-Do. Two years after his exile, in an interview in 1974 he stated:

*“...today Taekwon-Do is an international martial art, not the Korean Martial Art. [The ITF] has been moved to Toronto (...) how could you say that is a Korean Martial Art? Not Korean martial art, international martial art.”*<sup>53</sup>

This chapter will explore gen. Choi’s connections with the Overseas Koreans’ opposition movements against President Park Chung-hee (박정희, 1917-1979) and his regime. Although gen. Choi brings forth in his autobiography his relationship with the Overseas Koreans movements abroad, it has received little attention elsewhere. The displaced Koreans are a central, if not even inseparable part, of ITF’s history. After all, gen. Choi was one of them.

#### 3.1 Gen. Choi condemns Park Chung Hee – Minjok Shibo

From Toronto, from 1972 onwards, the General’s patriotic and democratic ambitions turned more visible while President Park’s regime turned more autocratic. Eventually, Gen. Choi publicly impeached president Park in an open letter published in a newspaper called Minjok Shibo (민족시보, 民族時報, National Times). Gen. Choi dates its publishing to 1<sup>st</sup> February 1975.<sup>54</sup> I claim that this was a substantial moment not only for Gen. Choi personally but also for the ITF. During the following decades, the events that the letter transpired continued effecting the ITF by directing and limiting the ways the federation and its leader were to work.

In his open letter the General writes:

*“I am impeaching Jung-Hee Park, who is creating factionalism with all the power and money he has and manipulating innocent Taekwon-Do lovers into dupes or gangsters serving politicians, in order to prolong his regime. (...) [T]here has been many tyrants and dictators, yet I have never heard of one who trades his or her own people and kills them only for the sake of his or her lust and greed. He has thrown religious leaders in jail and oppressed the students (...) censoring media and ignoring the virtue and ethics of our Koreans, threatening them, as it is already well known, with his corrupted government. (...) [L]et’s do our best to cast the foe of Koreans Jung-Hee Park, (...) for it is Park who, in the narrow-*

<sup>53</sup> “Part II, Fighting Arts Special...”, *Oriental Fighting Arts*, p.36-37. In Logan Bay, “General Choi Speaks – The founder of Taekwondo past talks of its present and looks to its future”, *Combat Magazine*, 1987, gen. Choi states “Taekwondo is now an INTERNATIONAL martial art, not just Korean.”

<sup>54</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, p.261-270.

*mindfulness of hindering one person, Choi Hong-Hi, is creating shameful scenes as a Korean.*"<sup>55</sup>

As we will see in the following paragraphs, this writing resulted into Gen. Choi becoming involved with the exile democratic groups of overseas Koreans.

Minjok Shibo, the publisher of the open letter, was a political underground newspaper published in Japan by a Korean minority group called Zainichi.<sup>56</sup> The Zainichi are ethnic Koreans who arrived in Japan either voluntarily or were forced to do so during Japan's colonialization period. After the defeat of Japan in the World War II, some 600 000 of them remained in Japan constituting the Zainichi population. When Korea was divided, these people became stateless. After 1965 Normalisation Treaty between Japan and South Korea, only South Korean nationalities were recognised and allowed to gain permanent residence status in Japan. North Korea was not recognised as a state, and North Korean nationalities and those refusing the South Korean nationality, were left stateless in the eyes of Japan.

Gen. Choi's article was published when the Zainichi were systematically discriminated by the Japanese government. Since the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, the Zainichi were excluded on local and national government levels from equal access, or even denied any access, to education, employment, housing and marriage, as well as excluded from social welfare (e.g., pension, child support and medical care). This happened although they were still subjected to pay taxes just like the ethnic Japanese.<sup>57</sup> Both Koreas were taking advantage of them by constantly inserting them into an underprivileged position.<sup>58</sup> Cho Ki-eun concludes the situation well: "the political reality of Zainichi Korean is in the crossroads between postcolonial situation and the cold war politics".<sup>59</sup> Or as Lie describes, that in the 70s the political and ideological division between South Korea and the Zainichi was wide and their treatment by Japanese came close to apartheid, systematically discriminating and excluding them outside the society.<sup>60</sup> It was these issues that Minjok Shibo was aiming to address.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, Vol 2, p.264-269.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., Choi, JungGie, "An Analysis of 'MinJokSiBo(National Times)' Article in 1980 after May 18: Focusing on the May 18 Democratization Movement and on the Kim Dae-Jung Rescue Movement", 2021.

<sup>57</sup> John Lie, discusses these issues profoundly in his book "*Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial identity*", 2008.

<sup>58</sup> E.g., John Lie, 2008; Cho, Ki-eun. 2020; Kim, Woongki, 2020; Tai, Eika, 2009.

<sup>59</sup> Cho, Ki-eun, "Korea Democratization Movement of Mindan zainichi Korean –'division' in 'solidarity'", 2014.

<sup>60</sup> Lie, 20008.

<sup>61</sup> Also: Choi, JungGie, 2021.

Looking into the Zainichi more closely reveals how Gen. Choi positioned himself in relation to them: he did not connect himself with groups that supported the authoritarian politics of South Korea. After all, as Lie writes, “[o]ne would have had to be a dyed-in-the-wool anticommunist to love the South Korean regime in the late 1960s and 1970s.”<sup>62</sup> Gen. Choi, like many other Koreans at this time, aligned himself with everyone else except the groups supporting the South Korean dictatorship.

The open letter must have also caught the attention of North Korea as in less than a month "a man" handed Gen. Choi a letter from his older brother residing in North Korea. Soon after receiving the letter, a meeting with the brother was arranged, taking place in Sweden during the same spring, in 1975.<sup>63</sup> Whether the open letter had anything to do with it, the available sources leave unclear. However, the proximity of the two events insinuates a correlation between them.

### 3.2 Zainichi – Chongryon, Mindan, Chōsen-seki

The Zainichi are roughly divided into the pro-North Korean association called Chongryon (General Association of Korean Residence in Japan, 재일본조선인총련합회), and into the pro-South Korean association called Mindan (Korean Residents Union in Japan, 재일본조선인총련합회). However, the divisions were (and are) not straightforwardly black and white. There was (and still is) a third group present among the Zainichi who did not recognise either of the Korean states. Instead, they recognised only undivided Korea and aspired their residence status in Japan to state the same. I argue that this imagined ground in-between the Koreas, is from where also Gen. Choi could be found.

Some Zainichi identify with a group called Chōsen-seki (조선적, 朝鮮籍), consisting today of some 26 000 individuals. In the 1970s their numbers are expected significantly larger, but the figures are unknown as the Japanese authorities do not provide any accessible data on them. They are often labelled by Japan and South Korea as being part of Chongryon and representing pro-North Korea sentiments. However, Chōsen-seki does not automatically mean pro-North Korea or pro-Chongryon. It can simply mean not recognising either of the state. As Kim, Woongki argues, they can be non-North Korea, non-Chongryon, Non-South Korea and non-Mindan. They may equally sympathise or averse both associations or have no interest

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<sup>62</sup> John Lie, "Zainichi (Koreans in Japan): Diasporic Nationalism and Postcolonial Identity", 2008, p.70.

<sup>63</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.271-280.

towards either.<sup>64</sup> Increasingly after the declaration of Yushin Constitution in late 1972, the Zainichi were unwilling to support South Korea or be part of the Mindan which supported President Park's dictatorship and accepted KCIA's violence against the opposition.<sup>65</sup> I interpret them as people who placed themselves on the narrow space in-between the two Koreas, as the ones trying to find ways out of the constant confrontations of the two Korean states. Since gen. Choi was aiming to stand on this narrow ground as well, he was drawn to the same space as Chōsen-seki.

### 3.3 Hanmintong (Hantongryon)

The Minjok Shibo that supported these in-between Zainichi, was also linked with the South Korean opposition politician and future president, Kim Dae Jung (김대중, 1924-2009). Following his failed assassination attempt after losing against President Park in the 1971 South Korean presidential elections, Kim Dae Jung escaped to Japan around the same time when gen. Choi and the ITF left South Korea. Kim Dae Jung then initiated a democratic exile movement in Tokyo with other Korean reformers against the South Korean dictatorship. This group is often identified in English as Korean Congress for Democracy and Unification, (재일한국민주통일연합), in short, Hanmintong (한민통).<sup>66</sup> KDJ was the movements initiator and one of Hanmintong's principal founders, as the papers of a Congress hearing held in Washington DC in 1977 reveal.<sup>67</sup> The movement was created as a reaction to Yushin: to support democratization in South Korea, to restore its human rights and to promote Korean unification. It was one of the largest and most central organisations supporting the Korean democratic movement. However, since it aimed building dialogue with North Korea, consecutively, people around it consisted also of pro-North Koreans coordinated and funded by North Korea. Therefore, Hanmintong can be seen to have compromised with the North Korean dictatorship, as Kirk (2009) indicates. In 1989 Hanmintong changed its name to Hantongryon (한통련), Korean Democratic Unification Union in Japan (재일한국민주통일연합).<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Kim, Woongki, 2020.

<sup>65</sup> E.g., Kim, Woongki, 2020; Cho, Kyung Hee, 2020; John Lie, 2008.

<sup>66</sup> Kirk, 2009, *Korea Betrayed*, pp.44-101; Cho, Ki-eun, 2014, 2015, 2021. See also bibliography: "United States. Congress. House. Committee on Standards of Official Conduct. Korean Influence Investigation: Hearings...", 1977, p.158. N.B. Translations to the Hanmintong's name vary, attention in defining the correct group is endorsed.

<sup>67</sup> United states, 1977; also, Kirk, 2009.

<sup>68</sup> Translation of and the use of Romanised name Hantongryon based on Ji, Choong-nam, "'A study on the 'Third National Unification Movement' of Korean Residents' Community in Japan", 2013. Other translations and Romanising of the name are possible.



It is not clear for how long Gen. Choi was active in Hanmintong after the 1970s and more research is needed.<sup>69</sup>

After declaration of Yushin, the already tense politics continued intensifying among the Zainichi. It was further triggered due to Kim Dae Jung's kidnapping and consecutive captivity in August 1973.<sup>70</sup> I believe this event resulted Hanmintong to organise itself more tightly. It had to become a stronger organisation and active among the Overseas Koreans to gain wider recognition.<sup>71</sup> Gen. Choi made an appealing affiliate: He was now leading an international federation of Taekwon-Do, boasting of having 20 million students in 60 countries.<sup>72</sup> Also, he had earlier global connections due to his prior army and ambassador careers. Furthermore, Gen. Choi had for years connected democratic ideals, Korean unification, and patriotism, into his martial art. Resulting that his interests aligned with Hanmintong.

### 3.4 Hanminrjon

Two years after publishing the open letter, Hanmintong invited Gen. Choi and other established Koreans residing abroad to participate into their meeting in Tokyo 12th to 14th August 1977. Hanmintong organised the meeting to an international branch called the Overseas Korean Federation for Democratic National Unification, in short, Hanminrjon (한국민주민족통일해외연합, 한민련).<sup>73</sup> Hanminrjon was to bring together the democratic minded, patriotic Koreans abroad, who were interested of working for the democratisation and peaceful unification. It was to strengthen collaboration between the overseas Koreans and foreign democratic organisations, as well as to expand the solidarity movement between them all to bring them all into collaboration with the Zainichi.<sup>74</sup>

The works of Kirk (2009), Lie (2008), Cho, Ki-eun (2014, 2015, 2020, 2021) and Ji Choongnam (2013, 2016) have shown, Hanmintong endorsed a third option where the division of North and South Korea did not have to denote that Zainichi were to divide along the same

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<sup>69</sup> Gen. Choi claims leaving his boardman position in Hanminrjon, an international branch of Hanmintong which we discuss next, by end of 1970s. This does not mean however, that he did not still collaborate with them later, Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, p. 293.

<sup>70</sup> Jack Kim, "South Korea spy unit admits kidnapping Nobel winner", *Reuters*, 24 Oct 2007; Also: Kirk, 2009, p.45-48; and Cho, Ki-eun, "(A Study of) Hanmintong's Democratization Movement for South Korea: Focus on the Activities of the 1970-80s", 2021.

<sup>71</sup> Kirk, 2009, p.99, mentions Hanmintong's international aspirations as well.

<sup>72</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.264.

<sup>73</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.287-293; Cho, Ki-eun, 2014, 2015, 2021; Cho, Hyun-Ock, 2005; Kirk, 2009, p.99.

<sup>74</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.287-293; Cho Ki-eun, 2015, Cho states that eleven counties, 104 delegates and min. 10 different democratic organizations of Koreans around the world were present in the meeting.

line. Similarly, Cho, Ki-eun has pointed that Hanminjon was essentially a civic movement led by civilians, meaning not a state-run organisation.<sup>75</sup> Works of Lee Misook and Cho Euna indicate similarly when they address the political movements surrounding Minjok Shibo.<sup>76</sup> Cho Euna, further defines that regardless of opposing the South Korean authoritarian state, Minjok Shibo was non-Chongryon newspaper that represented the “third way”. Meaning, aligning in-between the two Koreas.<sup>77</sup> However, neutrality between the countries was not an option South Korea favoured. Already the next year, in 1978, Hanmintong was declared an anti-state organization by South Korea’s Supreme Court. Hanminjon was likely also ruled an anti-state organisation since it was part of Hanmintong.<sup>78</sup> It has not been possible yet to confirm whether also Hanminjon was declared an anti-state organisation. All in all, in few years’ time Gen. Choi had come to contact with the North Koreans and gained an access to visit his homelands in North Korea in May 1979, little before a New York meeting we will soon discuss.<sup>79</sup>

### 3.5 Close companions: Mr. Chun Choong Lim and The New Korea Times

Gen. Choi writes that he travelled to the Hanmintong meeting in Tokyo 1977 with Mr. Chun Choong Lim (전충림, 全忠林, 1923-1995), who was a pioneering Korean immigrant to Canada (1962) and who founded the Toronto-based New Korea Times in 1973 (a Korean language newspaper, 뉴 코리아 타임스). It was a newspaper focusing on democratic issues and North Korea.<sup>80</sup> He was also involved with the Toronto Korean United Church (토론토한인연합교회), since its foundation in 1967. It was a church representing the North Korean Christian immigrants in Canada. North Korean community in Canada began to grow through Mr. Chun’s work to reunify Korean families.<sup>81</sup> He began reuniting divided Korean families from c.1979 onwards, with a program called Toronto International Dispersed Families Association

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<sup>75</sup> Cho, Ki-eun, 2015.

<sup>76</sup> Lee Misook, 2018; Cho Euna, 2020.

<sup>77</sup> Cho Euna, 2020, “(The)Cold War Structure of the Korean Peninsula/Japan and the Cultural Border Crossing of Koreans in Japan: A Genealogy of Auto-ethnographic Writing” (in Korean).

<sup>78</sup> Ji, Choong nam, 2016.; Kim, Tae-gyu, “Hanmintong members convicted of spying for N. Korea ruled innocent in 34 years”, Hankyoreh (Hani), 24 Sep 2011.

<sup>79</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, Vol. 2, pp.271, 336-340; Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, p.271.

<sup>80</sup> See Bibliography, "University of Toronto Libraries", an online collection of *The New Korea Times* (1982-2003).

<sup>81</sup> N.B. In 2004 the church splits in two to, Alpha Korean United Church and Willowdale Immanuel United Church.

(토론토 해외이산가족회). This happens to be the same time when gen. Choi began actively pursuing opportunities to introduce Taekwon-Do to North Korea.

Mr. Chun was a central figure in North America to coordinate Korean family reunions. Allegedly he helped 5000 North America based Koreans to find their lost families, of which c.900-1000 were reunited. However, due to his contact with the North Korea, he became alienated from other Overseas Koreans in Canada, and was referred to as “Red”, meaning a Communist. Work of Daniel Boo and Duck Lee confirm the work Mr. Chun and his organisation did for family reunification.<sup>82</sup>

In the Tokyo 1977 meeting Gen. Choi became the Chairperson for Canada, meaning managing Hanminrjon's national organisation.<sup>83</sup> This most probably created opportunities for Mr. Chun Choong Lim and gen. Choi to work more closely together.<sup>84</sup> Their close connections lead to conclude that their collaboration for unification of the Koreas and Korean families was close and long-lasting. Their lifelong friendship, mutual criticism towards President Park’s Yushin regime, connections to Hanmintong and Hanminrjon united them. Then, in 1994, the ITF rewarded Mr. Chun with a Distinguished Service Medal in the ITF World Championships of Malaysia.<sup>85</sup> Gen. Choi appears to have been later pictured (see below) in North Korea together with Mrs Soon Young Chu (전순영) who was Mr. Chun’s wife, and also deeply involved with Korean Reunification movement.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Boo and Lee, 1992, pp.146, 157, 169; also, Song, Kwang Ho: “Merit for finding the homes of 4000 separated families of Overseas Koreans” (in Korean), *The Tongil Shinmun*, 18 Mar 2022.

<sup>83</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, pp.287-293; Cho Ki-Eun, 2013, pp.195, confirm the presence of Gen Choi and Mr. Chun in the meeting.

<sup>84</sup> Informant 2 Canada, in relation to Chun Choong Lim, email to author, 27 April 2022.

<sup>85</sup> *ITF Newsletter*, 4/1994, AND Minutes of the Kuala Terengganu 1994 ITF Congress, 27 Jul 1994, Malaysia.

<sup>86</sup> Informant 1 Canada, in relation to Chun Choong Lim, email 6 Feb 2022; Larry Young, "Mr and Mrs Chun", Documentary, *Vimeo*, published 30th Aug 2011.



*Image 3 Gen. of Choi (in the middle) together with Mr. Chun Choon (on the left) Li, and Mrs Soon Yong Chu (left), and GM Rhee Ki Ha (second from the left) during ITF World Championships in Malaysia, 1994. Source: Screen capture of an image shared by Sereff Taekwon-Do Self Defence & Physical Fitness Centre's Facebook page, Facebook, seen 24 May 2023.*



*Image 4 Mrs Soon Young Chu with Kim Il Sung in front, General Choi appears to be in the background, left, footage undated. Screen capture from short documentary by Larry Young: Mr and Mrs Chun (Vimeo, published 30th Aug. 2011).*

### **3.6 Close companions: General Choi Duk Shin and Chondogyo**

During the autumn 1977, gen. Choi claims to have introduced Hanmintong also to his blood brother, a former South Korean Ambassador, General Choi Duk Shin (최덕신, i.a. Choe Deok-sin, 1914-1989). Gen. Choi Duk Shin was the “Godfather of Taekwon-Do” who had helped Taekwon-Do to grow especially abroad. Based on gen. Choi, this introduction took place in 1977 during a period from October to November in Tokyo where they travelled together –

only few months after the first Hanminrjon meeting.<sup>87</sup> The visit parallels with gen. Choi Duk Shin's exile from South Korea to the US in November 1977.<sup>88</sup>

General Choi Duk Shin was instrumental in supporting gen. Choi to introduce Taekwon-Do abroad. In available research thus far, gen. Choi Duk Shin's role in the history and distribution of ITF Taekwon-Do has largely gone undiscussed.<sup>89</sup> General Choi Duk Shin was the ROK Ambassador to Vietnam and thus had means to support Taekwon-Do's entry there. He also advised gen. Choi to accept work as an ambassador to Malaysia, helped introducing Taekwon-Do to Taiwan, and later, when gen. Choi Duk Shin was the ambassador to West-Germany, helped introducing the art also there.<sup>90</sup> His input for Taekwon-Do is also credited in each Taekwon-Do teaching manuals at least from 1983 onwards.<sup>91</sup>

Gen. Choi Duk Shin is best known for his army career during the Korean War and for being South Korea's former Foreign Minister and a diplomat. He is also known for his involvement in the Guchang incident in February 1951 when ROK soldiers under his command killed civilians in search for Communist guerrillas.<sup>92</sup> He is also known for being an ambassador to West Germany during the KCIA organised abductions of South Korean students in 1967 (aka the Berlin Incident).<sup>93</sup> Yet, he is most known for being the highest-ranking defector of South Korea: first to US, in 1977, and then to North Korea in 1986, three years prior to his death.

He is less known for being the leader of an ethnic Korean religion Chondogyo (천도교, also known as Cheondoism or Chondoism). After serving as an ambassador to West-Germany, and failing to prevent the Berlin Incident, he resigned from his position and took instead the lead of the Chondogyo in South Korea in around year 1967.<sup>94</sup> Chondogyo is a hybrid religion of Korean Shamanism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Daoism and Catholicism. The name roughly translates as Heavenly Way Religion. It is based on an older, similarly religious, and political

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<sup>87</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, pp. 294-302.

<sup>88</sup> Whymant, Robert: "Politician joins the anti-Park forces", *The Guardian*, 19 Nov 1977, p.7.

<sup>89</sup> Johnson (2018, Taekwondo diplomacy) AND Moenig and Young (2020) mention only briefly Choi Duk Shin's support for Taekwon-Do.

<sup>90</sup> *TKD Encyclopedia*, vol. 1, 1984, p. 249; Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.86-95, 513-514.

<sup>91</sup> E.g., see the chapter "About the Author" in encyclopaedias from 1983's onwards.

<sup>92</sup> E.g., Kim, Dong Choon, "Forgotten war, forgotten massacres – the Korean War. (1950-1953) as licenced mass killings." *Journal of Genocide Research*, vol. 6, No. 4, 2004, p.523; Gen. Choi Duk Shin mentions the massacre in his conference speech in New York: "Towards Democracy and Unification – Resources for the Overseas Korean Conference on National Issues.", 1979, p.82.

<sup>93</sup> E.g., "Abduction of South Korean Student and Teachers from West Germany", *Minerva*, 1967; Gen. Choi Duk Shin's account on the abduction "Towards Democracy and Unification...", 1979, p.82.

<sup>94</sup> "Choi Duk Shin returns to Chondogyo", *The Joongan* (newspaper) 8 Sep 1967, <https://www.joongang.co.kr/article/1133730#home>, seen 26 Jan 2023. In Korean.

movement called Donghak (동학, Eastern Learning, founded 1860). It also has close connection with Korean Colonial time independence activists and their movements, such as March First Movement of 1919 (삼일, Sam-il). Due this and its continued political activism, it can be defined religious-political movement. From 1951 onwards Chondogyo and its members were subject to persecution in North Korea, leading it to vanish almost completely. During the 1970s Chondogyo, however, was revived as the North Korea saw it as an opportunity to enhance unification discussions with South Korea.<sup>95</sup>

Chondogyo has a particular importance in the ITF Taekwon-Do. Sometime during a period after 1966 and before 1972, Gen. Choi created a new pattern called Eui-Am tul (meaning a pattern, a predesigned sequence of attacking and defence techniques, e.g. in Karate the tul are called 'kata').<sup>96</sup> The pattern is a reference to Son Byong Hi (손병희, 1861-1922), founder of Chondogyo and an independence leader of Sam-Il movement – a movement to which Choi dedicated a pattern already in his 1959 publication. Gen. Choi seems to have valued Chondogyo greatly, maybe due to its connection to gen. Choi Duk Shin.

Furthermore, Chondogyo has a political party in North Korea called Chondogyon Chongudang (also Cheondoist Chongu Party, 천도교 청우당), formed in 1946. Lankov defines it as non-Communist, similar to the second non-Communist party of North Korea, the Social-Democratic Party.<sup>97</sup> Gen. Choi Duk Shin became its leader in North Korea after he defected there. Prior to the Korean War, Chondogyo and its party were considerably large groups that created a significant opposition to the Communists in North Korea. Since the 1950s, Chondogyon Chongudang and Social-Democratic parties have only a nominal role in the North Korean political system.<sup>98</sup> When Gen. Choi Duk Shin passed away in 1989, his wife Ryu Mi Yong (류미영, 1921-2016) soon took over the leadership of the party.

All in all, Chondogyo and its political movement, do not appear representing a hard-line support to North Korean political system but rather an old opposition to it. Hence, maybe

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<sup>95</sup> Young, Carl, 2013, *Into the Sunset: Ch'ondogyo in North Korea, 1945-1950*; Lankov, 2001, *The Demise of Non-Communist Parties in North Korea (1945-1960)*.

<sup>96</sup> The exact time when pattern Eui-Am was created has been impossible to date. It was not yet included to the 1965/1966 TKD Textbook/Manual. But it is listed in the 1972 TKD Encyclopaedia.

<sup>97</sup> Lankov, 2001.

<sup>98</sup> Carl Young, 2013; Lankov, 2001; North Korea Leadership Watch, "Ryu Mi Yong (1921-2016), online; Kee, Kwangseo, "The Anti-Soviet & Anti-Communist Movements in North Korea after the Liberation of Korea: The Cases of Korean(Chosun) Democratic Party and Chondoist Chongu Party", *The Journal of Northeast Asia Research*, vol. 35, no. 1, 2021, pp. 101-134.

Taekwon-Do pattern Eui-Am was not only a sign of support towards his blood brother. It appears rather a conscious reference to Chondogyo as well as to the Cheondoist Chongu Party. This way gen. Choi was able to bring attention to those parts of the Korean society that worked towards unification, and which had potential to create a sense of unity between the two opposing political systems of the Koreas. Based on the available research, these connections in North Korea appear to align similarly towards the third political option wedged in-between the two Koreas, just like Hanmintong related groups were. Furthermore, Chondogyo is still present in both countries (as is also the tradition of commemorating Sam-il), creating thus a link between the two countries. More research is clearly required to understand the relationship between Chondogyo, Cheondoist Chongu Party, gen. Choi Duk Shin, and gen. Choi. As well as to understand if Korean family reunion programs have any connection to all of this.

### **3.7 National Security Law, Anti-State Organizations and the ITF**

As South Korea categorically labelled Hanmintong and Hanminrjon as pro-North and considered them a threat, it meant that anyone connected to them could be labelled along the same line, including gen. Choi and through him, the ITF. Any attempt to contact North Koreans (or anyone who was suspected of having contact with people who might have had contact with North Korea), could be considered a threat. Gen. Choi's involvement with Hanmintong and Hanminrjon, regardless of how long he collaborated with them (he claims he resigned from his board member seat in Hanminrjon couple of years after joining them in c.1979<sup>99</sup>), seems largely to explain, why he and the ITF have met so much resistance even today.<sup>100</sup> It made little difference if there was any actual criminal activity going on: possible crimes were presumed and judged already beforehand. The difficulties the opposition to South Korean government faced (and still faces), stem from the ambiguity of South Korea's 1948 anti-communist National Security Law (NSL), and especially its Article Number 7 incriminating anti-government organisations. NSL allows the government to silence even the legitimate opposition. Its vagueness allows criminalising any contact with North Korea well as penalising criticism towards South Korean government. It has led to thousands of arrests – even to torture and death sentences. Among them some of the longest serving political

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<sup>99</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, p.293.

<sup>100</sup> This probably also explains the article on gen. Choi's "questionable moral record" by Moenig, et al, 2021.

prisoners in the world.<sup>101</sup> As an example of the use of the law, two were arrested in 1977 for their alleged connection with Hanmintong, serving 34 years before being finally released as their charges were discovered unfounded and fabricated.<sup>102</sup>

The Amnesty International has also criticised the excessive use of the NSL and the oppression of the opposition groups advocating Korean unification and democratisation. As late as 2015 Amnesty International urged South Korea to restrain from an excessive use of the NSL.<sup>103</sup> Human Rights Watch also has voiced its concerns, also in recent times, in 2015.<sup>104</sup>

The setting can therefore be seen as providing a motivation for both, South Korea and the state connected WTF,<sup>105</sup> to pressure in particular the ITF's Overseas Korean members to move from the "anti-state" ITF to the "government approved" WTF. As the NSL provided means for intimidation, it legitimised the use of force against anyone considered anti-state. Hence, it provided means to intimidate the ITF members legally.

### 3.8 New York Meeting of 1979 and Democratic Overseas Koreans

This chapter will further investigate gen. Choi's relationship with the Overseas Korean's opposition movements. The following written recording of Gen. Choi's speech, presented in an Overseas Koreans conference in New York in June 1979, is used here to reveal his political motivations to enter North Korea and demonstrate his ideas on Korean Unification. Based on the publication, present were also General Choi Duk Shin and Chun Choong Lim.

Gen. Choi's speech is found from a booklet recording the presentations of a Democratic Overseas Koreans Meeting (민족문제 해외 통포회의) held in New York between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1979. It documents his relationship with the Overseas Koreans democratic movement(s), and presents his desire to enter North Korea to build connections between it and South Korea,

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<sup>101</sup> E.g., Diane Kraft, "South Korea's National Security Law: A Tool of Oppression in an Insecure World", *Wisconsin International Law Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2006; and Amnesty International, "South Korea: Prisoners held for national security offences", 30 Sept 1991.

<sup>102</sup> Kim, Tae gyu, "Hanmintong members convicted...", *Hankyoreh* (Hani), 24 Sep 2011.

<sup>103</sup> E.g., Amnesty International, South Korea: "Summary of Amnesty International's concerns", 1 Dec 1994; "The National Security Law, curtailing freedom of expression and association in the name of security in the Republic of Korea", 28 Nov 2012; "National Security Law continues to restrict freedom of expression", 20 Jan 2015.

<sup>104</sup> Human Rights Watch "Retreat from Reform: Labor Rights & Freedom of Expression in South Korea", 28 Nov 1990; Human Rights Watch, "South Korea: Cold War Relic Law Criminalises Criticism, Repeal or Revise Repressive National Security Law", 28 May 2015.

<sup>105</sup> About WTF/WT state connection, e.g., Forrest and Forrest-Blincoe, "Kim Chi, K-Pop, and Taekwondo: The Nationalization of South Korean Martial Arts", 2018.



as well as with the Korean diaspora around the world. Although Taekwon-Do is not mentioned in his speech, his position as the leader of an international, exiled Taekwon-Do federation, is why he was there. The conference took place only few months before the project to bring ITF Demonstration Team to North Korea began.

This document demonstrates that the General was not hiding his desire to enter North Korea; he even encouraged other participants to do the same in his speech. The following quotation shows how Gen. Choi supported an idea of unification first, after which the reunited Korea could vote on its future government:

*I feel desperately that we must have a country, and that we must also have an independent country with strong sovereignty. We must restore democracy in South Korea as soon as possible, and drive out the Japan's tool, Park Chung-hee, opposing unification, to achieve the inter-Korean reunification we desire. (...) Unification is not so difficult as long as you insist on doing it. First, we just need to have a serious thought of unification while putting aside all our ideology and ideas. The ideology and system of the country can be decided by 50 million people in a referendum after unification. I don't think it's necessary to talk about it now.<sup>106</sup>*

In the following paragraph he warns how anti-communism prevents unification:

*"Second, we want to be united with the communist country that is North Korea. Thus, we should know that being anti-communist means we don't want reunification with North Korea. It also means that we are getting caught up in Park Chung-hee's tactic to create two Koreas."<sup>107</sup>*

He then continues how Park's regime could be overpowered with collaboration of all people interested: "*democracy must be restored, and the two Koreas must be reunified*". He writes that it is important to create a central organization to support the work of all the Korean democratic movements abroad, stating how he desires to organize a national representative meeting for the Overseas Koreans to bring them together. He aspires them to become motivated to work for the reunification and to "*cooperate with foreign governments and international organizations*". He had confidence in the Overseas Koreans to bring forth Korean unification, hoping to expand this kind of international collaboration himself.

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<sup>106</sup> "Towards Democracy and Unification..." 1979, p.18-19.

<sup>107</sup> "Towards Democracy and Unification..." 1979, p.19.

His motivations to enter North Korea emerge from the transcript. He explains how he believed that allowing Overseas Koreans to travel freely between North and South Korea would lead to unification:

*When many people freely travel to and from North Korea without being obsessed with anti-communism and hundreds of thousands or millions of overseas compatriots freely move back and forth between North and South Korea, I think that is unification.<sup>108</sup>*

In the transcription of his speech, he emphasised interaction with North Korea instead of isolating it if unification and democratisation of Korea was to take place.

However, movement of even millions of people moving over the border was not a solution South Korea was supporting. Neither North Korea allowed free travel for its citizens. It is expected that Gen. Choi's opinions presented in the New York meeting did not place him into any more favourable light in the context of South Korea's NSL. Especially not, when General Choi's requested the Zainichi and the wider audience of Overseas Koreans living in free democracies, to join the democratisation and unification movement, while at the same time South Korea was trying to keep them out from their internal politics by banning them from voting in the country's elections.<sup>109</sup>

Lastly, in his speech, Gen. Choi lacks criticism towards the issues present in North Korea. Neither Choi Duk Shin expressed criticism to North Korea in his speech. This does not seem very balanced in comparison to Gen. Choi's democratic message.

### **3.9 Views of Gen. Choi vs. views of the ITF Members**

When the ITF is viewed through its leader, it becomes linked with the international democratic movement(s) of the Overseas Koreans. Undoubtedly, no matter how apolitical Taekwon-Do (and sports in general) is desired be, to isolate the ITF from the political realities of the Korean life is as convincing as trying to isolate FIFA from world politics. As a Korean art of self-defence, being led by Koreans, and being centred in many countries around the ethnic Korean communities, Taekwon-Do was – willingly or unwillingly – part of the politics (and stigmas) that surrounded the Overseas Koreans.

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<sup>108</sup> "Towards Democracy and Unification...", 1979, p. 19.

<sup>109</sup> E.g., "Revising the Constitutionality of the Voting Rights of Overseas Koreans", *Korea Journal*, 2014, pp. 5-29.

However, the political views of its leader do not eradicate the political plurality of the ITF members. When the ITF is viewed through its members instead of its leader, the federation ceases to link with the international democratic movement(s) of the Overseas Koreans. Presuming the whole ITF shared the same views as the General's politics is an over-generalisation. Moreover, gen. Choi did not include all the ITF into all his politics. It is likely that gen. Choi dealt with the democratic movements outside the official ITF meetings and events, arranging them before, after and around them – not during them and in direct connection as the available sources, especially the memoirs, indicate. This study has not found any traces of these politics in direct connection with ITF events. However, stories circulate among ITF members of how number of Koreans, namely non-ITF members, began appearing when there was an ITF event held where gen. Choi was present.<sup>110</sup> All in all, gen. Choi was dedicated to the Korean Reunification, and Taekwon-Do was part of it as it created a platform where all Koreans could have met in equal terms, and without discrimination. And even if the ITF was kept separate, and was not a direct part of the reunification politics, it can still be seen part of gen. Choi's larger ensemble of how to bring North and South Korea closer to each other. More research is certainly in place on these topics.

From the beginning of the 1980s, gen. Choi's connection with the Overseas Koreans' democratic movements appears to have gone through a change. The Hanmintong and its international branch, Hanminrjon were most likely shut down due to the trial that declared them anti-state organizations in 1978, as discussed. Possibly this was the moment when gen. Choi resigned from his position in the Hanminrjon board, although communication otherwise might have continued.

Then, almost immediately after the New York Meeting, gen. Choi travels to Europe to establish the All European Taekwon-Do Federation (AETF), on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1979. The continental federation AETF was created to include the national associations of both, the Western Europe and the Eastern Bloc. ITF was not the only international sport organisation crossing the ideological borders. As for example a collection of studies published in 2017 special issue of *Sport in History* journal reveal, by the 1980s it was not uncommon for international and European sport federations to cross the political boundaries of the Cold

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<sup>110</sup> Discussions with the ITF members based in the Netherlands. It has remained unclear to the organisers of the ITF events who these Koreans exactly were (except when it was South Korean Embassy who contacted them). Gen. Choi was well known among the democratic minded overseas Koreans so I would assume these Koreans to link somehow with these democratic movements. To confirm, further research is needed.

War.<sup>111</sup> It took however, some ten years until the AETF became per se organised. From 1990 onwards it was already able to organise European Championships annually. More research is needed also of AETF's organisational history.<sup>112</sup>

To conclude, Cold War did not manage to cut the world in two or keep the politics cut in left and right. It resulted in the formation of alternative political groups. Among the displaced Koreans, it resulted into a third political option wedged in-between the two Koreas. In Europe, for instance, this third political group grew and multiplied, creating more plurality into the European political map, as well as creating numerous different civic movements. And fast forward, Berlin Wall fell, and USSR collapsed. But in Korea they never really multiplied or found political colour and compromise. The division remained. But attempting to divide in two the political field of the Korean diaspora of 1970s based only on the political systems of the two Koreas is problematic. It leaves out the political plurality. Instead, the Zainichi and the Democratic Overseas Koreans' groups, should be seen as part of the 1970s Cold War détente and the Koreans' nation building process and organisation of their scattered civil society. They were aiming to find a common ground, dialogue, and compromise between the extremely polarised politics. They too were full of plurality of thought, believes and politics. And they should be allowed that plurality.<sup>113</sup> Same applies to gen. Choi and the ITF he led. Even if gen. Choi was in close contact with the non-Mindanao Zainichi groups, and with the Hanmingotong or Hammingron, it alone does not permit condemnation unless one wants to condemn whole population alongside with him. Accusations, especially in research, need to remain fact based, and not to rely on over-generalisations.

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<sup>111</sup> *Sport in History*, vol. 37, no. 4, 2017.

<sup>112</sup> Old AETF website, [www.old.itfeurope.org](http://www.old.itfeurope.org), European Senior Championships Results, seen 29 May 2023.

<sup>113</sup> E.g. Demelius, 2021.

## 4 ITF Enters North Korea and Intermediate period - 1980-1985

Taekwon-Do's entry to North Korea did not happen overnight: the first steps towards the isolated land were taken prior to the actual entry as seen already in the previous chapter. Likewise, North Korea did not enter the ITF overnight, it happened gradually. In the following I will discuss this process of introduction in more detail showing that the period from 1980 to 1985 creates its own sub-era in the history of the ITF.

### 4.1 Taekwon-Do Enters North Korea

According to Gen. Choi's writings, Taekwon-Do should know no political borders.<sup>114</sup> Based on this logic, North Korea, regardless of its political situation, was no exception. By the early 1980's Taekwon-Do was introduced to almost all corners of the world, in some places more successfully, others less. But North Korea remained uncared for. Gen. Choi claims that by the 1980, only 10 Korean instructors who had followed him remained with the ITF, and that the federation's funds and membership numbers were low. Many had joined the WTF, others had established their own organisations. With the strong backing of President Park and his administration, the WTF had grown quickly larger than the ITF.<sup>115</sup> Master C.K. Choi asserts similarly: during the 1970s, South Korean government officials pressured and intimidated the Korean instructors around the world to depart the ITF and join the WTF instead. He also states that the situation left ITF members little choice but to oblige. Based C.K. Choi's observations, the ITF lost over 90% of its instructors to the WTF.<sup>116</sup> Thus, gen. Choi had his back against the wall with the ITF which explains why the entry to North Korea happened at this time and not some other.

In September 1980, despite the resistance of some ITF leaders and Korean Masters around the world, Choi enters North Korea with his Taekwon-Do Demonstration Team.<sup>117</sup> This signals the beginning of Taekwon-Do in North Korea.

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<sup>114</sup> E.g., Choi, *TKD Encyclopaedia* 1984, vol.1, p.8. "1984 ITF Taekwon-Do World Championship", *YouTube*, published 23 Apr 2019, seen 30 Jan 2023.

<sup>115</sup> Johnson, 2018, 246; Moenig, 2015, pp. 121; Ha, Jae-Pil, et al., "From Development of Sport to Development through Sport: A Paradigm Shift for Sport Development in South Korea," *International journal of the history of sport*. vol. 32, no. 10, 2015, p.1271.

<sup>116</sup> Choi, Chang Keun, 2007, p.119.

<sup>117</sup> Choi, Chang Keun, 2007, p. 103-105. Choi, *TKD Encyclopaedia*, vol 1, 1984, p. 259-260. E.g., Moenig et al, 2020, pp. 1817-1818.

After the entry, the ITF was now to balance against the pressure of both Koreas in a situation where the federation was weakening due to the departures of its members. The National Security Law provided South Korea the justification to interpret the ITF's entry to North Korea as treason and to further isolate the ITF from the international sports. For instance, in 1982, the ITF instructors and masters were barred from teaching Taekwon-Do in South Korea.<sup>118</sup> Around the same time, starting from 1980 the ITF and WTF begin negotiations with the International Olympic Committee for recognition. Both federations aspired to become an Olympic recognised sport, while IOC demanded one unified federation before either of the taekwondo groups could be accepted. On 20 April 1982 the ITF and WTF signed a contract where the two federations were to merge. However, the WTF never acted upon it, based on the account of Master C.K. Choi who was present at these negotiations.<sup>119</sup> WTF, however was soon recognised fully as an Olympic Sport. This provided yet another motivation for South Korea to limit the influence and popularity of the ITF.<sup>120</sup>

For North Korea, the ITF Taekwon-Do offered a new route for soft diplomacy as well as an opportunity to try co-opting a global sport and martial arts federation. Were they to achieve control over the ITF, it could become only the third international organisation in North Korea's control. First being the different Juche ideology study groups and seminars around the world, and second the North Korea friendship associations (e.g., Suomi-Korea-seura, the Finland-Korea Society). In 1980s when the ITF was introduced to North Korea, the federation was possibly already far larger than these two other groups. Although more research is needed, it seems that the Juche study groups and the North Korea friendship associations generally had only one main group or centre per country, while National Taekwon-Do Associations attended to have several clubs in one country, as well as frequent annual events. This prospect should not be overlooked when analysing ITF's importance to North Korea. The ITF was internationally large enough to provide almost limitless possibilities of connections around the world. The fact that the federation continued weakening when it lost its instrumental Korean Taekwon-Do Pioneers, only made the situation easier to North Korea. It facilitated North Korea's opportunities for (hybrid) influencing opportunities, when those

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<sup>118</sup> Choi, Chang Keun, 2007, p.101.

<sup>119</sup> Choi, Chang Keun, 2007, pp.105-108.

<sup>120</sup> The minutes of the IOC from early 1980s discuss this recognition process. Quick exploration reveals that there were discrepancies about the two governing bodies, ITF and WTF, as well as a corruption relating to the acceptance of WTF Taekwon-Do as Olympic Sport. Further exploration is out of the scope of this study. More research needed.

who could have raised criticism were excluded. Through Taekwon-Do North Korea could easily camouflaged their politics behind the aura of clean, apolitical sports.

#### 4.2 North Korean instructor spies? Limitations and realities

Some six months after the Taekwon-Do Demonstration Team entered North Korea, an intensive Taekwon-Do teaching program was introduced in North Korea in February 1981 with Master Park Jung Tae (박정태, 1943-2002) in its lead.<sup>121</sup> This, as was revealed in the gen. Choi's speech in New York meeting in 1979, meant that an Overseas Korean was now working with the North Koreans. Based on the speech, this was the bridge-building he was speaking of between the North Koreans, Overseas Koreans, and South Koreans.

In only 7 months, North Korea produced its first international instructors, a project that usually takes years of dedication to accomplish. After the first course, 19 North Koreans were promoted to 4<sup>th</sup> dan instructors and 25 participants gained 3<sup>rd</sup> dan.<sup>122</sup> Soon there was a difference between the North Korean Taekwondoins and those elsewhere: they learned, trained, and practiced Taekwon-Do professionally. Outside Korea, professional Taekwon-Do practice was predominantly a distant dream due to the tight finances of the ITF and its NAs. Thus, gaining new grades took generally much longer than the required minimum years defined by the ITF. North Korean regime supported the ITF's growth in their country by introducing Taekwon-Do to the school curriculums and army.<sup>123</sup> The state's support for teaching programs such as Master Park's, quickly increased the ITF membership numbers. It also created its most visible outcome, the North Korean Taekwon-Do Demonstration Team.<sup>124</sup>

I presume, these instructors were first needed to teach and spread Taekwon-Do in North Korea and to form and run a new North Korean national association, the Korean Taekwon-Do Committee (조선태권도위원회, referred in this study as NKTKDA). Thus, sending the North Korean instructors abroad became relevant, and most likely also more numerous, only a little later. Moreover, the ITF strongholds like Canada, USA, UK, and Argentina, had already senior Overseas Korean Taekwon-Do instructors present as well as several non-Korean senior

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<sup>121</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, p. 364; In 1990 Master Park leaves the ITF and founds his own federation, Global Takwon-Do Federation, GTF. Will be discussed more later.

<sup>122</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.365-366. Amount conformed also through documentations in the AETF archives.

<sup>123</sup> North Korea supported ITF a lot like South Korea supported WTF, as Johnson et al (2018) have also noted, p. 246; Moenig, 2015, pp.121 "the formation of modern Taekwondo".

<sup>124</sup> After the federation split, the NK Demo Team became a soft power tool for North Korea, as Johnson (YEAR) has shown in his research. More research attention is still needed to see if and how the post-2002 use of the Demo Team differs from pre 2002 use.

instructors. Their national associations were older than the ITF North Korea, some for more than two decades. The North Koreans were juniors to both Overseas Korean and the non-Korean instructors. And in martial arts seniority mattered greatly. Therefore, until their skillset grew, there was little need or interest to hire North Korean instructors. And even then, financial recourses continued tight: To cover an upkeep of a North Korean instructor was out of the reach for many NAs. This limited the numbers of North Korean instructors abroad, especially in the West.

Some studies and publications, Master Choi Jung Hwa's comments included,<sup>125</sup> discuss that North Korea installed a vast web of its own instructor-spies to be sent around the world. However, it is unlikely that it met great success in the West because of visa restrictions. Johnson has noted similarly in their study.<sup>126</sup> It is more realistic that if North Korea installed instructor-spies, it took place inside the Communist Bloc prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union; in counties without visa restrictions to North Koreans; or in countries with little Overseas Koreans or other senior instructors to take the lead. Certainly, based on the available sources, the ITF's Overseas Koreans present in older member countries do not appear supportive towards the idea of introducing of North Korean instructors into their NAs. Had they, more North Korean instructors would have been hired and less Overseas Korean members would have left the ITF. Consecutively, this study has exposed no evidence indicating that North Koreans ITF Taekwon-Do instructors were hired in the West, especially not so in the Western Europe. However, North Korea could have sent their instructors spies without involving the ITF into the process – a possibility this study has not been able to explore.<sup>127</sup>

In Poland, as it was still a part of the Communist Bloc, North Korean instructors were regularly hired as early as 1982, the last contract became finalised by Warsaw 2003 ITF Congress.<sup>128</sup> And most probably in Czechoslovakia, where North Korean instructor Hwang Ho Yong moved in 1987 to teach Taekwon-Do.<sup>129</sup> Initial discussions with the Polish ITF

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<sup>125</sup> Interview to Master Choi Jung Hwa, "N Korea 'hired taekwondo killers'", *BBC News*, 9 Sept 2008.

<sup>126</sup> Johnson, 2018, pp.1640-1641; Johnson and Vitale, 2018, p. 246.

<sup>127</sup> The ITF Newsletters, at least from issue 1/1990 onwards, frequently requested the ITF to be informed when its instructors visited other countries to teach Taekwon-Do. It was demanded by the ITF that any travel to teach Taekwon-Do to be officially approved by the ITF so that official procedures could be followed. These frequent requests seem to signal that some bypassed the ITF protocol on the matter. Further details have not been detected by this study.

<sup>128</sup> Contracts preserved in AETF Archives, Lublin, Poland. Initial discussions with Polish ITF contacts.

<sup>129</sup> "Grandmaster Hwang Ho Yong, IX Dan", [www.michalkosatko.com/master-hwang-ho-yong](http://www.michalkosatko.com/master-hwang-ho-yong), seen 27 Jan 2023.



members have also raised doubts that most of the North Korean instructors hired were instead from Kyeok Sul Do (격술도), a North Korean martial used by DPKR Army and North Korean intelligence services. Thus, further research is needed to distinguish who these "Instructor Spies" exactly were, which discipline they *de facto* presented, and whether North Korea bypassed the ITF protocols by dispatching them without informing the federation about it.

It should be also noted that the North Koreans did not yet participate in the World Championships in Chaco, Argentina 1981, nor in Glasgow, Scotland in 1984. The earliest appearance on international stage appears to have taken place when North Korean Demo team made a presentation in the Taekwon-Do European Championships in Budapest, Hungary in 1986.<sup>130</sup> First ITF World Champion they participated was in Athens, Greece in 1987. This leads into conclusion that ITF North Korea entered the ITF gradually, not immediately after the introduction of Taekwon-Do. There was no need take over the ITF overnight as it needed to strengthen its own NA first.

### 4.3 Choi Jung Hwa and The Presidential Assassination Scandal

The General may not have been able to predict what took place almost immediately after introducing Taekwon-Do to North Korea. Gen. Choi's only son and likely heir to take over the ITF, Mr. Choi Jung Hwa (최중화), became involved in the assassination attempt of South Korea's new President, Chun Doo-hwan (전두환, 1931-2021), who continued the authoritarian rule in South Korea after his coup. The assassination was to take place in Philippines in 1981 during a golf game between President Chun's and Ferdinand Marcos, the President of the Philippines.<sup>131</sup> Gen. Choi accounts that his son's motivation for the assassination was in the government lead Gwangju Massacre in May 1980, which left thousands of civilians dead, lost, tortured, and imprisoned. President Chun was blamed for these events.<sup>132</sup> Based on the media reports, North Korea was suspected of being behind the assassination plot.<sup>133</sup>

In autumn 1981 the assassination plot was revealed to the Canadian authorities, and it led to charges against Mr. Choi Jung Hwa for his involvement in the assassination. In February

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<sup>130</sup> It is possible they gave an earlier demonstration, but no evidence has been found.

<sup>131</sup> Nick Pron, "Man charged in plot to kill Korean leader", *Toronto Star*, 23 Jan 1991; Farrell Crook, "Mississauga man, 36, pleads guilty in North Korean assassination plot", *Toronto Star*, 24 Jan 1991; CP, "Ontario man pleads guilty in plot to kill Korean chief", *Waterloo Record*, 24 Jan 1991.

<sup>132</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2. pp.368-374.

<sup>133</sup> "Plot Denounced", *The Vancouver Sun*, 27 Feb 1982; "Plot Denounced", *The Evening Sun*, 27 Feb 1982; "2 Arrests in Plot to Kill Chun", *The Sydney morning Herald*, 27 Feb 1982.

1982, the authorities came publicly forward with their investigation and Choi Jung Hwa was accused of conspiracy for counselling the murder of President Chun.<sup>134</sup> The trials that followed brought Choi Jung Hwa's collaboration with North Korean agents and Canada-based international arms dealers under a public scrutiny. The scandal was reported mainly by Canadian newspapers, but also by some American and Australian press.<sup>135</sup> Mr. Choi Jung Hwa, however, did not remain in Canada to face the charges. Instead, he fled to North Korea and hid behind the Iron Curtain in Europe. Gen. Choi confirms in his memoirs that his son escaped to North Korea first, claiming that Choi Jung Hwa tricked him to send him there to teach together Master Park Jung Tae. Gen. Choi claims that his son left without mentioning he had been caught in the assassination plot.<sup>136</sup> Choi Jung Hwa later accused that his father knew everything and was part of the plot.<sup>137</sup>

In the early 1980s (pre-internet and pre-email times) the Korean language news and Canadian media did not easily catch the non-Korean ITF Taekwon-Do practitioners' attention around the world. But most importantly, the charges were not addressed in any apparent way by the ITF. This was certainly omitted in the ITF Newsletters, and the correspondences attached to them. Neither AETF Archives reveal such communication. Had Mr. Choi Jung Hwa had a clear leadership position in the ITF and had the scandal been discussed in more openness within the ITF, the members could have demanded his accountability more efficiently and with more legitimacy. Instead, the Choi Jung Hwa scandal was not addressed directly.<sup>138</sup> With his silence, gen. Choi approved the actions of his son. He reveals in his memoirs how he thinks president Chon Doo-hwan was even more abominable dictator than President Park since he "betrayed his own people". Thus anyone "in the name of rightlessness" might have wished for his assassination. He concludes he therefore "did not feel shame even though Jung-Hwa might have been that ring-leader of the incident."<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> "Assassination Plot Reported", *The Capital Times*, 27 Feb 1982; "Korean 'Plotter' Held", *The Gazette*, 5 Mar 1982; "Koreans Pursue 'Plot' Suspect", *The Salt Lake Tribune*, 26 Feb 1982.

<sup>135</sup> E.g., *Toronto Star* (Toronto, CAN), *Le Gazette* (Montreal, Canada), *The Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney, AUS), *The Capital Times* (Wisconsin, US), *The Evening Sun* (Baltimore, US).

<sup>136</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, Vol.2, pp. 368-374.

<sup>137</sup> Gillis, 2008, information based on the author's interviews with Master Choi Jung Hwa.

<sup>138</sup> In the initial discussions with the ITF members, an expression "you do not talk about the son" meaning Choi Jung Hwa, has been relatively frequent. It gives room for an idea that discussions over the Choi Jung Hwa scandal were somehow subjected to limitations. Whether this was a direct command from the ITF is unknown, and it could be also a learned reaction to the situation from the ITF members. More research is needed.

<sup>139</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, Vol.2, p.374

#### 4.4 Entry to North Korea changes the art – Juche and Sinewave

Soon after Taekwon-Do reached North Korea, the technical construction of the art became finalized by 1983: one of the 24 Taekwon-Do patterns called Ko-Dang tul was revised and renamed into Juche tul.<sup>140</sup> Also, Taekwon-Do's distinguishing sine-wave movement<sup>141</sup> was introduced – or at least emphasised greater than before.<sup>142</sup> The new Encyclopaedia also contained some new movements. The first volume of the fifteen part Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedia was finalised already in 1983, and in 1985 the ITF members were informed of all 15 volumes availability in the ITF Newsletter.<sup>143</sup> After this, changes to the art have been nominal. The revised pattern was named after the North Korean state ideology, Juche (주체사상). Ko-Dang tul was named after Cho Man Sik, a Korean independence activist and critic of Communism who was likely executed by North Korea early in Korean War. Thus, he was not a favourable character to North Korea and a pattern dedicated to him was unlikely to be accepted by the government. This study, however, has not discovered a statement of Gen. Choi why this particular name change and not some other.

The change transpired most likely due to political pressure from North Korea, meaning that changing Ko-dang to Juche tul was a compromise to have his books published there. Based on the available sources, the North Korean versions of these Encyclopaedias are the same, except that they were written in Korean. However, to confirm that no changes were done after printing (e.g., adding new content such as an image of Chairman Kim) needs to be confirmed first hand in North Korea. This however, has not been possible in the scope of this study. The North Korean Worker's Party, WPK, had to approve the teaching manuals' content before publishing, which explains why Ko-Dang tul was not accepted, although it does not explain why Juche was chosen as the new name. Gen. Choi claims that he did not want Chairman Kim Il Sung to take credit for creating Taekwon-Do nor place his image and name on the

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<sup>140</sup> Published for the first time in *Encyclopaedia of Taekwon-Do* (15 vol. set), vol.1, 1983 (first print, first volume, publisher ITF Canada, other volumes likely to have been published later).

<sup>141</sup> Author's note: Sine-wave means a correct use of the knee spring, meaning not advancing from one position/technique to another with stiff legs (not to go against the natural movement of the body joints). At its best, it works like the shock absorbers in a car. By relaxing in between movements, one charges the body, and allows the body to rise slightly before the attack. Resulting, that the performer appears to move in a slight wave-like manner. Sinewave also links closely with the concept of dynamic balance (balance + movement), and comes very close to biomechanics used almost in any sport. Sinewave is a highly debated and misunderstood topic, especially outside the ITF.

<sup>142</sup> Sinewave was not exempt from Taekwon-Do before 1980: *TKD Encyclopaedia*, 1972, p.85, part 11: "Raise the hip slightly at the beginning of the punch, and lower it at the moment of impact."

<sup>143</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, Vol.2, p.393; *ITF Newsletter* 1985/2.

books in order to distribute his books in North Korea.<sup>144</sup> Neither did he want to change the book's moral philosophy containing teachings of Mencius and Confucius and alike into “Ju-Che philosophy” which Gen. Choi called it as “a twist of ethnocentric dogma, based on what President Kim Il-Sung taught”. Gen. Choi continues that “if we put that kind of phraseology into the book, the ITF would be closed and that would be a suicide.”<sup>145</sup> These parts of the Encyclopaedia have thus remained untouched. This signals that Gen. Choi was not naïve about what kind of country North Korea was. After all, he was a former ROK Army General and came with the experience his active years in the South Korean Army had taught him. Hence, he was equipped to confront resistance and defend Taekwon-Do from a North Korean state led political appropriation. In this context it should not be forgotten that he was well known of his uncompromising leadership methods which certainly must have worked for his benefit when dealing with North Korean authorities.

#### TUL

Since the new encyclopaedia is available it is an appropriate time to remind people that there has been a pattern change. Ko-Dang is being replaced by JU-CHE and Master Park Jung Tae has been giving seminars to familiarise students with this change. Since the encyclopaedia came out there has been an increase in new techniques and JU-CHE, although having most of the movements of Ko-Dang, has had some other, more difficult, moves added. The addition of these, more difficult moves, is felt to be appropriate to be practised at that stage as it is possibly the peak of a student's ability, depending on age of course. Ko-Dang was chosen to be replaced as it was the last person in the historical events chosen for TKD patterns. JU-CHE means completely self-supporting and is most appropriate at this time.

*Image 5 Announcement about the change of a Juche tul in ITF Newsletter 2/1985*

As a curiosity, Juche tul does not fit inside the competition ring, unless the athlete began their pattern exceptionally from the top of the ring, right in front of the umpires. Resulting, that based on the official competition rules, the moment the competitor steps outside the ring, the pattern will be penalised by deducting points. Furthermore, Juche tul is an extremely complex and demanding pattern which usually only the most talented athletes in their prime can perform accordingly. Hence, performance of Juche tul weakens considerably with maturity, and average practitioners are hardly even able to suffer it through. Whether this was an intentional error, or a veiled criticism to imply that Juche ideology was doomed to fail is unknown, and further research is needed. All in all, creation of the pattern is often credited to Master Park Jung Tae.<sup>146</sup> It was also his responsibility to tour around the world teaching the

<sup>144</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, p. 396,401, 464-467.

<sup>145</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.466.

<sup>146</sup> E.g., Anslow, Stuart Paul: *The Encyclopaedia of Taekwon-Do Patterns*, 2010.

new pattern to ITF members.<sup>147</sup> Coincidentally, he soon leaves the ITF accusing it for too close relations with North Korea (which we will soon discuss more). Lastly, Juche tul was not yet included to the competition patterns for the Budapest 1988 World Championship.<sup>148</sup>

#### 4.5 Reactions of the ITF members

Gen. Choi's decision to enter North Korea made continuing the ITF membership difficult especially to the Overseas Korean members. The situation was particularly demanding to those who had to keep connections with South Korea. The situation was made even more difficult, as the Overseas Koreans were often highly critical towards any contact with North Korea in their communities. An international sport organisation was no exception.

Most notable Overseas Koreans who left the federation early due to the ITF's entry to North Korea in 1980, were afore-mentioned Nam Tae Hi (남태희, 1929-2013) and Han Cha Kyo (한차교, 1934-1996). They had been with gen. Choi since the founding of the Oh Do Kwan gym in 1953 (gen. Choi's first club in South Korea where he began teaching Taekwon-Do). After leaving the ITF in 1981, Master Nam Tae Hi most likely turned his focus back to his own organization, American Taekwon-Do Federation (ATF) which he had founded in 1969 in Chicago. Details of this period require further research as reliable sources about Master Nam Tae Hi during this period are unavailable.<sup>149</sup> Master Han Cha Kyo left the ITF, and he also established his own group, called United Taekwon-Do Federation (UTF) in 1981.<sup>150</sup> Another notable master to leave the ITF around the same time, albeit not as gigantic as the other two mentioned, was Master Park Jong Soo. He was gen. Choi's perhaps closest student. Also Master Park established his own group, Park's Tae Kwon Do Federation.<sup>151</sup> As the ITF primary sources are not available prior to 1985, it has not been possible to confirm what their official positions in the ITF were. For the same reason, there is no marking in the available ITF related sources of them or other central figures that might have left the federation in early 1980s.

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<sup>147</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 2/1985.

<sup>148</sup> *ITF Newsletter*, 2/1987. Official tuls were up to Gae-Baek tul only, the last of the 1<sup>st</sup> dan black belt.

<sup>149</sup> "ITF History in the U.S.A.", *Totally Tae Kwon Do*, no 118, Sep 2018, found through [www.kidokwan.org](http://www.kidokwan.org), seen 4 Apr 2023.

<sup>150</sup> Master Han Cha Kyo's United Taekwon-Do Federation website, [www.utftkd.com](http://www.utftkd.com), seen 2 Apr 2023

<sup>151</sup> Master Park's Tae Kwon Do Federation website, [www.parksfederation.com](http://www.parksfederation.com), seen 2 Apr 2023. N.B. He however returns the ITF around 2001 and reconciles with gen. Choi before his death.

Soon the Mr. Choi Jung Hwa scandal further complicated the ITF membership of the Overseas Koreans. Once Choi Jung Hwa's central role in the assassination plot began to reveal itself to the members, especially so in Canada and in US, it prospectively caused even more pressure for the Korean ITF members to leave the federation. Based on gen. Choi's memoirs, especially the Overseas Korean language press was releasing condemnatory articles about his son and the trial case (not that western papers were particularly sympathetic either). But still, the General did not remove his son from the ITF which facilitated Choi Jung Hwa's deferment behind the Iron Curtain and which then gave reason for members to leave.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, despite the entry to North Korea and the Choi Jung Hwa scandal, no mass exile of ITF's Korean members took place immediately. Based on materials relating to Glasgow ITF World Championships in April 1984, there were still senior Overseas Koreans present in the federation. In total nine Overseas Korean Masters and one senior instructor took part in the competition and their numbers match with the estimation of gen. Choi, as already discussed. The "Noted Master Instructors in Attendance" were masters Lee Suk Hi, Rhee Ki Ha, Park Jung Tae, Yun Young Kyu, Han Sam Soo, Park Jung Taek, Lim Won Sup, Lee Ki Young, Chung Kwang Duk, and the one senior instructor, Kim Suk Jun.<sup>152</sup> Thus, they were still present in the ITF in 1984, four years after gen. Choi and the ITF had brought their Demo Team to North Korea, and two years after Choi Jung Hwa scandal became public – only some half a year prior to the ITF relocating its headquarters to Vienna.

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**WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS**  
**Kelvin Hall Arena, Glasgow, United Kingdom**  
**APRIL 20th thru 23rd, 1984**  
**Presented by MASTER RHEE KI HA, President - United Kingdom**  
**Taekwon-Do Federation & All Europe Taekwon-Do Federation**  
**GUEST OF HONOR - GENERAL CHOI HONG HI,**  
**Founder of Taekwon-Do, President I.T.F.**

Noted Master Instructors in Attendance:		PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES		
Lee, Suk Hi, 8th Dan, Canada	Lee, Ki Young, 7th Dan, Germany	Argentina	Hungary	Puerto Rico
Rhee, Ki Ha, 8th Dan, United Kingdom	C.E. Serreff, 7th Dan, U.S.A.	Canada	Ireland	Scotland
Park, Jung Tae, 8th Dan, Japan	Chung, Kwang Duk, 7th Dan, Argentina	England	Italy	Sweden
Yun, Young Kyu, 8th Dan, Australia	Kim, Suk Jun, 6th Dan, U.S.A.	Germany	Japan	U.S.A.
Han, Sam Soo, 7th Dan, U.S.A.	Lim, Ching Sing, 6th Dan, Canada	Greece	Malaysia	Wales
Park, Jung Taek, 7th Dan, Canada	Sabree Salleh, 6th Dan, U.S.A.	Guatemala	Netherlands	Yugoslavia
Lim, Won Sup, 7th Dan, Sweden	Andre Blake, 6th Dan, Canada	Honduras	Norway	

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<b>TEAM OVERALL - MALE</b> Canada, U.S.A., Netherlands	<b>TEAM OVERALL - FEMALE</b> England, Yugoslavia, Canada
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Image 6. Overseas Korean instructors "Noted Master Instructors in Attendance". On the left side, participating countries. Source: *Human Weapon, Official Magazine of I.T.F., April 1984, p. 12.*

<sup>152</sup> The official video recording of the Glasgow World Championships confirms the same individuals present at the competition: "1984 ITF Taekwon-Do World Championship", *YouTube*, published 29 April 2019.

What makes this publication interesting is, that it was still in the hands of the Overseas Korean members who would soon leave the federation.<sup>153</sup> The editor in chief was an Overseas Korean, Master Kim Suk Jun. Contributors were either other Overseas Koreans, Asians, or Westerners. The magazine was published in New Jersey, US, by Taekwon-do Instructors Association INC. As such, the journal does not appear representing the interests of the North Korea but of the members who were present in the federation already long before the ITF entered North Korea – and of whom many would soon begin their exits from the ITF.

But what makes this publication even more interesting, are some 30 Korean names that appear in the same publication. At the end of the magazine, there is an ITF Directory, listing instructors as well as other ITF contacts around the world. On it, there are 235 names and 65 countries or regions listed (including approx. ten non-Taekwon-Do related intuitions, groups, or instructors, e.g., National Olympic Committees). From this list it is possible to identify c.30 Korean names, from which at least c.20 are identifiable as Taekwon-Do instructors, namely pioneers who promoted the art around the World.

First, only a few of these Koreans listed are found from the official ITF documentations created after the Vienna move. Hence many of those listed eventually left the ITF. Second, many of these names are familiar from the Taekwon-Do Encyclopedias and gen. Choi's Memoirs, and they are also names that appear when exploring the histories of the ITF National Associations. Unfortunately, in the scope of this study it has not been possible to explore the ITF history also on the level of the many NAs to see when these members were present. More research is therefore needed before further analysis can be drawn.

A preliminary analysis of this source supports the idea that neither the ITF's entry to North Korea nor Choi Jung Hwa scandal caused a massive change in the federation overnight. Instead, changes were gradual. The preliminary analysis further indicates and coincides, that the remaining Overseas Koreans rather began to leave the federation between the time when ITF moved its headquarters to Vienna by early 1985 and an eventful year of 1991 which we will soon discuss.

Below a list demonstrating how ITF Taekwon-Do was distributed around the world based on the 1984 ITF Directory. Clearly the numbers of Korean instructors were lower than those

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<sup>153</sup> Initial discussion with ITF member in Scotland has revealed that the Human Weapon, and the subsequent issues, later fell in the hands of North Korean control. This seems correct, as many of the ITF magazines later lack publication details. More research needed.

discussed earlier. In 1969 there was 152 dispatched Korean instructors, and in 1970s at least 68 notable Korean instructors. By 1984, the maximum appears to be c.30.

Distribution of names in ITF Directory per country					
ANGOLA	1	GREENLAND	1	POLAND	10
ARGENTINA	8	GUATEMALA	2	PORTUGAL	1
AUSTRALIA	6	HONDURAS	2	PUERTO RICO	1
BAHRAIN	1	HONG KONG	1	SALVADOR	2
BARBADOS	1	HUNGARY	1	SAUDI ARABIA	1
BELGIUM	2	INDIA	1	SIERRA LEONE	1
BOLIVIA	2	INDONESIA	4	SINGAPORE	4
BRAZIL	4	IRELAND	1	SOUTH AFRICA	1
BRUNEI	1	ISRAEL	4	SPAIN	7
CANADA	11	ITALY	4	SRI LANKA	1
COLOMBIA	4	JAMAICA	3	SURINAM	3
COSTA RICA	2	JAPAN	2	SWEDEN	3
DENMARK	1	JUGOSLAVIA	3	SWITZERLAND	1
DOMINICAN REP.	4	MALAYSIA	7	TAIWAN	1
EGYPT	2	NETHERLANDS	4	TANZANIA	1
EL SALVADOR	1	NEW ZEALAND	4	TURKEY	9
ETHIOPIA	3	NICARAGUA	1	UGANDA	1
FIJI	1	NORWAY	4	SCOTLAND	2
FINLAND	1	PAKISTAN	2	URUGUAY	1
FRANCE	1	PANAMA	1	USA	46
GERMANY (WEST)	12	PAPUA NEW G.	1	VIETNAM	7
GREECE	5	PARAGUAY	4		
<b>COUNTRY TOTAL</b>					
	<b>65</b>	<b>KOREAN NAMES (estimation)</b>		<b>29-34</b>	
<b>NAMES TOTAL</b>					
	<b>235</b>	<b>KOREAN NAMES (TKD connected, estim.)</b>		<b>20-23</b>	

Figure 1. Data collected from: *I.T.F. Directory, Human Weapon, Official Magazine of I.T.F., April 1984, p. 15-16.*

Based on the list of Notable Masters present in Glasgow 1984 (figure 8), the first Master to leave around this time was Master Lim Won Sup (림원섭). He is an Overseas Korean based in Sweden, who was appointed as the ITF Under Secretary to help launching the Vienna office. He left his new position almost immediately in late 1984, possibly because he was not satisfied with his new position.<sup>154</sup> Then, in 1985, he was expelled. The reason given was exceeding his authority as the ITF Under Secretary General by attempting to negotiate the WTF-ITF merger sidelining the ITF Merger Committee assigned for the task. Furthermore, the ITF claimed Master Lim Won Sup had made accusations that the ITF was under the control of the North Korea, which further motivated his expulsion.<sup>155</sup> He was replaced by Master Park Jung Taek (박정택, NB. not SG Park Jung Tae), but he too resigned from his position in late

<sup>154</sup> Master MacCallum later claims that Master Lim desired the higher position of Secretary General: Jedut, Jerzy: "Interview with Master Thomas MacCallum, Secretary General of the I.T.F.", AETF Online Archives, 24 Oct 2004, seen 2 Jun 2022. Announcement of Master Lim Won Sup expelled in *ITF Newsletter 2/1985*.

<sup>155</sup> Letter from MacCallum to UKTA, dated 10th July 1985, in GM Sheena Sutherland's Online Archives; *ITF Newsletter 2/1985*; MacCallum claims that Master Taek left possibly because he did not like living in Vienna.



1984.<sup>156</sup> He was then replaced by Mr. Thomas MacCallum by the end of 1984 who remained in Vienna until the splintering of the ITF.<sup>157</sup>

Second master to leave the ITF around the same, was Master Lee Suk Hi (리석희), a Canada based Overseas Korean. Little is known of him and he is not found from the post-Vienna ITF sources. He is claimed to have left the ITF in 1985, soon after the introduction of the Juche pattern to the ITF's senior members. It is unclear whether he remained otherwise as an ITF member or whether he fully left the federation.<sup>158</sup>

The third Overseas Korean to leave the ITF at this time was Mr. Kim Suk Jun (김석준), representing US and the editor of the above discussed ITF Journal. He was expelled from ITF in 1986 without any further information why.<sup>159</sup> Eventually he founded his own group, Taekwon-Do International.<sup>160</sup> The already mentioned Master Park Jung Taek was eventually the fourth master expelled from the ITF, in 1987.<sup>161</sup> Then the fifth, Master Yun Young Ku (윤영구) representing ITF in Australia and a former President of the “South Pacific TKD” (most likely the ITF Continental Association South Pacific). He resigned from his positions in the ITF also in 1987. Thus, he only resigned from his positions and was not per se expelled from the ITF. As no further ITF documentation is available, it is unclear if he fully leaves the ITF in 1987.<sup>162</sup> In 1990, however, he founded his own group, Yun Jung Do International.<sup>163</sup>

Hence, only half of the noted master instructors listed in the Glasgow World Championships remained in the ITF by the end of the 1980s. Loosing these senior Korean masters weakened the ITF as their experience and expertise was no longer in use of the federation. Similarly, it was damaging on the local level when ITF affiliated Taekwon-Do teaching became reduced. More research is needed to understand how many students, clubs or NAs the ITF lost with them. On the other hand, if the actions of some of these masters were harmful for the ITF, as

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<sup>156</sup> Jedut, Jerzy: “Interview with Master Thomas MacCallum, Secretary General of the I.T.F.”, AETF Online Archives, 24 Oct 2004, seen 2 Jun 2022; ITF Newsletter 5/1987.

<sup>157</sup> Jedut, Jerzy: “Interview with Master Thomas MacCallum, Secretary General of the I.T.F.”, AETF Online Archives, 24 Oct 2004, seen 2 Jun 2022.

<sup>158</sup> “Grandmaster in Question: The Story of Grandmaster Rai”, *Original ITF Magazine*, issue 1, July 2021, www.originalmagazine.com, seen 5 APR 2023.

<sup>159</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 2/1986.

<sup>160</sup> Official website of Taekwon-Do International, www.tkdinternational.org, seen 12 Apr 2023.

<sup>161</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 5/1987.

<sup>162</sup> Letter from USG MacCallum to ITF members: “Resignation of Master Yun Young Ku”, 4 Nov 1987, AETF Archives Online 1987. N.B. This was a letter from USG MacCallum, not from gen. Choi. As there no congress minutes available of his resignation/expulsion, his status with the ITF remains unclear.

<sup>163</sup> Official website of Yun Jung Do International, www.yunjungdo.com, seen 12 Apr 2023.

was claimed, after their exits, the ITF was likely able to work more efficiently. All in all, it left a power vacuum in the hierarchy of the ITF. This was – once again – beneficial to North Korea as it meant there was now less competition for the leadership if they were to take control over the federation. The remaining Masters, Rhee Ki Ha, Park Jung Tae, Han Sam Soo, Chung Kwang Duk, and Lee Ki Yung, will be discussed a little later in this study.

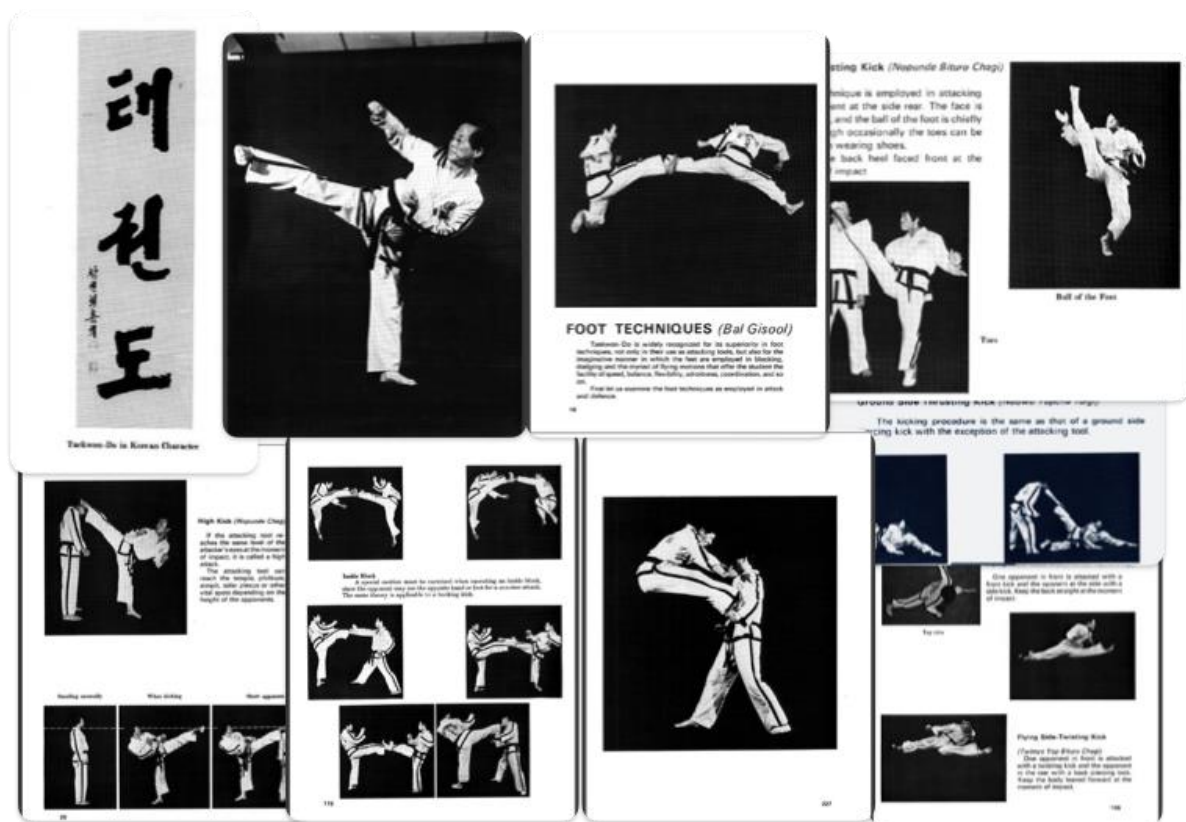


Figure 2 ITF Taekwon-Do kicks as illustrated in 15-volume ITF Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedia, vol. 4. Top left corner, Calligraphy by gen. Choi, displaying Taekwon-Do in hangul. Second image from the left, gen. Choi performing side kick (Yop Chagi) in middle section. From 1972 onwards, gen. Choi used mainly his Overseas Koreans to create the technical images for his encyclopaedias, as well as North Koreans. GM Park Jong Soo, GM Rhee Ki Ha and Masters Park Jung Taek, and Kim Suk Jun, in a many more, seem to appear frequently in these images. To some degree, also non-Korean Taekwondoin appear in these illustrations.

## 5 The ITF after the move to Vienna – 1985-1991

The years of 1985 to 1991 create a period in the history of the ITF that calls for an exploration of its own. In the late 1984 and early 1985, the ITF moved its headquarters to Vienna, Austria.<sup>164</sup> This took place soon after gen. Choi finished writing the 15 volume Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedia, a project in which his son, Choi Jung Hwa was also actively involved.<sup>165</sup> From Vienna, it was easier to lead the federation as the new host country was considered politically neutral. It had diplomatic connections with both Koreas and was situated in-between the Communist World and the West. This way the North Koreans were also able to access the ITF headquarters relatively unrestrictedly, similarly to the western members.

### 5.1 Geopolitics of the New Office

Although a practical decision, the ITF's move to Vienna can also be interpreted as a compromise towards North Korea, to provide them an accessible office abroad. But it is conceivable that the public scrutiny towards the Choi Jung Hwa scandal accelerated the decision to move the headquarters in Vienna at this time as the news were damaging to the ITF's desire to be apolitical sport organisation. Furthermore, it is not possible to exclude that North Korea did not pressure the ITF to move, as the new geopolitical location close to the Iron Curtain facilitated North Koreans presence in the ITF as well as provided them an entry to the West. North Korea had (and still has) offices and diplomatic missions around the world that it used (and uses) for illicit endeavours. Daniel Salisbury in his research states that North Korea has almost 50 diplomatic missions around the world, several of those in Europe, listing missions also in Vienna.<sup>166</sup> Hence, North Korea had diplomatic offices in Vienna which means that their proximity to the ITF office made its relocation even more favourable to them and provided more chances to pressure and co-opt the ITF. This is certainly a connection that requires further research. It should be noted, however, that this does not demonstrate that ITF office was a diplomatic office. Nonetheless, the presence was there, and it was close.

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<sup>164</sup> Move to Vienna dated to 1984 in Gen. Choi letter to all members, "Item: Secretary General", dated 29 Jan 1990, attachment in *ITF Newsletter* 1/1990 AND in Jerzy Jedut, "Interview with Master Tom MacCallum, Secretary General of I.T.F.", 24 October 2004, old AETF Official website, depr. 02 June 2020. ITF Encyclopaedias published after the move to Vienna, date the HQ change to 1985, most likely the move was then finalised, e.g., see (Condensed) *TKD Encyclopaedia*, 1995 Fourth Edition, pp.757.

<sup>165</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.393, 395-397, 401.

<sup>166</sup> Salisbury, "Spies, Diplomats and Deceit: Exploring the Persistent Role of Diplomatic Mission in North Korea's WMD Proliferation and Arms Trafficking Networks." *Asian Security*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2021.

But the Vienna office come with a back-lock. The headquarters' location could now also be used as a tool to counter-pressure North Korea in case they went too far with their tactics in taking advantage of the ITF. The implicit message was that the Vienna office could be pulled from the favourable grounds and moved back to Toronto where North Korea was not able to enter as easily. Hence, there appears to be structures and strategies present in the ITF that could be used to slow down or limit the North Korea's co-opt attempts.<sup>167</sup> The relocation to Vienna did not alleviate criticism of ITF's too close connections with North Korea, at least not internally, as was noted in previous chapter: soon after the move, several ITF senior members left the federation. It most likely alleviated possible criticism in the media, however, Austrian German language media created certain barriers as it did not reach globally as many people as English language media did. Then again, it similarly created barriers also for the positive news on the ITF in Austria. Hence, its benefits were likely soon nullified.

Likewise, it is not yet possible to exclude that South Korea did not also play a role in the ITF moving the headquarters to Vienna. By now they were winning the Olympic bid between ITF and WTF, the merge of WTF and ITF was brushed off, and Mr. Choi Jung Hwa had gotten involved in an assassination scandal to murder South Korean president. It was thus also favourable for them to push the ITF into an area where North Korea had more chances to tighten its grip over the ITF: This would make the ITF more dependent on North Korea and make its international status as an independent, apolitical, and international sport federation less convincing.

All in all, the ITF now began steadily to cumulate documents of its existence and work as the federation began to take clearer form. The ITF did not produce such sources prior to the 1985, which leads to a assume that from 1985 onwards the ITF was more evidently an international governing body of Taekwon-Do than before. For the next approximately 5 years, amid the expulsions, resignations and some further controversies, the ITF continued to take shape as an international federation. Then finally from c.1992 it begins to settle down and solidify. But before that was possible, the Choi Jung Hwa scandal needed to come an end.

### 5.1.1 Case example of the consequences of Choi Jung Hwa scandal

A year after the ITF headquarters were moved to Vienna, a WTF Taekwondo club in Tampere, Finland, decided to change affiliation to the ITF. Since 1981 Tampere Taekwon-Do

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<sup>167</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.498-499.

Club, (Tampere Taekwon-Do Seura, TamTKD<sup>168</sup>), had been unsatisfied with the scarcity of training opportunities the WTF Finland and its South Korean state sponsored main instructor, Master Hwang Dae Jin (황대진), provided. Thus, in early 1986 TamTKD hired Mr. Fikret Güler, 4th dan Taekwon-Do instructor from ITF Sweden, as their new coach. Then the club together with Mr. Güler, decided to organise an event called Open Nordic Championship in Tampere, Finland, on 6<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> September 1986. General Choi, Master Park Jung Tae, the North Korean Taekwon-Do Demonstration Team and Polish competition team were to be present. Based on the sources, it seems that also Choi Jung Hwa was to be present, but this has been impossible to fully confirm.<sup>169</sup> Afterall, Finland had an extradition deal with Canada, so its incongruous that Mr. Choi Jung Hwa would have chosen to come to Finland from his yearslong hiding in Poland and the Eastern Europe.

What transpired next was, that the Finnish Taekwondo Federation (Suomen Taekwondoliitto, WTF Finland), their chairman Jari Sjögren, and the South Korean coach and Master instructor, Hwang Dae Jin, interfered the organisation and sent a “colourful” letter<sup>170</sup> to no other than Finnish Intelligence Services (Suojelupoliisi, Supo), and to the department of sport services of Tampere (Tampereen Liikuntavirasto) demanding the event to be cancelled. Media was also well informed. This is when TamTKD learned about the accusations. Based on the sources, Sjögren and Master Hwang accused in their letter the TamTKD of supporting international terrorist organisation and feared that terrorists were to infiltrate Finland through them. They accused the ITF of being devoted to North Korean ideology politically, harbouring criminals, and claimed the ITF was forced to withdraw from Toronto and move to Vienna because of their involvement in the assassination attempt of President Chun Doo Hwan.<sup>171</sup>

As a result, the TamTKD President at the time, Mr. Erkka Keinänen, still a colour belt, unaware of the Choi Jung Hwa scandal, was called to a lengthy Supo questioning. Nothing resulted from it, he was never accused of anything. Tampere town did not give in under the political pressure and did not halt the organisation of the competition, neither interfered the

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<sup>168</sup> I began my Taekwon-Do practice in this club in mid 1990.

<sup>169</sup> Collection of Finnish news articles (*Ilta-sanomat*, 3 Sep 1986; *Aamulehti*, 3 Sep 1986; *Kansan lehti*, 4 Sep 1986...) sent by Supo Kirjaamo, email to the author, 12 May 2022; also *Länsi-Savo*, "Taekwondo saa uuden liiton" (Taekwondo gains a new federation), 6 Sep 1986; However, discussions with Erkka Keinänen, point that the organisers themselves expected also Choi Jung Hwa to be present, and also here more research is needed.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. I have not gained an access to see the original letter and more research is needed.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

Finnish Central Sport Federation (SVUL), to which the WTF Finland belonged. Gen. Choi and Master Park joined the event. The North Korean Demo Team cancelled. The latter eventually gained entry to Finland in 1990 summer and gave two demonstrations in Tampere and Oulu.<sup>172</sup>

Considering how silent the ITF was about the charges against Choi Jung Hwa, it is unlikely that members of a local club in the ITF periphery and consisting only of colour belts and one first degree black belt, would have heard about Choi Jung Hwa involvement in the assassination scandal. To access Canadian or Korean language newspapers in 1986 Tampere is also unlikely. Whether Mr. Fikret Güler knew, is speculation, but as he was the senior black belt present, he had at least some responsibility in guiding his students. Nevertheless, General Choi most certainly knew. Yet, he did not inform TamTKD. And as in their reply to this author's enquiry, Supo has never seen Taekwon-Do as a particular object of attention in Finland.<sup>173</sup> All in all, TamTKD at the time consisted practically of young people early in their engagement with the sport. The measures they were subjected to can be said to have been out of proportion.<sup>174</sup>

This, based on the discussions the author has had with other ITF members during the period 1995-2023, is not exceptional behaviour from the WTF/WT and the South Korean state secured into it. Three early non-Korean Taekwon-Do pioneers in East Asia have accounted to this author in mid-2010 of their Dojangs (meaning Taekwon-Do training halls) being attacked and even burned, and themselves being physically violated and threatened, in order to convince them to change from the ITF to the WTF. Under pressure these Pioneers practiced ITF Taekwon-Do in secret, stopped practice all together, or changed into the WTF until it was again safe to continue practicing ITF Taekwon-Do in their countries (c.2010s onwards). In 2017 the author also received a direct account from a victim of a physical violence taking place in Southern Europe (c.1970s) to pressure the person to change into WTF/WT, which he then did. The journalistic and popular work of Alex Gillis accounts similar stories as well.<sup>175</sup> Until the safety of these individuals can be guaranteed, further details on them will not be

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<sup>172</sup> Discussions with Mr. Erkkä Keinänen; Gen. Choi's account of the events: Choi, *TKD & I*. vol.2, pp. 418-419.

<sup>173</sup> Supo Kirjaamo, email to the author, dated 12 May 2022.

<sup>174</sup> Regardless of the tough beginnings, today TamTKD is the most successful Taekwon-Do club in Finland producing European Champions and World Champions, and medallists, since 1990, and in every competition since 1994. Thus, the club quickly recovered the 1986 hubbub and excelled. Until 2023 the club has not detected any international criminals on their tatamis and have continued their training normally.

<sup>175</sup> Gillis, 2008.

released in this study. There is need for dedicated research that can follow all the necessary steps to keep these ITF members protected and address these issues thoroughly.

## 5.2 Choi Jung Hwa hiding (yet rising in the ITF)

In January 1987, only some months after the Nordic Championships, General Choi nominated Mr. Choi Jung Hwa as the technical director of ITF Poland. Based on the letter he wrote to appoint his son into the role, he referred to him as the Director of the ITF and the Vice Chairman of the ITF Technical Committee.<sup>176</sup> Two years after being post to Poland, in 1989 Mr. Choi Jung Hwa was promoted to 7<sup>th</sup> dan Master Instructor, a prestigious position in the martial art's hierarchy.<sup>177</sup> It is possible that Master Choi Jung Hwa was appointed as the ITF Director and ITF Chairman only by his father and not through the official ITF Congress procedure as details of these nominations have not been found. Based on the Congress minutes released by the ITF, he does not enter the ITF leadership until the Pyongyang 1992 ITF Congress where he is nominated as the Under Secretary General Management.<sup>178</sup>

## 5.3 Expulsions, Resignations and The Global Taekwon-Do Federation, GTF

As discussed earlier, ITF's first major internal splintering begun when the ITF entered North Korea in 1980, and Masters Nam Tae Hi and Han Cha Kyo left the ITF. It accelerated when the Vienna headquarters were established, and more Overseas Korean masters left the ITF between the years 1984 and 1987. I see this period of internal splintering coming to its end when the following four Overseas Korean leaders leave the ITF by the early 1990's.

Of them, two masters were simultaneously barred from the ITF in early 1990 when gen. Choi's resignation and expulsion letters to members were sent. One of them was Master Park Jung Tae, an ITF Secretary General and a Chairman of the ITF Instructor Committee, the same Master who was responsible of the launch of ITF North Korea, as discussed earlier. The second was Master Han Sam Soo (한삼수), a Chairman of the ITF Umpire Committee. Both were to leave the federation at the same time.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> ITF Official Letter from General Choi to ITF Poland titled "Sports Authority – Poland", ref ITF/28/POL/CHH, dated 22 Jan 1987, AETF Online Archives, Important Documents.

<sup>177</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 4/1989, 29 Aug 1989.

<sup>178</sup> Minutes of Pyongyang 1992 ITF Congress.

<sup>179</sup> Gen. Choi's letter to ITF Members, dated 29 Jan 1990, in *ITF Newsletter* 1/1990, AETF Online Archives; gen. Choi letter to ITF Members, dated 21 Feb 1990, AETF Online Archives, Important Documents; SG Lee Ki Yong, Letter to ITF Members, dated 13 Apr 1990, AETF Online Archives, Important Documents.

Master Park Jung Tae in particular, was a giant of the ITF. He began Taekwon-Do before the founding of the ITF in 1966 and promoted Taekwon-Do from early on. In the 1980s he gained even more prominent role by introducing Taekwon-Do to new challenging areas: as part of ITF Demo Team to North Korea, launching of the ITF North Korea in 1981, then ITF Japan in 1982, and ITF China in 1988. By mid 1980s he was the ITF Secretary General and by 1990s also a chairman of several ITF Committees.<sup>180</sup> Master Han Sam Soo also began his Taekwon-Do career before founding of the ITF. He was well known for being the Chairman of the ITF Umpire Committee, a highly visible role to the ITF members.

At first Master Park was removed from his position as the ITF Secretary General in January 1990. But he was then expelled from the ITF the next month, together with Master Han Sam Soo. In March 1990 Master Park Jung Tae contacts the ITF members with a letter. In this, he accused gen. Choi for his unfair and unconstitutional dismissal without a congress decision; accused the ITF's for too close connections with North Korea and its state-level politics; blamed gen. Choi for misusing the ITF Constitution and for having dictatorial leadership methods. To protest these grievances and to have a "non-political ITF", he then founded his own Taekwon-Do group. With the same letter he then invited all ITF members to join this new group, the Global Taekwon-Do Federation, GTF. Although Master Han Sam Soo was expelled simultaneously, his role in the GTF is unclear. In 2013 he joins CJH ITF.<sup>181</sup>

Officially, both masters were accused of misusing ITF funds and their positions for their own benefit and for requesting North Korea to remove gen. Choi from his ITF Presidency.<sup>182</sup> Gen. Choi implies in his memoirs that North Korea bore a responsibility in the events that preceded the dismissal of Masters Park Jung Tae and Han Sam Soo. Gen. Choi states he threatened the North Korean officials: "Therefore, from now on, if you attempt any contact with Park Jung Tae or Han Sam Soo, the ITF will come back to Canada."<sup>183</sup>

It is easy to refute the above claim as unfounded, as it is only a record in gen. Choi's memoirs. However, when placed in the context of the larger events from the ITF's entry to

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<sup>180</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 1/1985, 2/1985, 2/1986, 1/1987, 7/1988, 5/1988; Athens 1987 ITF Directors Meeting, 21 May 1987, online AETF Archives, Minutes of the ITF Congress.

<sup>181</sup> "Message from GM Han Sam Soo", CJH ITF official website, [www.itf-dministration.com](http://www.itf-dministration.com), dated 2 Apr 2013, seen 30 Mar 2023. Master Han Sam Soo was later part of the Life International Taekwon-Do Federation.

<sup>182</sup> Gen. Choi's letter to ITF Members, dated 29 Jan 1990, in *ITF Newsletter* 1/1990, AETF Online Archives, Important Documents; gen. Choi letter to ITF Members, dated 21 Feb 1990, AETF Archives, Lublin; Secretary General, Master Lee Ki Yong, Letter to ITF Members, dated 13 April 1990, AETF Online Archives, Important Documents.

<sup>183</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.499.



North Korea until the ITF's splintering, the General's account of the events begins to substantiate. Especially it does so if we allow a presumption that North Korea deliberately involved Choi Jung Hwa in the assassination attempt of President Chun Doo-hwan to remove him from the line of succession to the ITF presidency. Choi Jung Hwa himself later, in 2008, suddenly claimed that North Korean agents did recruit him, and that North Korean spies infiltrated the ITF, to command him and the ITF members to assassinate President Chun Doo-hwan.<sup>184</sup> However, there might have been more objectives behind this recruiting. Starting from 1982 the latest, Mr. Choi Jung Hwa's involvement in the assassination had gradually diminished his future in the ITF. From 1991 onwards the news about the scandal had begun reaching a larger audience among the ITF members.<sup>185</sup> Master Choi Jung Hwa now came with a reputation hard to fit on the shoulders of a future ITF leader.

Master Park Jung Tae had no such reputation. He was an ITF strongman trusted by gen. Choi to take care of the most challenging projects. He quickly rose in the ITF leadership.<sup>186</sup> Him being part of the ITF since the beginning, his seniority in rank, his position in the ITF leadership, and a vast international experience of teaching Taekwon-Do around the world made him a core-leader of the ITF. He was well recognised and known in Taekwon-Do. Even more so, he was the one who taught Taekwon-Do to North Koreans and made them blackbelts. He was thus the direct Master Instructor to the members of ITF North Korea. Hence, Master Park's presence in the ITF was a constant reminder to North Korea about their juniority in the ITF. Thus, if one presumes that North Korea was interested in getting the ITF systematically into their control, removing the Master Park Jung Tae from the ITF was fundamental. Having Master Park out of the picture meant that from now on, North Korea could declare themselves independent in teaching their own students. Outsiders such as Overseas Koreans, were no longer needed as North Koreans could now bypass seniority and take fast lane to self-reliance in Taekwon-Do. Having both Masters Park Jung Tae and Choi Jung Hwa out of the future presidential candidature and knowing that the ITF's then Senior Vice President Chon Jin Shik was already an ageing man, the future ITF leader became

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<sup>184</sup> "N Korea 'hired taekwondo killers', *BBC News*, 9 Sep 2008.

<sup>185</sup> In 1991 Choi Jung Hwa's imprisonment was reported: "Son of ITF Founder Convicted in Assassination Attempt" *Tae Kwon Do Times*, July 1991, p. 10. The article caught attention at least in ITF Poland where he had been the head instructor and "Sports Authority" until turning himself in. The article was discussed in an All Poland Taekwon-Do Meeting after which Choi Jung Hwa contacts ITF Poland refuting any such ideas that he would anything to do with any scandal. Source: Letter from ITFPOL President Tadeusz Loboda to Master Choi Jung Hwa, dated Lublin, 1993.11.10, AETF Archives.

<sup>186</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 1/1985.

uncertain. The tarnished reputation of one future leader and the removal of the other, was beneficial to North Korea if they were to take over the ITF when gen. Choi passes away. One ageing Senior Vice President would not be an obstacle for long.

Next to the above, in 1990 another Overseas Korean pioneer and ITF leader also resigned: Master Chung Kwang Duk (정광덕). He later claims that he founded his own group, Taekwon-Do Society, ITS, in 1990.<sup>187</sup> There is no mention in the studied ITF documentations about him being expelled or even leaving the ITF, but he does not appear in the ITF leadership from Montreal 1990 Congress onwards and neither is there any trace of him in the ITF Newsletters.

Then, only one year after these events, in December 1991, Master Lee Ki Yung (이기영), resigned from his position as the ITF Secretary General to which he was nominated after the dismissal of Master Park Jung Tae.<sup>188</sup> He was an Overseas Korean based in Germany and a pioneer of the German Taekwon-Do. He was known for being a Chairman of an ITF Standing Committee. Master Lee Ki Yung was not officially expelled from the ITF based on the documentations shared by the ITF and it is unclear whether he fully leaves the ITF.

Around this time, in early 1990s, Soviet Union was collapsing, and North Korea was facing bankruptcy. This could have resulted in North Korea's pressure towards the ITF increase. If the Overseas Korean ITF members began experiencing more pressure in the ITF, just like Master Choi Jung Hwa claimed years later, it could explain their removals. But what can be said with certainty is that the ITF of the early 1990s was not able to persuade or motivate them to stay. More research is thus needed to see why these masters left the ITF and what was North Korea's role in it.

#### **5.4 Choi Jung Hwa turns himself in**

In January 1991, Master Choi Jung Hwa finally gave himself in to the Canadian authorities and faced the charges of the President Chun Doo Hwan's assassination attempt. Based on news reports, Master Choi Jung Hwa was sentenced six years in penitentiary for counselling the murder of President Chun Doo Hwan.<sup>189</sup> The official ITF communications available, do

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<sup>187</sup> "An Interview With Grandmaster Kwang Duk Chung", *Totally Tae Kwon Do*, Issue 24, Feb 2011, seen though Sportification.ru, 10 Apr 2023.

<sup>188</sup> Announcement of the new SG: gen. Choi letter to members, 29<sup>th</sup> Jan 1990, published in *ITF Newsletter* 1/1990; Lee Ki Yong's resignation announced in gen. Choi letter to members, 5 Dec 1991, AETF Online Archives, Important Documents.

<sup>189</sup> "Man Jailed for Plot to Murder Politician", *Toronto Star*, 14 Mar 1991, A7; "Mississauga man gets 7 years in Korean assassination plot", *Toronto Star*, 13 Mar 1991.

not reveal when he returned in person to the ITF. In March 1991 he was reported of receiving 6 years of penitentiary. But already the next month during the ITF European Championships in Reading, UK, in April 1991, the Polish ITF members were informed that Master Choi Jung Hwa was to be present in Pyongyang 1992 ITF Taekwon-Do World Championships, and that questions "would be cleared up in face-to-face discussion".<sup>190</sup> It is unclear whether these discussions eventually took place and whether Master Choi Jung Hwa was physically present in Pyongyang. Those who were supposed to be part of these "face-face discussions" do not remember such discussions taking place, and none of the ITF members present in Pyongyang World Championships have been able to confirm Choi Jung Hwa's presence in the initial discussions used for this study. Still in 1993 Master Choi Jung Hwa denied in his letter to the ITF Poland of having any connection with the accusations he saw as "a vicious rumor started by the "enemy"". <sup>191</sup> With certainty, Master Choi Jung Hwa was pictured in an ITF event in ITF Newsletter in 1995 and was present in the ITF events by 1996.<sup>192</sup> In his interview in 2008 BBC News reported that instead of Master Choi Jung Hwa, his aid had told the Associated Press (AP) that he served only one year of his 6 year prison term.<sup>193</sup> A direct confirmation from Master Choi Jung Hwa has not been discovered. The timeline that this study has constructed of these events, supports the idea that he did not return to the ITF before 1995 and that he was either prisoned or in home arrest until then.

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<sup>190</sup> Copy of a letter from Tadeusz Loboda to Choi Jung Hwa, dated 10 Nov 1993. AETF Archives, Pisma Pizzychupzace I.T.F., Marze '89 – Grunpzien '97.

<sup>191</sup> Singed letter from Choi Jung Hwa to Mr. Tadeusz Loboda, Polish Taekwon-Do Association, dated 13 Sep 1993. AETF Archives, Pisma Pizzychupzace I.T.F., Marze '89 – Grunpzien '97; the unwritten ITF rule "do not talk about the son" might still result into lack of details today, although among the const.ITF there is no such limitation to speech any longer at place. Instead, open discussion of the art's history is encouraged by the const.ITF, or more precisely, their members do not any ask any permits to speak freely.

<sup>192</sup> *International Taekwon-Do Federation: ITF April World Conference and Seminar, an ITF magazine*, Jul 1996. See esp. pp. 4, 7.

<sup>193</sup> "N Korea 'hired taekwondo killers', *BBC News*, 9 Sep 2008.

## 6 ITF Leadership 1985-2002

In this chapter I explore the ITF leadership from the allocation to Vienna in 1984-1985 until the events transpiring around the death of General Choi on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2002. Master Choi Jung Hwa's expulsion and the founding of his own ITF during early 2002 will also be discussed. The looming splintering is viewed through the organisational history of the ITF's leadership so that the reader can precisely see what kind of a federation splintered. Presenting ITF's structure helps in understanding the motivations and reasons behind the otherwise nonsensical havoc the federation underwent in 2002. In 2002, a truly colossal turmoil ravaged through the ITF in all its organisational levels: world, continental, national, regional, club and private levels. It scattered, at least for a sometime, the federation into pieces.<sup>194</sup> Lastly, I will briefly discuss the actual splintering but only to demonstrate through a few main sources that the ITF de facto splintered in two also after the death of its founder. The splintering was so massive that it demands further studies, especially in the present world where co-opting sport federations has come a common place. To support these future studies, I first hope to show what exactly splintered and why.

### 6.1 ITF Leadership: available roles and positions – Divide et Impera

Firstly, gen. Choi remained in the lead of the ITF until his death. Based on the available ITF Congress minutes, after the Vienna move, the members elected him thrice to serve his six-year terms from 1988 onwards. Hence, gen. Choi subjected himself to be elected for each term. His position was not challenged until the unconstitutional attempt in the Rimini 2001 ITF Congress to split the Presidency with his son, then ITF Secretary General, Master Choi Jung Hwa.

The idea was to have gen. Choi to serve the first two years and Master Choi Jung Hwa the remaining four.<sup>195</sup> This decision was soon rescinded with gen. Choi's letter in November

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<sup>194</sup> I gained my black belt in early 2002. To my experience, the year ahead caused a blow that ran through everything and everyone in the ITF. At the time it was next to impossible to keep track what was happening or who said what. Walls came up in all levels of the ITF, communication was cut between the different ITF groups, there was rumours, tension, isolation, overflow of information and disinformation. Concerns were voiced especially for those working in the Vienna office, as well as for the ITF members in general. Yet, there was also optimism that North Korea would satisfy to remain as an NA, and not to attempt a takeover. I remember no particular resistance over Mr. Chang Ung's presidency, only initial surprise, reservations and concern, as none of us had ever heard of him before.

<sup>195</sup> Minutes of Budapest 1988, Terengganu 1994, and Rimini 2001 ITF Congresses; ITF Constitution 1988, paragraph 12, p.6.

2001, as well as in the ITF Special Meeting of the Congress in Vienna, in January 2002.<sup>196</sup> The term was therefore never split. It should be noted that the available ITF Constitution of 1988 has no mention of the possibility to divide the term of the President, nor is there any mention for SG to take this role. Instead, it states:

*“The Senior Vice President will assume the duties of the President at such times as maybe required by the absence or incapacity of the President. In cases of permanent incapacity of the President the Senior Vice President will retain the position of President for the elected time remaining until the next meeting of the Congress when re-election would have taken place. (...)”*<sup>197</sup>

The ITF Constitution also clearly states that the President (and Vice Presidents) will hold office for six years.<sup>198</sup> Against this backdrop, it is unsurprising that the Vienna 2002 ITF Special Meeting of the Congress rescinded the Rimini vote to split the presidential term and in turn, requested gen. Choi to remain President until the end of his term.

Master Choi Jung Hwa and his ITF crew refuted the discussion of the Vienna Special Congress and then continued insisting that the Master Choi Jung Hwa was the only legitimate ITF President. Their claims appear carefully coordinated. In fact, they had so much attention to the detail, that it is hard to believe that a group of taekwondoin alone was able to build such an arrangement independently and by their unyielding determination alone. Their wide-ranging claims and accusations and misinterpretations of the ITF Constitution published on their website, appear well constructed. They appear as a meticulously synchronised web of disinformation and accusations, mixing fact and fiction. Their public claims and accusations caused internal division, and instability in his father’s ITF as they undermined its democratic processes and efficiently targeted the vulnerabilities of the federation. Yet, there is constant ambiguity surrounding all that is written.<sup>199</sup>

Although it is possible that Master Choi Jung Hwa’s claim to the throne was just an act of highly capable and well organised democratic minded citizens, more research is needed to exclude the presence of outer political forces that could have worked behind them, namely those using hybrid influencing and interference methods. North Korea certainly had the

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<sup>196</sup> Gen. Choi’s signed letter to members, dated 5th Nov 2001, a fax sent to ITF POL, received 27th Nov 2001, (also published on the official ITF website), AETF Archives, Lublin; Minutes of the Vienna 2002 ITF Special Meeting in Austria.

<sup>197</sup> ITF Constitution 1988, Paragraph 14.2., p. 7.

<sup>198</sup> ITF Constitution 1988, Paragraph 12.2., p. 6.

<sup>199</sup> This analysis is based on the texts published on the CJH ITF’s website ([www.itf-information.com/bulletins.html](http://www.itf-information.com/bulletins.html)), called the “bulletin”, with focus on those published from 6 July 2001 until 19 June 2002.

means, skills, and motivation for such. This is not to say that Master Choi Jung Hwa or his organisation knowingly worked for North Korea or any state: they could have been victims themselves. But Master Choi Jung Hwa's move to power and his smear campaign harmed and undermined the democratic processes, structures and forces present in the ITF so efficiently that it raises concerns whether he again was used by North Korea, in a similar way as in the assassination attempt of President Chun Doo Hwan. His actions caused internal division and instability in the ITF while simultaneously enforcing the idea of the ITF being nothing more than a North Korean front office. It completely excluded and discredited all those ITF members and National Associations present who would soon, after the death of gen. Choi, defend the democratic, non-governmental foundations of the ITF that they believed in.

They mainly consisted of those members who today are known as the ITF legality group (the ITF currently based in Lausanne, Switzerland). But also, the Grandmasters, Masters and Instructors who later left the North Korea controlled ITF, including all those who later left all the three ITFs and who now reside in countless independent ITF Taekwon-Do organisations. They were and are crystal-clear evidence that a vast majority of the ITF represented anything else except North Korean front office. Thus, although Master Choi Jung Hwa's claims served to strengthen his own position and to a certain degree voiced already existing concerns of many democratic, non-authoritarian minded ITF members, even more so, his exit and accusations facilitated North Korea's claim to the throne by causing internal division and by tarnishing the reputation of the remaining members who were to defend the non-governmental role of the ITF. And most of all it created an image of the ITF as a North Korean front office already prior to North Korea's move to take full control of it during the second half of 2002. The first splintering therefore appears as a mission to divide and weaken the ITF so that it would be easier to take under control.

Hence, Choi Jung Hwa and his ITF crew were either puppets, useful fools, cognizant contributors, or victims of a larger political game aiming to gain control over an international sport organisation. Regardless of their exact position, this research has not been able to escape the impression nor exclude the possibility of a politically motivated hybrid influencing and interference campaign also behind this first splintering of the ITF in 2002. Several aspects correspond with the concept of hybrid interference that for instance, the European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats (Hybrid CoE) describe in their works. The CJH ITF open letters shared on their websites and in other ITF groups, seem to provide almost a schoolbook example of disinformation campaign when using Hybrid Coe framework called

‘DISARM’ (‘DISinformation Analysis & Risk Management’) to detect information manipulation. It does even more so when applying this framework from the 1981 Choi Jung Hwa scandal onwards until the 2002 turmoil and its aftermath – it seems to apply even until the present day ITF world, which unfortunately falls outside the scope of this study. To mention few examples, the following descriptions presented in the Hybrid CoE’s DISARM framework correspond with the claims found from the CJH ITF’s open letters and other similar materials: the constant mix to discredit the credible sources, distortion of facts; to distract, dismay and divide (the ITF); to leverage existing narratives, develop new ones, amplify existing conspiracy theory narratives, to reframe context; to cultivate ignorant agents, create fake experts, compromise legitimate accounts; and to seed Kemels of truths, as well as to flood the information space. Even the way how the CJH ITF’s campaign segmented and divided the democratic and non-authoritarian minded forces present in the ITF, in particular those who would most likely resist any attempt of North Korean state to control and coordinate the ITF, correspond with the methods described in DISARM. These open letters repetitively feed disinformation going as far as using an expert, namely a Canadian lawyer, Mr. Michael Tibollo (an ITF lawyer claimed by CJH ITF, we will discuss him more detail later in this study). CJH ITF used him as an authority, to claim with his professional voice, that Master Choi Jung Hwa’s presidency was (supposedly) legally based on the ITF Constitution even when it had no such foundation. Of course, also Master Choi Jung Hwa himself was an authority himself: he was the legendary heir and son of gen. Choi, and as such he was the closest thing to Taekwon-Do royalty the ITF had. The sordid accusations the CJH ITF made to degrade and shame the then ITF Secretary General, Master MacCallum, to completely undermine the leadership position trusted to him, as well as to damage his reliability in holding that position, are also described by the DISAM as a part of a disinformation campaigns.<sup>200</sup> This hybrid interference, however, does not seem to stop here. It stretches evermore powerfully from this moment on until the eventual splintering of the ITF. But let us proceed one step at a time.

Regarding the ITF future leader, Gen. Choi however, seems to have wished until the very end that his son could have taken over the leadership of the ITF. But as the father writes in his

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<sup>200</sup> See European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats, e.g., on disinformation, “Foreign information manipulation and inference defence standards: Test for rapid adoption of the common language and framework ‘DISARM’”, Hybrid CoE Research Report 7, 29 Nov 2022, esp. p.17; And ”Ambiguity in hybrid warfare”, Hybrid CoE Strategic Analysis/24, by Andrew Mumford, Sep 2020. CJH ITF open letters found from OLD CJH ITF websites, bulletin boards (as well as chat rooms), captured by Internet Archive (see bibliography).

memoirs, Master Choi Jung Hwa committed violence against USG MacCallum.<sup>201</sup> During the Vienna ITF Special Meeting, Choi Jung Hwa performed a flying spinning kick to purposely hit the recorder of USG MacCallum who habitually had documented Taekwon-Do events for years. This act of violence seems to have been the last drop to the ITF members, and it ruined Master Choi Jung Hwa's last chance to become the next President of the ITF. Members now saw Choi Jung Hwa violent behaviour right in front of them, it was not about rumours any longer. For a Taekwondoin to use violence in such way against anyone, to demonstrate such impulsiveness and disregard, was simply unacceptable.

Then, by February 2002, Master Choi Jung Hwa established his own ITF in Toronto. Choi Jung Hwa proclaimed himself as the only legal ITF President and accused that his father's ITF was an illegal federation, calling it "the North Korean outlet in Vienna".<sup>202</sup> This signals the moment when the 2002 ITF splinter began.

Then, on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2002 gen. Choi's left from Toronto to Pyongyang.<sup>203</sup> Next month, on 11<sup>th</sup> June, a translation of gen. Choi's acclaimed final words were documented in Pyongyang and immediately, on the same day, published on CJH ITF's and on GM Hwang Kwang Sung's websites. In this translation of his will the general allegedly stated: "I have always worried about a successor to the president. However, my mind is set at ease for there is Mr. Chang Ung". The translation further claims him to have said "Taekwon-Do never exists without the D.P.R. Korea" and "Taekwon-Do must be Korean centred." This was the first time that the ITF members heard the name of Mr. Chang Ung, a North Korean politician and vice-chairman of North Korea's National Olympic Committee. Furthermore, Taekwon-Do being Korean centred and for it not existing without North Korea were unusual choices of words to describe the art and the ITF. Hence, the will's context and framing astonished and even shocked the ITF members.<sup>204</sup> However, the nomination Mr. Chang Ung as the next ITF

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<sup>201</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, Vol. 3. p.478 (in Korean).

<sup>202</sup> "An announcement from the Office of the ITF For the attention of Taekwon-Do Practitioners worldwide", Bulletin 14, News updates, posted 6 Feb 2002, CJH ITF official website [www.itf-information.com](http://www.itf-information.com), captured by Internet Archive on 3 Apr 2002, seen 14 Aug 2021.

<sup>203</sup> "From the offices of ITF Administration: General Choi, Founder of Taekwon-Do heads to PhongYang, North Korea", Bulletin 23, News updates, posted 12 May 2002, CJH ITF official website [www.itf-information.com](http://www.itf-information.com), captured by Internet Archive on 9 Jun 2002, seen 8 May 2023 (Also GM Whang Kwang Sung reported the same on his website, [www.itf-katu.com](http://www.itf-katu.com)).

<sup>204</sup> I personally remember these times: the surprise, confusion and preoccupation that the nomination of a complete unknown North Korean coming from outside the ITF caused in Finnish Taekwon-Do Federation (SITF) and in the AETF around me. Meaning, that gen. Choi nominating a North Korean was not *per se* the source of these concerns. Had a known NKTKDA member been nominated instead, it would have caused less concerns, especially if the usual procedures to elect an ITF President would have been followed.



President was not per se disputed in the available sources. Instead, the controversy focused on the exact translation of gen. Choi's last words from Korean to English. Especially SG MacCallum, who was present in Pyongyang to hear the General's last words and who had an interpreter with him contested the translation.<sup>205</sup> But why those who eventually lined with Mr. Chang Ung were in so much rush to publish of the last words immediately, remains unclear.<sup>206</sup> What is clear however, is that due to its content, the sudden publication of the will came as complete surprise to the ITF members as the available communications reveal. It created once again internal division, confusion, subverted the democratic processes and caused instability within the ITF and its leadership. And again, the ones to benefit from it were CJH ITF, and those ITF members who were forming around Mr. Chang Ung. North Korean state raised no objections even if the rushed publication of the will caused instability in the ITF. Nevertheless, nowhere in the will did gen. Choi state that Mr. Chang Ung should be placed as president immediately or that ITF's already existing procedures for nominating a president were to be ignored and overruled. Neither did gen. Choi require in his will an unconstitutional election.

A few days later after the publication of his last words on June 15<sup>th</sup>, general Choi passed away, which was announced widely by different ITF related websites by 18<sup>th</sup> June. At least some NAs and individuals were likely informed also by fax and mail.<sup>207</sup> Couple of days later, the last words of gen. Choi were published by the official ITF website, on 20<sup>th</sup> July. Unfortunately, I have not found the video recording of gen. Choi's last words that North Korean Taekwon-Do Association captured. Likewise, the original Korean language version of his will remains misplaced.<sup>208</sup> Especially the video recording of his last words should resolve the concerns relating to his will. Future research should therefore prioritise exploring these lost primary sources.

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<sup>205</sup> SG MacCallum letter to ITF Members, *Subject: Situation*, 23 Oct 2002, AETF Archives. Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące 2002 ITF (also published on [www.itf-generalchoi.com](http://www.itf-generalchoi.com), and based on private archives of an ITF Netherlands member, also sent to ITF members by mail).

<sup>206</sup> Based on GM Hwang Kwang Sung letter, among him, also GM Rhee Ki Ha, GM Park Jong Soo, Masters Hwang Jun and Phap Lu demanded immediate publishing: GM Hwang letter to SG MacCallum, "Memo to Master Tom MacCallum, 6/25/02", dated 25th Jun 2002, published on [www.itf-katu.com](http://www.itf-katu.com), captured by Internet Archive on 14 Oct 2002, seen 2 Nov 2021.

<sup>207</sup> For instance, [www.itf-generalchoi.com](http://www.itf-generalchoi.com) shared the information on the 18 Jun 2002; Fax received by ITFPOL, "Detailed Report of the Spokesman of the funeral committee concerning the funeral ceremony for the deceased Gen. Choi, President of the International Taekwon-Do Federation", dated 18 Jun 2002, received on 25 Jun 2002, AETF Archives Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące, 2002 ITF.

<sup>208</sup> Letter from Masters Stilianidis and Gialamas, "Why is Mr. Chang Ung's election absolutely legal?", dated 29 Sep 2002, Thessaloniki, AETF Archives Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące 2002 ITF.

In the third volume of his memoirs which have not yet been translated into English, and which were published posthumously, his last words were: "...my fundamental plan to resign from the post of president at the 2003 General Assembly and devote myself to the integration of Taekwon-Do as an honorary governor for life remains unchanged. The end."<sup>209</sup> The words were likely to have been written soon after the Vienna Special Congress of 12<sup>th</sup> January 2002. However, as the third volume of his Memoirs was published after his death, there is no guarantee that its content has not been altered afterwards. Thus, it is not possible to state with certainty what gen. Choi's will was as also his final words (published on 11<sup>th</sup> June) are unconfirmable.

The only thing clear is that based on the ITF Constitution of 1988, Senior Vice President was to take over the Presidency until the end of the term, and that new President was to be elected in the subsequent ITF Congress if the President becomes permanently incapacitated. The next ITF Congress was to take place during the 2003 Warsaw ITF World Championships.<sup>210</sup>

Then in July 2002, gen. Choi's death was also announced in the ITF Newsletter. The same Newsletter announced that SVP Russel MacLellan (CAN) retained the ITF President position. He became the ITF acting President the latest on 15<sup>th</sup> June, when gen. Choi passed away.<sup>211</sup> Below the ITF presidency as documented in the available ITF Congress minutes.

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<sup>209</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.3, p.479 (only in Korean).

<sup>210</sup> The Rimini 2001 ITF Congress decided to give the 2003 ITF World Championships to Warsaw. Rimini 2001 ITF Congress Minutes, published in the *ITF Newsletter* 2/2001; the 2003 Warsaw ITF World Championship were announced in the *ITF Newsletter* 4/2001 onwards.

<sup>211</sup> Tran Trieu Quan, "Evolution of ITF legal cases against Mr. Chang Ung", dated 4th October 2007, AETF Archives, Lublin (available also on [www.kidokwan.org](http://www.kidokwan.org)); GM Hwang Kwang Sung places the day later, on 16 Jun 2002, "Letter to Mr. MacLellan, 6/25/02, KATU website, [www.itf-katu.com](http://www.itf-katu.com), captured 14 Oct 2002, seen 2 Nov 2021.

Table 1 ITF Presidents in Vienna - 1966 until 2002 splintering. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting minutes and ITF Congress minutes 1987-2002, and ITF Newsletters Gen. Choi's presidency based on TKD Encyclopaedias, Textbooks and Manuals (1959-2002).

### ITF PRESIDENTS – Recorded until 2002 splintering

#### General Choi Hong Hi, Canada

- 1966 → ITF President, uncontested
- 1987, Present as ITF president, ITF Directors' Meeting, Athens, Greece
- 1988, Elected in ITF Congress Budapest, Austria
- 1994, Elected in ITF Congress Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia
- 2001, Declared *could have his term extended by 2 years* as ITF President, ITF Congress Rimini, Italy
- 2002, Decision of Rimini 2001 rescinded in Special Meeting of the ITF Congress, Vienna, Austria, 12 Jan 2002, to continue as the ITF President until the end of 6-year term

#### (Choi Jung Hwa, Canada, ITF Presidency rescinded)

- 2001, Declared *could serve the further 4 years* remaining of gen. Choi's presidential term, ITF Congress Rimini, Italy
- 2002, No presidency, decision of Rimini 2001 rescinded in Special Meeting of the ITF Congress, Vienna, Austria, 12 Jan 2002 → Choi Jung Hwa founds his own ITF (CJH ITF)

Next, the ITF Senior Vice President (SVP), a critical position in ITF leadership. Mr. Chon Jin Shik (JAP) was nominated to this role in Budapest 1988 ITF Congress, becoming the first SVP recorded in the available minutes. Based on them, he remained in this role until his death in 1995 after which the position remained empty as late as the ITF Extraordinary Congress in Vienna on 12th January 2002, when Mr. Russell MacLellan was appointed to the role. This was the last ITF Congress before gen. Choi passed away and the federation splintered. As mentioned, by 15<sup>th</sup> June 2002, SVP MacLellan became the acting president of the ITF. More research is needed to follow this procedure in more detail.

Table 2 ITF Senior Vice Presidents. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes and Congress minutes, and ITF Newsletters.

### ITF SENIOR VICE PRESIDENTS – Recorded during 1984/1985 - 2002 Splinter

#### Chon Jin Shik (JAP)

- 1988, appointed, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria
- 1994, appointed, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia

No ITF Senior Vice President recorded during 1995-2002

#### Russell MacLellan (CAN)

- 2002, Elected, Special Meeting of the Congress, Vienna, Austria

Then, the ITF Vice Presidents (VP). In total nine VPs were recorded during the researched period. The VPs remained relatively steadily in their roles and less changes took place in comparison to the other ITF leadership positions. For instance, Grandmaster Rhee Ki Ha (SCO) first appears in the available ITF documentations as a VP in 1987, and he seems to have kept his position until he was elected again in 2001, a position he held until the

federation splintered. The same applies to VP MacLellan, with the exception that he was also elected as the Senior VP in January 2002. Mr. Valeri Kuzin (RUS) was another long-time VP (since 1992, although it is unclear when he was re-elected). In any case, Mr. Kuzin was still listed as the VP, in the ITF Executive Committee in December 2001. Grandmaster Sereff, should also be mentioned here – the VP being only one of the many roles he held in the ITF. The NA of three VPs remains unclear. All three have Korean names, but they are not known Overseas Korean Pioneers. It is likely they were North Koreans, as the presence of South Koreans in the ITF leadership especially after 1980, is extremely unlikely. The Kuala Terengganu 1994 ITF Congress minutes mention that “other officers and Chairmen remain the same”. This indicates that many of the previous appointments listed below remained past the Malaysia Congress. The wording of the minutes however is vague.

*Table 3 ITF Vice Presidents. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes, ITF Congress minutes and ITF Newsletters.*

<b><u>ITF VICE PRESIDENTS</u></b> – Recorded during 1984/1985 - 2002 Splinter	
<b>Chon Jin Shik (JAP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1986, Mentioned in ITF Newsletter 2/1986</li> <li>• 1987, Present as VP, ITF Directors' Meeting, Athens, Greece</li> <li>• 1988, Elected, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria (→ to serve as SVP)</li> <li>• 1994, Elected, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia (→ to serve as SVP)</li> </ul>
<b>Rhee Ki Ha (SCO)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1987, Present as VP, ITF Directors' Meeting, Athens, Greece</li> <li>• 1988, Elected, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria</li> <li>• 1990, Present as VP, ITF Congress, Montreal, Canada</li> <li>• 1994, Elected, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia</li> <li>• 2001, Elected, ITF Congress, Rimini, Italy</li> </ul>
<b>Russell Maclellan (CAN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1990, Elected, 8th ITF Congress, Montreal, Canada</li> <li>• 1994, Elected, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia</li> <li>• 2001, Elected, ITF Congress, Rimini, Italy</li> </ul>
<b>Kim Duk Jun (country unclear)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1988, Elected, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria</li> <li>• 1990, Resigns as VP, ITF Congress Montreal, Canada</li> </ul>
<b>Valeri Kuzin (RUS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1992, Elected, ITF Congress, Pyongyang, North Korea</li> <li>• 1994, Elected, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia</li> </ul>
<b>Ri Tong Sik (country unclear)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1994, Elected, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia</li> </ul>
<b>Charles Sereff (USA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1994, Elected, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia</li> <li>• 2001, Elected, 13 ITF Congress, Rimini, Italy</li> </ul>
<b>Pak Si Ung, (country unclear)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1999, Elected/appointed, ITF Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina</li> <li>• 2001, Elected, 13 ITF Congress, Rimini, Italy</li> </ul>
<b>Yuri Kalashnikov (RUS)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2002, Elected, Special Meeting of the Congress, Vienna, Austria</li> </ul>

Next, the ITF Secretary General (SG). During the studied period, in total five masters worked as ITF SG. Four of them were expelled (Masters Park Jung Tae, 1990; Cho Dae Sung, 1997, Choi Jung Hwa, 2002) and one resigned (Master Lee Ki Yung, 1991). Based on the available sources, after Master Lee Ki Yung, from 30<sup>th</sup> November 1991 until 8<sup>th</sup> September 1992, the SG position remained unfilled, until Master Cho Dae Sung was appointed to it. The last ITF Secretary General before gen. Choi passed away, was Master Thomas MacCallum. He was appointed to the role on 29<sup>th</sup> January 2002 by a letter of gen. Choi, after the expulsion of then SG, Master Choi Jung Hwa. This change appears to have been constitutional, as at least the 1988 ITF Constitution states that “Under Secretary General Planning will assume duties of the Secretary General at such times as may be required by the absence of the Secretary General.”<sup>212</sup> The 1988 ITF Constitution further states that they will hold office for three years and that re-election is possible.<sup>213</sup>

*Table 4 ITF Secretary Generals. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes, ITF Congress minutes, and ITF Newsletters.*

<b><u>ITF SECRETARY GENERALS</u></b> – Recorded during 1984/1985 - 2002 Splinter	
<b>Park Jung Tae (CAN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1984-1987, mentioned in ITF Newsletters 1/1985, 1/1987, and gen. Choi letter (29 Jan 1990)</li> <li>• 1987, Present as SG, ITF Directors' Meeting, Athens, Greece</li> <li>• 1988, Elected, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria</li> <li>• 1990, Resigned from his position, 29 Jan 1990 (in gen. Choi's letter, 29 Jan 1990)</li> <li>• 1990, Expelled, 21 Feb 1990 (in gen. Choi letter, 21 Feb 1990)</li> </ul>
<b>Lee Ki Yung (GER)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1990, Acting Secretary General until next ITF Congress (in gen. Choi letter, 29 Jan 1990)</li> <li>• 1990, Elected and appointed, ITF Congress, Montreal, Canada</li> <li>• 1991, Resigned from his position, effective 30 Nov 1991 (in gen. Choi's letter dated 5 Dec 1991)</li> </ul>
<b>(No ITF Secretary General registered between 30 Nov 1991 and 8 Sep 1992)</b>	
<b>Cho Dae Sung (USA)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1992, Appointed, ITF Congress, Pyongyang, North Korea (8 Sep 1992)</li> <li>• 1997, Expelled, ITF Congress, Saint Petersburg, Russia (2 Jul 1997)</li> </ul>
<b>Choi Jung Hwa (CAN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1997, Appointed, ITF Congress, Saint Petersburg, Russia</li> <li>• 2001, Mentioned present as SG, ITF Congress, Rimini, Italy</li> <li>• 2002, Dismissed from his position as ITF Secretary General, Special Meeting of the Congress, Vienna, Austria 12 Jan 2002: dismissal proposed, seconded and advised by members present, gen. Choi to dismiss Choi Jung Hwa “with regret”; his removal confirmed later by letter to members from MacCallum (16 Jan 2002), and gen. Choi letter to appoint MacCallum as SG (29 Jan 2002)</li> </ul>
<b>Thomas MacCallum (SCO/ITF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2002, Appointed after Vienna 2002 Special ITF Congress in gen. Choi letter, 29 Jan 2002, and ITF Newsletter 1/2002</li> </ul>

<sup>212</sup> ITF Constitution 1988, Paragraph 14.4., p. 8.

<sup>213</sup> ITF Constitution 1988, Paragraph 12.2., p. 6.

The below ITF Under Secretaries Generals (USG) had three different roles in the ITF: General Management, General Planning and General Administration. In total eight different Under Secretaries worked in these roles after the move to Vienna until the 2002 splintering of the ITF. NAs or country of four Under Secretaries are not mentioned. Based on their names they were all Korean origin but no further details on them were found. However, in case of Mr. Kim Yong Soo, situation remains unclear due to the common name: namesakes can be found from the ITF related sources from before the entry to North Korea resulting that simultaneously he could be three different Kim Yong Soo.

*Table 5 ITF Under Secretary Generals. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes, ITF Congress minutes, ITF Newsletters.*

<b><u>ITF UNDER SECRETARY GENERALS</u></b> – Recorded during 1984/1985 - 2002Splinter	
<b>Thomas MacCallum (SCO/ITF)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1984, USG, mentioned in ITF Newsletter 1/1985</li> <li>• 1987, Present as USG, ITF Directors' Meeting, Athens, Greece (no election)</li> <li>• 1988, Elected, USG Planning, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria</li> <li>• 1990, Elected and appointed, USG Administration, ITF Congress, Montreal, Canada</li> </ul>
<b>Choi Chol Ung (country unclear)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1987, Present as USG, ITF Directors' Meeting, Athens, Greece (no election)</li> </ul>
<b>Kim Yong Soo (country unclear)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1990, Elected and appointed, USG Planning, ITF Congress, Montreal, Canada</li> </ul>
<b>Kim Yung Kyu [Kim Yung Gyu] (country unclear)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1988, Elected, USG Administration, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria</li> </ul>
<b>Choi Jung Hwa (CAN)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1992, Appointed, USG Planning, ITF Congress, Pyongyang, North Korea</li> </ul>
<b>Li Yong Gil [Ri Yong Gil] (Country unclear)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1992 Appointed, USG Management, ITF Congress, Pyongyang, North Korea</li> </ul>
<b>Volmir Ligay (UZB)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1999, Elected/appointed, USG Planning, ITF Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina</li> </ul>
<b>Hwan Jin (JAP)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1999, Elected/appointed, USG Management, ITF Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina</li> </ul>

After these, came the Chairmen of different ITF Standing Committees. Based on the 1988 ITF Constitution, there were 10 Standing Committees, and their chairmen were appointed by the President with approval of the Board of Directors. The President was also entitled to create and disband alone the Temporary Committees.<sup>214</sup> These explain why there is less information (e.g., congress minutes) available of their nominations. These were roles that were somewhat overlapping, meaning one individual could also have other roles in the ITF. For example, Master Thomas MacCallum was elected as the USG and Chairman of the Tournament Committee in Budapest 1988 ITF Congress, and Master Park Jung Tae was nominated as the SG as well as the Chairman of the Instructor Committee in the same ITF Congress. These

<sup>214</sup> ITF Constitution 1988, Paragraph 17., p. 9.

were roles that were subject to changes during the researched period, meaning that titles were updated, and new Committees were founded with new Chairman seats. Often, they were referred to with slightly altering names.

There is also one, rather ambiguous committee: the Consultative Special Council “To guide the ITF for the future”. It was founded after the Rimini 2001 ITF Congress on 1st September. Master Leong Wai Meng became the Chairman and members were GM Park Jong Soo (CAN), Masters Benny Rivera (PRI), Georgios Stylianides (CRC), Phap Lu (CAN), Hwang Jin (JAP) and Paul Weiler (GER).<sup>215</sup> In his last memoirs gen. Choi describes the Consultative Council as something that was supposed to support Choi Jung Hwa in his future presidency. Saying that his son could use it for finding guidance during his leadership, and that “the fair operation of the ITF” could be guaranteed and members would hear his son is a competent governor. Master Choi Jung Hwa and the CJH ITF lawyer Mr. Tibollo, however, disputed the function of the Consultative council.<sup>216</sup> In other words, no counselling took place.

NAs of five ITF Chairmen listed below, however, remain unclear (marked in question marks). These are again Korean names that have not been identified as known Overseas Korean Pioneers. Them being South Koreans, is unlikely due to the same reasons already mentioned. Also, the NA of Mr. H.M. Yusupov remains unclear. Because of the sheer number of these positions, it is not possible to address the Chairmen in more detail in the scope of this research and thus more profound research is at place in the future.

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<sup>215</sup> Letter from gen. Choi, “SUBJECT: Consultative Special Council”, dated 19 Jul 2001, sent in *ITF Newsletter* 2/2001; Minutes of the Consultative Council (Forming meeting), dated 1 Sep 2001.

<sup>216</sup> “Transcript of Correspondences between Master Choi, Jung Hwa and Mr. Michael Tibollo, ITF Legal Counsel”, posted 3 Nov 2001, CJH ITF website [www.itf-information.com](http://www.itf-information.com), captured by Internet Archive on 3 Feb 2002, seen 11 May 2023.

Table 6 ITF Chairmen. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes, ITF Congress minutes. Those listed in ITF Newsletters are not listed here as the data on Chairmen is too inconstant and thus, further research is needed.

### **ITF CHAIRMEN** – Recorded during 1984/1985 - 2002 Splinter

**1987, ITF Directors' Meeting, Athens:** Lee Ki Yung (GER), Yu Hong Sun (USA), Han Sam Soo (JAM/CAN), Cho Pyung Kyu (USA), Chung Kwang Duk (ARG), Charles Sereff (USA), Toni Nobile (YUG/CRO), Sabree Salleh (MAL), Kim Yong Gyu (???)

**1988, ITF Congress, Budapest:** Toni Nobile (CRO), Chung Kwang Duk (ARG), Thomas MacCallum (SCO/ITF), Yu Hong Sun (USA), Park Jung Taek (CAN), Lee Ki Yung (GER), Sabree Salleh (MAL), Cho Dae Sung (USA), Cho Pyung Kyu (ARG/USA), Han Sam Soo (JAM/CAN), Kim He Gun (???), Charles Sereff (USA)

**1990, ITF Congress, Montreal:** H.M. Yusupov (???), Valeri Kuzin (RUS), Georgios Stylianides (GRC), J.H. Chon (???), Benny Rivera (PRI), Hwang Kwang Sung (USA), Charles Sereff (USA), Sabree Salleh (MAL), James Lim (CAN), Manuel Luque (ARG), Tran Tieu Quan (CAN), Leong Wai Meng (GRL/MAL). Other Chairmen present: Lee Ki Yung (GER), Cho Dae Sung (???), Toni Nobile (YUG/CRO),

**1992, ITF Congress, Pyongyang:** Volmir Ligay (UZB), Raul Bonilla (HND), Park Jung Taek (CAN), Hwang Jin (JAP)

**1994, ITF Congress, Kuala Terengganu:** Park Jung Taek (CAN), Li Yong Suk (???)

**1999, ITF Congress, Buenos Aires:** Willem Jacob Bos (ITA), Nestor Galarraga (ARG), Leong Wai Meng (GRL/MAL)

**2002, ITF Congress, Vienna:** Tran Tieu Quan (CAN), Pablo Trajtenberg (ARG)

After these came the Country (NA) Directors and Directors of ITF Continental Federations. The Country Directors were as many as the NAs, selected by the countries themselves to the roles. Continental Federations underwent changes during the researched period, probably, to meet better the regional needs. Eventually the ITF appears to have settled into Continental Federations of Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Asia and Oceania. But as the available sources regarding the Continental Federations is so fragmented, it is not presently possible to study them in more detail. The Country Directors (of the NAs) were vital for the ITF as they voted in ITF Congresses and as such, spoke on behalf of their NAs in the ITF. In chapter “6.5. The size of the ITF and its international scope”, I provide an estimation of a probable maximum of c.100 active NAs, which should then correspond to the same amount of Country Directors elicitable to vote in ITF Congresses – if all were present and membership payments and other bending issues were closed. More research is needed to understand better the development of the NAs' and Continental Federations. To exclude them from a study on ITF, is like excluding the presence of voters in a democratic country and call it dictatorial. Also, excluding the NAs from the ITF benefits those parties to whom weaker democratic structures of the federation were or are advantageous, namely CJH ITF and NKITF. Without the active presence and opposition of the NAs, the 2002 splintering of the ITF would have transpired differently – if at all. The ITF structured around its NAs was harder to take under control. Therefore, and subsequently, it is essential that future research also includes the NAs for more balanced analysis of the ITF.



Second last role to mention here is the ITF Spokesmen. Master Hwang Kwang Sung (황관성), an Overseas Korean residing in US, was nominated as the ITF Spokesman in an ITF Newsletter 2/1989 but no ITF Congress nomination has been found. Then, in 1990, Jan Erik Lehn (NOR, 1950-2001), from the NA of Norway, was elected as the ITF Spokesman. After his death in 2001, there is no mention in the available documentations that someone was nominated to replace him. Thus, it is unclear for how long Master Hwang Kwang Sung remained in this role as still on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2002, he was referring to himself as the ITF Spokesman.<sup>217</sup> In 1996, Master Hwang Kwang Sung was appointed as a Special Assistant to gen. Choi (nomination in ITF Newsletter number 3/1996, no congress appointment, nor mention of the role in the 1988 ITF Constitution), a unique position held only by him. Based on the sources, he held this position until the death of gen. Choi.

*Table 7 ITF Spokesmen. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes, ITF Congress minutes, ITF Newsletters.*

<u>ITF SPOKESMEN</u> – Recorded during 1984/1985 - 2002 Splinter
<b>Hwang Kwang Sung (USA)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1989, ITF Newsletter 2/1989</li> </ul>
<b>Jan Erik Lehn (NOR)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1990, Elected and appointed, ITF Congress, Montreal, Canada</li> </ul>

ITF Auditor is the last ITF leadership position to mention. Mr. Toni (Anto) Nobile, representing Yugoslavia and later Croatia, was the ITF Auditor from the 1988 and 1990 ITF Congresses onwards (Malaysia 1994 Congress most probably renewed his nomination). In 2001 ITF Congress there is a mention of him continuing as the ITF Auditor as before. Hence, it seems he remained as the ITF Auditor from 1988 until the splintering of the ITF in 2002. No records have been found of anyone else nominated to the role. Mr. Nobile, a celebrated athlete, was a lawyer by profession which was probably one of the main reasons why he was elected as the ITF Auditor and why he lasted in his role for so many years.

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<sup>217</sup> Hwang Kwang Sung letter, “GM Hwang Letter to Members”, dated 7 Jul 2001, published on [www.itf-information.com](http://www.itf-information.com) (Old CJH ITF website), captured by Internet Archive 7 Jul 2002, seen 16 Aug 2021. Published also on [www.itf-katu.com](http://www.itf-katu.com) (Gm Hwang website, captured by Internet Archive on 2 Aug 2002).

Table 8 ITF Auditors. Sources: ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes, ITF Congress minutes, ITF Newsletters.

### **ITF AUDITORS** – Recorded during 1984/1985 - 2002 Splinter

#### **Toni Nobile (YUG/CRO)**

- **1988**, Elected, ITF Congress, Budapest, Austria
- **1990**, Elected and appointed, ITF Congress, Montreal, Canada
- **2001**, Elected to remain as ITF Auditor, ITF Congress, Rimini, Italy

In addition, a few words on the presumed ITF Lawyer, Mr. Michael Tibollo (CAN). First, no mention of an official ITF lawyer has been detected from the ITF documentations used. Claims of an official ITF lawyer being Mr. Tibollo can only be found from sources deriving from the CJH ITF, where he is indeed listed as the ITF official lawyer.<sup>218</sup> Although in the last volume of his memoirs, gen. Choi confirmed appointing Tibollo as the lawyer, the ITF members were not informed about it through the usual, official routes such as the ITF Newsletter. Nor is there any marking of it in the available in the ITF Congress minutes. The CJH ITF claimed in their messages to the ITF members, that Mr. Michael Tibollo was appointed to his role by gen. Choi in Toronto sometime in April 2001, and that his nomination as the ITF Lawyer was ratified in in the 2001 ITF Congress in Rimini.<sup>219</sup> However, based on the published Rimini Congress Minutes, Mr. Tibollo was not nominated as the ITF lawyer, instead he was only to chair the Congress until it was time to elect the new President and Vice Presidents. Furthermore, the 1988 ITF Constitution has no mention of an ITF lawyer – yet alone as part of the ITF leadership. Despite of all this, CJH ITF used Tibollo's unrecognised position in the ITF as confirmation of its illegal methods.<sup>220</sup> As his status as ITF lawyer remains debated, more research is at place.

Overall, the NAs were relatively evenly represented in the ITF leadership although more research is still needed to explore them in detail. Yet, this preliminary exploration demonstrates already now a clear diversity present in the ITF. Naturally, it was not possible for all NAs to have a seat in the Executive Board or in the ITF Committee Chairs as there was a limited number of these positions in comparison to the number of the NAs. In the ITF Executive Committee, the roles were mainly divided between the Overseas Koreans (from

<sup>218</sup> Old CJH ITF website, "Site Map" section 1, "Hierarchy", [www.itf-taekwondo.com](http://www.itf-taekwondo.com), viewed through Internet Archive, captured on 19 Aug 2001, seen 8 May 2023.

<sup>219</sup> "ITF Legal Representation", News Bulletins 2001, Bulletin 02, Old CJH ITF's website, [www.itf-information.com](http://www.itf-information.com), posted 19 Jul 2001, Internet Archive capture 5 Aug 2002, seen 13 Aug 2021; also "Concerning the Extraordinary Congress Meeting – Letter of resignation", News Bulletin 2002, Bulletin 10, Posted 13 Jan 2002, Internet Archive Capture 6 Aug 2002, seen 24 Apr 2023.

<sup>220</sup> Mr. Tibollo has thence left the CJH ITF and is now the Legal Advisor of ITF HQ, an ITF Taekwon-Do federation that splintered from Choi Jung Hwa's ITF some years after its establishment.

different NAs), Americans, Canadians, Europeans, Russians and as well as the unknown Korean names of which NAs are largely unmentioned anywhere in the available ITF documentations. Among the Chairmen, the combination of different NAs was wider and even smaller ITF countries, such as Norway, Jamaica or Puerto Rico were represented. The Chairmen positions were allocated between different member countries relatively evenly and the Chairmen represented several different national associations of the ITF. No clear favouring of a specific country or region is detectable. If the Korean names without the NA or country did truly represent North Korea, they had a continuous representation in the ITF leadership albeit they did not dominate it. But as it has not been possible to confirm their NA, it could also be stated they had almost non-existing presence in the ITF leadership. Hence, more research is at place.

When looking into the available sources more widely, for instance, including the ITF Newsletters and the ITF correspondences, some members appear more active than others. For instance: Masters and Grandmasters Benny Rivera, Lee Ki Yung, Charles Sereff, Georgios Stylianides, Hwang Kwang Sung, Leong Wai Meng, Park Jong Soo, Park Jung Tae, Chon Jin Shik, Rhee Ki Ha, Russell MacLellan, Sabree Salleh, Tran Trieu Quan, Phap Lu, Toni Nobilo, Raul Bonilla, Valeri Kuzin, Volmir Ligay, Tadeusz Loboda, and most of all Thomas MacCallum. Their names appear in many different contexts, in the list of new black belt promotions, organising ITF events such as competitions or seminars, sending letters to members of variety of topics, being present in the ITF Congresses, appearing in the photos shared, found in ITF Directories, receiving awards, being nominated as their NA Presidents, in news articles shared through ITF Newsletters, and so forth. This is important as it created an image of the ITF, of those who belonged to it, of what and who the ITF was. Through the available sources, image of an international and multicultural federation – not ethnocentric – transpires, while the positions of North Koreans remain unclear and unconfirmed in the ITF leadership.

Below, the ITF Executive Committee and the ITF Chairmen in January 2002. The Image displays the leadership after the Vienna Special Congress where Master Choi Jung Hwa was expelled, and before the splintering of the ITF when gen. Choi died. Those listed correspond with the earlier ITF Congress Minutes, ITF Newsletter announcements and letters sent by gen. Choi and the ITF. However, Mr. Chong Jae Hun (PRK) was appointed to his role already in 1990, meaning his position was likely renewed during an earlier congress (e.g., 1994 Malaysia). Only the appointment of GM Hwang Kwang Sung as the Chairman of the

Promotion Committee has not been found. But as stated, these roles were not static, and it is possible that he was appointed as the Promotion Committee Chairman already before the available Congress minutes in my use. A later capture of Internet Archive from May 2002 exists with Mr. MacLellan as the ITF President. But as it has not been possible to confirm from any other sources the change taking place in May, I have not included it here (the screen capture from January is confirmable from other sources). ITF's later president, Master Tran Trieu Quan, who succeeded Mr. MacLellan, dates this to 15<sup>th</sup> June, the day of gen. Choi's passing.<sup>221</sup> GM Hwang Kwang Sung, announced Mr. Maclellan as acting President on 16<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>222</sup> Nevertheless, it changes little, as the 1988 ITF Constitution states that the SVP will assume the role of the President in case of incapacity, meaning, that the transfer of power can be interpreted automatic in the case of the ITF.

ITF - Official web site

### ITF Executive Committee

<b>President</b>	General Choi Hong Hi	Canada
<b>Senior Vice President</b>	Mr. Russell MacLellan	Canada
<b>Vice President</b>	Grand Master Rhee Ki Ha	Scotland
<b>Vice President</b>	Grand Master Charles Sereff	USA
<b>Vice President</b>	Mr Youri Kalashnikov	Russia
<b>Vice President</b>	Mr. Pak Si Ung	Austria
<b>Secretary General</b>	Master Thomas MacCallum	Austria
<b>Under Secretary General - Management</b>	Master Hwang Jin	Japan
<b>Treasurer</b>	Mr. Son U Chol	Austria
<div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 200px; height: 20px; margin: 0 auto;"></div>		
<b>Chairman Promotion Committee</b>	Grand Master Hwang Kwang Sung	USA
<b>Chairman Ethics Committee</b>	Master Benny Rivera	Puerto Rico
<b>Chairman Technique Committee</b>	Grand Master Park Jong Soo	Canada
<b>Chairman Instruction Committee</b>	Master Hwang Ho Yong	Czech Republic
<b>Chairman Disciplinary Committee</b>	Master Georgios Stylianides	Greece
<b>Chairman Umpire Committee</b>	Master Leong Wai Meng	Australia
<b>Chairman Tournament Committee</b>	Master Tran Trieu Quan	Canada
<b>Chairman Auditor Committee</b>	Mr Toni Nobilo	Croatia
<b>Chairman Expansion Committee</b>	Mr Chong Jae Hun	Korea DPR

Image 7. ITF Executive Committee (above) and ITF Committee Chairmen (below) as pictured on the official website of the ITF. Empty rectangle in the middle probably has stated 'ITF Standing Committees'. Full image not captured by Internet Archive. [www.itf-general.com](http://www.itf-general.com). Seen 13 Aug 2021.

<sup>221</sup> ITF President, Master Tran Trieu Quan: "Evolution of ITF legal cases against Mr. Chang Ung", dated 4 Oct 2007.

<sup>222</sup> GM Hwang Kwang Sung, "Letter to Mr. MacLellan, 6/26/02", dated 25 Jun 2002, capture by Internet Archive on 14 Oct 2002, seen 02 Nov 2021.

## 6.2 ITF Funding

In this chapter, I will discuss the ITF finances. Here I want to share those parts of the ITF finance that can be referenced already with the present available sources. I hope these details will facilitate future research.

First, prior to the ITF's relocation to Vienna, Gen Choi stated he arranged a loan of 400 000 USD borrowed annually from North Korean Taekwon-Do Association (NKTKDA) because the ITF had run out of funds. He claims that in three years after starting the instructor training in North Korea, the ITF had enough instructors to be dispatched around the world. Without funds however, it was impossible to coordinate it.<sup>223</sup> Hence, since he borrowed from NKTKDA, it was not directly a loan from the North Korean state. However, such a loan creates a dependency even if it does not arrive directly from the state. And as such it can be used for control, especially considering that the NKTKDA was not (financially) independent from the state since in North Korea such independent organizations simply do not exist.

One source of income was the 15-volume TKD Teaching manuals, meaning the Taekwon-Do Encyclopaedias. They were published in North Korea with the acceptance of the Korean Working Party in 1983, a year after the move to Vienna. Based on gen. Choi's account, the main motivation to print them in North Korea was that it was cheaper there.<sup>224</sup> Yet, it is unclear whether the state or the NKTKDA supported the publishing also financially or whether they only offered cheaper prices than in the West. However, it is possible that the state supported the ITF at least by helping to keep the publication costs low.

Since the ITF was international governing body of Taekwon-Do, the federation collected different payments from its members. Based on the overall primary sources of the period after the Vienna headquarters were established, these payments were expected to take place between an NA and the ITF. Meaning, the NA's handled the payments from their members to the ITF and not the individual practitioners. The ITF required annual payments mainly for instructor and club licenses. It is unclear whether NAs also paid annual fees for ITF membership. Next to these, the ITF gained funds at least from new black belt certificates, teaching seminars and world championships. The documents created after the ITF's relocation

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<sup>223</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.401. Of course, visa restrictions, mainly in the West, still limited this dispatchment.

<sup>224</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.395-397. N.B. the manuals were re-printed in several countries, such as Canada and Russia and New Zealand (prior to 1972 also in South Korea). Hence, not all re-editions were printed in North Korea alone. Also, the later *Condensed TKD Encyclopedia* (first print in 1988) was likely also a similar income source.

to Vienna, show that some payments were adjusted based on the economic level of the member country: the richer member countries paid more, poorer less.<sup>225</sup> The ITF also gained some sources through selling teaching manuals and training gear, although especially with the latter, there were also other suppliers on the market.

#### AFFILIATION FEES

This is repeated to remind you that the ITF needs your support in all areas and of course in the financial area. Lots of people do not pay fees and then wonder why the ITF cannot do anything. All main gyms should pay the \$200.00(US) affiliation fee and a 'Main' Plaque will be sent. The annual fee thereafter is \$150.00(US). Branch gyms should send \$80.00(US) for the first year's affiliation and they will be sent a 'Branch' Plaque. The annual fee for the next three years is \$50.00(US) following which there is no fee to be paid.

*Image 8. Example of ITF affiliation fees in 1985. Source: ITF Newsletter 2/1985, 9 November 1985.*

#### CERTIFICATE FEES

The Board of Directors have agreed that the 1st. and 3rd. Degree certificate fees be raised. Therefore with effect from 1st. July 1986 the fee for 1st. degree certificate will be \$80.00(US) and the fee for 3rd. degree certificate will be \$150.00(US). This is only a small raise and since the fees have not been changed since 1980 then we feel sure that it will not cause hardship. The ITF are checking the gross national product for differing countries and the certificate fees for nations who are not so well off will be adjusted accordingly. PLEASE NOTE FROM JULY 1st. 1986 and all grading tests from this date must be with the agreement that the fees are as listed.

*Image 9. Example of ITF Certificate fees in 1986. Source: ITF Newsletter 2/1986.*

What comes to the above payments, the ITF does not differ from other sport institutions: different membership payments to international governing bodies are a common practise. Neither is there anything peculiar in North Korea being part of international sport institutions. It had been an IOC member since 1957; participated in its first Winter Olympics in Innsbruck 1964, its first Summer Olympics in Munich 1972; been a FIFA member since 1958; IIHF member since 1963 and so on. Hence, when North Korea (NKTKDA) became an ITF member country sometime during the 1980's, it does not substantiate as evidence that the ITF become financed by North Korea from that instant on, as it does not so with other international sport institutions either. Thus, it makes little sense to bellow over Taekwon-Do being introduced to North Korea: If they can play football, they can do Taekwon-Do. As a national association, the NKTKDA was expected to deal with the membership, not the North Korean state. Future research is therefore in place to see if the NKTKDA membership payments differ substantially from other North Korean national sport associations and their international governing bodies.

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<sup>225</sup> *ITF Newsletter 2/1986* informs ITF members of raised degree certification fees, last change 1980, fees based on grade and GDP of the NA.

Conventionally, the larger the NA, the greater the power in the international sport organisation. This seems particularly true in the case of the ITF. Based on the available sources, Taekwon-Do practice grew quickly in North Korea after it was introduced. This should have consecutively resulted membership-related payments to the ITF grow. Therefore, as in any sport organisation, the NKTkDA had the potential to raise into a dominating role in the ITF due to their greater finance and membership numbers. In general, this can be used to direct and even co-opt an international governing body of the sport.<sup>226</sup> By threatening to withdraw their membership or funding for international events, for example, an NA can pressure their international governing body to make favourable decisions for them. Hence, when discussing the NKTkDA's role in the ITF, its significance to the umbrella organisation cannot be ignored. It was too large and financially too strong for not to be heard in the ITF decision making. Hence, at least potentially, it was powerful enough to try co-opting the ITF. After all, in North Korea, national organizations are not independent from government control, resulting that NKTkDA had also the state to strengthen its position in the ITF when applicable.

Furthermore, due to the much stronger economic situation of the western countries, their NAs were not exactly weak compared to NKTkDA, even if many of them were not recognised by their governments (lack of official recognition i.e., hampers access to government or municipal funding when Taekwon-Do clubs were excluded from public sport facilities...). Hence, NKTkDA was not the only one with financial power. Even if the main candidates for future ITF Presidency were either gone, about to die or had lost their credibility, the western NAs were growing which improved their financial situation. Hence, they too were able to advocate their own interests in the ITF. Growing NAs enabled them to protect themselves from outside influencing and misuse more firmly.

### **6.3 Close companions: Mr. Chon Jin Shik and IAPT Funds**

Next to the membership payments and gen. Choi's loan from NKTkDA, another significant part of funds came from a Korean Japanese businessman and a wealthy millionaire, called Mr. Chon Jin Shik (also John Shik, 전진식). Together with his older brother, Mr. Chon Yon Shik (전연식) they founded a Tokyo based Corporation called Sakura (사쿠라). It was a large

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<sup>226</sup> For example, accusation of Russia co-opting boxing and fencing federations: "New boxing organization hopes salvage Olympic future", *ESPN*, 13 Apr 2023; Ari Pusa, "Varoittava esimerkki" ("Warning Example"), *Helsingin Sanomat*, 5 Mar 2022.

Zainichi company in Japan, associated mainly with the Chongryon and the Chosenseki associations due to its connections with North Korea. Since Japan actively discriminated the Zainichi which left them largely as outsiders in the Japanese society until as late as the end of 1980s, as discussed earlier, they had to be creative with their businesses as they could not get any financing or loans for their business outside their own communities. Their exclusion from the Japanese society also pushed the Zainichi towards shady businesses, as legitimate jobs were blocked for them. Hence, business with North Korea was not rare.<sup>227</sup> The Sakura company became one of the many successful Zainichi business in Japan.

Based on the sources used, Mr. Chon Jin Shik was the principal financier of the ITF as well as of ITF Japan. Other similar financiers have not been discovered. Through him, the ITF was able to receive funds and sponsoring while avoiding direct financial ties with North Korean state. However, it should be noted that Mr. Shik was a representative of the Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea (SPA, meaning the "parliament" of North Korea) and a vice-chairman of North Korea connected Chongryon, which made him close to North Korean regime.<sup>228</sup> However, even if the connections were tight, it does not confirm funds to originate from North Korea to the ITF. It is equally possible for the funds to originate from other sources, e.g., from the much wealthier Japanese market. Afterall, Mr. Shik was a wealthy millionaire. Thus, he might have brought financial sources to North Korea and not the other way around. The collapse of Soviet Union instigated the North Korea's own financial crash down, mass starvation and economic crisis in the 1990s: the Arduous March. Mr. Shik's funding of the ITF lasted from 1986 until 1995. North Korea from 1989 onwards hardly had a dollar.

The first recorded financial support that Mr. Shik gave to the ITF, happened when he arrived to the ITF office in Vienna and donated personally cash worth of 150 000 USD for the ITF's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1986.<sup>229</sup> Around the same time, he was named as the ITF Vice-President.<sup>230</sup> Then in 1988-1989, together with the ITF, they founded a new project called IAPT, International Association for the Promotion and Popularisation of the Original Taekwon-Do. Based on the details shared in the ITF Newsletters, the IAPT transpires as a pension fund for the ITF members providing a lifetime membership, and a fund through

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<sup>227</sup> N.B., I discuss here how Sakura corporation appeared during the researched era based on the available sources. The way company presently works might differ greatly from its past.

<sup>228</sup> Japan informant, email to author, 27 Feb 2023.

<sup>229</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 2/1986; Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, p.415.

<sup>230</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 2/1986. Hence, nomination not confirmed in Congress minutes, only in the Newsletter.



which members and NAs were rewarded for their achievements in Taekwon-Do.<sup>231</sup> Mr. Shik was involved with the IAPT project since its beginning from 1988 until his death in 1995. He was the IAPT Chairman from 1990 onwards when the project was officially launched. In 1989, now a Senior Vice President of the ITF, Mr. Shin was to arrange 10 million dollars in ten years – one million annually – to the IAPT fund. After his death, the IAPT changed its name to OPTA, Original Taekwon-Do Promotion Association. Master Hwang Jin of ITF Japan became the OPTA Chairman.<sup>232</sup>

An undated document shared to ITF members, originating from a period c.1990-1997, reveal that awards varied from 500 to 5000 USD for individuals, and 2000 USD for the NAs. The document appears to have been sent by an ITF core-leader and head-instructor of ITF Japan Mr. Hwang Jin (환진), another active Chongryon affiliate who oversaw the IAPT/OPTA registrations. The letter also reveals that at the time there were 2892 IAPT members, of which 653 were new members from the previous year. Based on this document, in total there were at least 7 individuals, and 4 national associations who were designated for an award, equating to 23 000 USD.<sup>233</sup> When looking into the reports of the ITF Newsletters and ITF Congress Minutes, the IAPT/OPTA was used to award its members and hence, the foundation functioned as promised in regard of the rewards being handed out. The IAPT/OPTA as a pension fund, however, remains unclear.<sup>234</sup>

Mr. Shik also sponsored competitions. Gen. Choi records in his memoirs that at least the Montreal ITF Taekwon-Do World Championships in 1990 were sponsored by Mr. Shik.<sup>235</sup> Also annual high-level competition in Japan called Moranbong was funded by Mr. Shik.<sup>236</sup> More research is needed to see if he sponsored Taekwon-Do even more.

In 1994, based on newspaper *Le Monde*, Mr. Shik was considered the most central and wealthiest Korean entrepreneur in Japan trading with North Korea. Interestingly, in the article it is stated that he also criticised the ways North Korea over-controlled business calling it

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<sup>231</sup> E.g., *ITF Newsletter* 1/1989, Of which the members were also able to resign when so desired.

<sup>232</sup> “OPTA, Original Taekwon-Do Promotion Association, Establishment of the OPTA and Dissolution of the IAPT.” Published in an ITF journal titled “*International Taekwon-Do Federation, ITF April World Conference and Seminar*”, July 1996, p. 13; also, *ITF Newsletter* numbers 6/1990; 2/1994, 3/1997, 2/1998; also, Buenos Aires 1999 ITF Congress Minutes, and Rimini 2001 ITF Congress Minutes; Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, pp.439-441 447-448.

<sup>233</sup> Choi refers to Shik as the financier in his biography and same reference can be found from *ITF Newsletters*.

<sup>234</sup> E.g., *ITF Newsletter* numbers 6/1990; 2/1994, 3/1997, 2/1998; also, Buenos Aires 1999 ITF Congress Minutes and Rimini 2001 ITF Congress Minutes.

<sup>235</sup> Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, pp. 493, 520.

<sup>236</sup> Japan Informant, emails to author, received 20 Jan 2022, 4 Feb 2022, 21 Feb 2022, 23 Feb 2023.

hampering the wellbeing of its own citizens.<sup>237</sup> Hence, once again, it seems that gen. Choi's close associate was not simply an ardent supporter of the North Korean regime. It suggests that gen. Choi was positioning himself among the moderates who attempted to find ways to keep the connection with North Korea but who at the same time did not desire to become part of the machine itself. It should be noted that gen. Choi denied the ITF being an organisation connected to the North Korean government.<sup>238</sup>

Japan was geopolitically important area to gen. Choi as it had the largest Korean diaspora outside Korea. The ITF Japan (JITF) had many Korean practitioners: the Zainichi members of the JITF were even allowed to compete as Koreans under the banner of KTFJ, Korean Taekwon-Do Federation Japan. But the Japanese members had only one option, the JITF. JITF/ KTFJ's connections with NKTKDA were deep, and the connections of the JITF/KTFJ leaders were tight also with Chongryon and North Korea. The federation was closely centered around the Chongryon which led to a situation where the position of Japanese members was different from the Zainichi: Membership was based on ethnicity and the Japanese members of the JITF were left in the margins. For non-Koreans practitioners it was impossible to achieve any leadership positions in the JITF, and KTFJ had them excluded.<sup>239</sup>

JITF/KTFJ had tight connections with North Korea: JITF head-instructor Hwan Jin, was active in Chongryon, and other instructor, Mr. Seo Man Cheol (서만술, 1927-2012), former ITF World Championship bronze medallist, became later Chongryon's chairman (c. 2001). The latter was also a member of Supreme People's Assembly of North Korea (SPA, meaning the "parliament" of North Korea).<sup>240</sup> It is evident that Japan was geopolitically important for gen. Choi as the presence of the Zainichi provided connections to both sides of Korea. Next to strictly Taekwon-Do related matters, through the Zainichi, it was also possible for gen. Choi to stay better in contact with Overseas Korean democratic movements present in Japan, such as Hanmintong. Thus, further research is needed on JITF/KTFJ to understand its value to Chongryon and North Korea. But also, to understand if the presence of the ITF in Japan facilitated gen. Choi's contact with the different democratic movements of the Koreans present in Japan.

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<sup>237</sup> Ph.P. "Je ne vois plus où va mon pays", *Le Monde*, 8 Jun 1994; Pons, Philippe "Le Nouveau Maître De La Corée Du Nord...", *Le Monde*, 4 Aug 1994.

<sup>238</sup> E.g., Choi, *TKD & I*, vol. 2, p. 442.

<sup>239</sup> Japan Informant, emails to author, received 20 Jan 2022, 4 Feb 2022, 21 Feb 2022, 23 Feb 2023.

<sup>240</sup> Japan Informant, emails to author, received 20 Jan 2022, 4 Feb 2022, 21 Feb 2022, 23 Feb 2023.

## 6.4 The Treasurers

Lastly to be discussed in relation to the ITF funding, are the ITF Treasurers. The other ITF leadership positions were discussed earlier. Little details remain of the treasurers in the available official ITF sources. Likewise, next to nothing has been found through other sources, including online searches. In the initial discussions with the ITF members, the only thing evident is that there is confusion about how the ITF Treasurers worked and who they were. Hence, these discussions have not provided further information about them. Compared to other ITF leadership positions, the treasurers differ from the rest in just how little is known of them. The Overseas Korean instructors who were already part of the ITF long before Taekwon-Do was introduced to North Korea, have been relatively easy to distinguish.

The study of the ITF treasurers is intricated by the inconsistencies in writing Korean names. Furthermore, unlike in the case of Overseas Korean members, the treasurers, excluding the last two, have no mention of their NA or country anywhere in the ITF documentations available. This might signal that they were not ITF members but hired from outside the ITF to work as treasurers. This would also explain why there is so little details available in related sources about them. The ITF Treasurers recorded in the ITF Congress minutes, ITF Newsletters and AETF Archive materials were as follows:

ITF Treasurers 1987-2002		
NAME	YEAR	NOMINATED/MENTIONED IN
Kim Yong Soo <sup>1</sup>	1987	ITF Directors' Meeting Minutes, Athens, Greece May 1987
Song Ryong Uk	1988	ITF Congress Minutes Budapest, Hungary, April 1988
Kim Yong Gyu (Kyu)	1990	ITF Congress Minutes, Montreal, Canada, August 1990
O Song Ho	1992	ITF Newsletter 1/1992 February ITF Congress Minutes, Pyongyang, NK, September 1992
Ri Yong Son	1998	ITF Newsletter 3/1998 June No Congress nomination found
Son U Chol	2001	ITF Executives listed in the ITF official website No Congress nomination, no ITF Newsletter mention found

Figure 3. ITF Treasurers. Source: ITF Newsletters 1985-2002 and ITF Director Meeting and Congress Minutes 1987-2002.

The first ITF Treasurer in the available ITF primary sources is Mr. Kim Yong Soo. He was listed as the treasurer in the minutes of the Athens 1987 ITF Directors' Meeting in, held in Greece. It is possible, that Mr. Kim was part of the ITF leadership already before, but since

the available minutes do not date further in time, it is not possible to confirm. Already the following year in Budapest 1988 ITF Congress in Hungary the treasurer was changed. However, Mr. Kim Yong Soo returns to ITF leadership in the Montreal 1990 Congress in Canada. He was nominated as the ITF Under Secretary General Planning. Then in the ITF Newsletter 3/1992, it is announced that Master Choi Jung Hwa was to replace Kim Yong Soo as the Under Secretary General Planning (The timing was convenient, as this seems to coincide with the time when Master Choi Jung Hwa was expected to be liberated from the penitentiary based on the news report of *Tae Kwon Do Times* journal.<sup>241</sup> The nomination takes place only a month prior to the Pyongyang 1992 ITF Congress in North Korea, where Master Choi Jung Hwa's nomination is confirmed.) After this Mr. Kim Yong Soo does not appear in the available ITF related primary sources.<sup>242</sup>

The least is known of the second ITF Treasurer listed, Mr. Song Ryong Uk. The only detail found in the available ITF sources about his work is his appointment as an ITF Treasurer on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1988 in the Budapest ITF Congress in Hungary. This transpires less than a year after Kim Yong Soo's nomination, as mentioned above.<sup>243</sup> No further details of ITF Treasurer Song Ryong Uk has been found.

More details are found of the third ITF Treasurer, Mr. Kim Yong Kyu (also Kim Yong Gyu). Kim Yong Kyu was already a Chairman of an ITF Standing Committee since Athens 1987 Directors' Meeting, but the available minutes do not specify his exact position. In the Budapest 1988 ITF Congress he was first nominated as the ITF Under Secretary General Administration, and then in the Canada 1990 ITF Congress, the Treasurer. In his memoirs gen. Choi refers to an ITF Under Secretary named Kim Yong Kyu around the same timeframe as the available ITF Congress Minutes do. This helps confirming his active presence in the ITF leadership.<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>241</sup> "Son of ITF Founder Convicted", *Tae Kwon Do Times*, July 1991, p.10.

<sup>242</sup> Minutes of the Athens 1987 ITF Directors' Meeting.

<sup>243</sup> *ITF Newsletter*, 5/1988. From this issue it is possible to find in printed the "items of interest" regarding the minutes of the Budapest 1988 ITF Congress, Hungary, 7 Apr 1988. The actual minutes of the 1988 ITF Congress in Budapest were not shared to members in full in the *ITF Newsletters*.

<sup>244</sup> E.g., Choi, *TKD & I*, vol.2, pp.502-503, 543-545, 557-558.

## TREASURER

Mr. Kim Yong Gyu has returned to Korea and is replaced by Mr. O Song Ho as from February 1st. We thank Mr. Kim for his past services and wish Mr. O a happy association with the ITF. Please send any money orders for encyclopaedias made out to Mr. O Song Ho.

Figure 4 Announcing Kim Yong Gyu as the new ITF Treasurer requesting payments to him. Source: ITF Newsletter 1/1992.

The fourth ITF Treasurer is Mr. O Song Ho. He took over the responsibilities from Mr. Kim Yong Kyu's (Kim Yong Gyu) after he had to returned to Korea in around February 1992 as the above announcement taken from ITF Newsletter 1/1992 shows. Korea here should mean North Korea, as there was no South Korea present in the ITF. Then, the next autumn, on 8<sup>th</sup> September 1992, Mr. O Song Ho's position was cemented when he was elected at the Pyongyang 1992 ITF Congress in North Korea. He was the last ITF Treasurer to be nominated through ITF Congress. O Song Ho continued as the ITF Treasurer for much longer than his previous colleagues, until 1998.

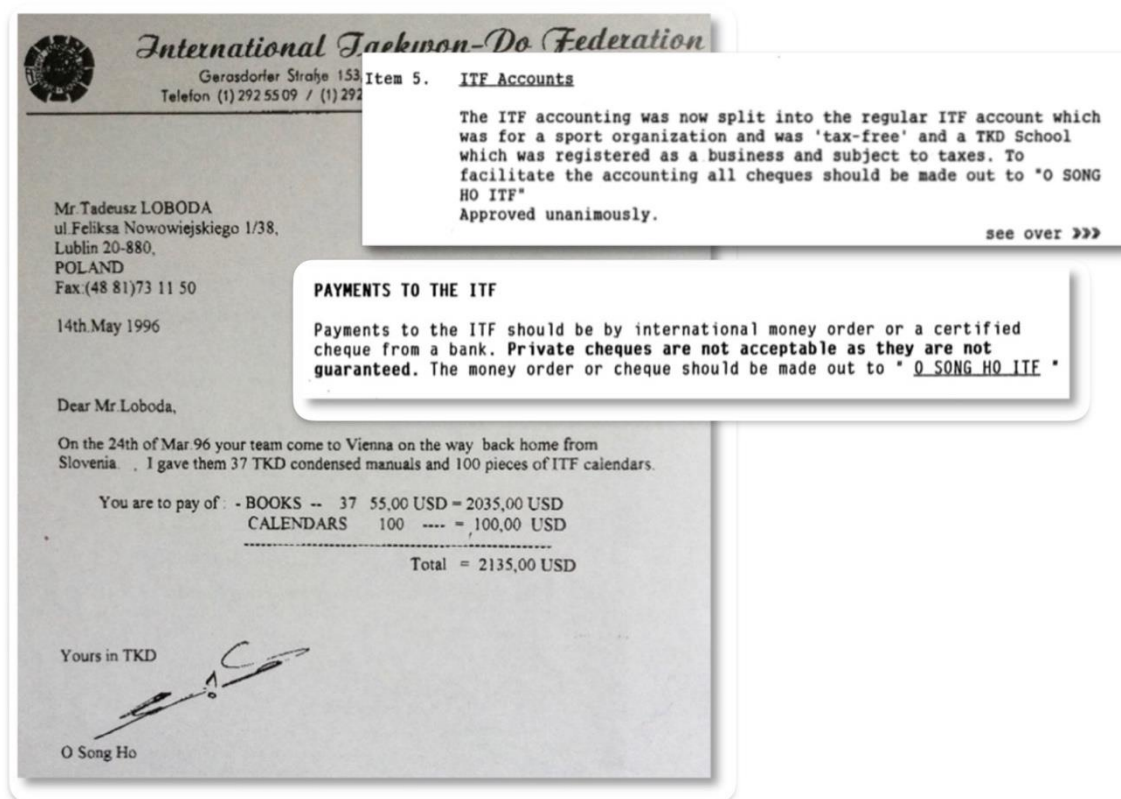


Image 10. On the left: letter from ITF Treasurer O Song Ho to the Polish ITF about an order of TKD manuals and calendars, dated 14<sup>th</sup> May 1996, AETF Archives, Lublin, Poland. Top right: "Item 5. ITF Accounts", advising ITF Members to send their cheques in the name of the ITF Treasurer, O Song Ho. Source: Pyongyang 1992 ITF Congress Minutes, Bottom right: "Payments to the ITF", repeating money orders to "O Song Ho ITF", ITF Newsletter 4/1992.

The second last of the ITF Treasurers before the 2002 splintering is Mr. Ri Yong Son who became an ITF Treasurer in June 1998 when it was announced in the ITF Newsletter.

Somewhat surprisingly however, unlike in the case of the previous ITF treasures, there is no mention in any of the ITF Congress minutes or similar, not even a letter from gen. Choi, the Secretary General, or the Under Secretaries, of when Mr. Ri Yong Son was appointed to his role.<sup>245</sup> Further information about Mr. Ri Yong Son's work as an ITF treasurer has not been found. The ITF Congress Minutes and ITF Newsletters through which the members were usually informed of changes in the ITF leadership, do not reveal how long Mr. Ri Yong Son remained in his role. Uncertainty exists partly because it is unclear when the next ITF Treasurer was nominated to his role, and partly, because an announcement of changing the treasurer is missing. Based on the International Instructors data, he gained his 5<sup>th</sup> dan the previous year in 1997, and then his NA was marked as Korea, meaning North Korea. A year after the splintering of the ITF, he was nominated as the Deputy Secretary General of the North Korea controlled ITF the latest in 2003.<sup>246</sup> Currently he is the President of the North Korea controlled ITF.<sup>247</sup>

The last of the ITF Treasurers before the splintering, is Mr. Son U Chol. He is the only treasurer whose NA was recorded in the available ITF sources prior to the 2002 splinter: the ITF identified Mr. Son U Chol as an Austrian.<sup>248</sup> Mr. Son U Chol gained his International Instructor status and 4<sup>th</sup> dan in 1998. Then his NA was listed as Korea, meaning North Korea (N.B., the NA is not the same as nationality and they change based on the residence of the member).<sup>249</sup> As an ITF Treasurer working in ITF Vienna office, it was natural for him to choose Austria as his NA as that is where he was based. Lastly, after the 2002 splintering, the North Korea controlled ITF appointed Mr. Son U Chol as their ITF treasurer in their Congress in June 2003.<sup>250</sup> Later, in 2007 he was also part of the trials between the post splinter ITFs of which I will soon discuss more.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> *ITF Newsletter*, 3/1998.

<sup>246</sup> NKITF, "Decision of the 14th ITF Congress, Thessaloniki Greece, 12 Jun 2003". NB: published by North Korea controlled ITF after the Post-2002 ITF splintering. The scheduled and the officially announced ITF Congress took place in Warsaw, 13th Jun 2003. We discuss more of this a little later in this study.

<sup>247</sup> Apparently, there are presently two North Korea controlled ITFs: one led by Mr. Chang Ung, and the other led by Mr. Ri Yong Son. This falls out of the time frame of this study; hence I will not explore it further.

<sup>248</sup> ITF official website, "ITF Executive Committee", Internet Archive capture May 2001-June 2002, seen 11 Sept 2021.

<sup>249</sup> *ITF Newsletter* 1998/5: Grading results.

<sup>250</sup> NKITF, "Decision of the 14th ITF Congress, Thessaloniki Greece, 12 Jun 2003". NB: published by North Korea controlled ITF after the Post-2002 ITF splintering. The scheduled and the officially announced ITF Congress took place in Warsaw, 13th Jun 2003. We discuss more of this a little later in this study.

<sup>251</sup> The trial in question took place in around in 2007 in Vienna, Austria: Republik Österreich Landesgericht für ZRS Wien, case number GZ: 12 Cg 11/06k-54. We briefly discuss this trial later in this study.

Mr. Son U Chol was not approved as the ITF Treasurer by the ITF Congresses, nor was he nominated to his role through an ITF Newsletter announcement, both commonly used to inform the ITF members of changes to the ITF leadership. No official letter of appointment from the ITF or gen. Choi has been found about his nomination. It is exceptional that Mr. Son U Chol's nomination as the ITF Treasurer is not available. Hence, it can be claimed Mr. Son U Chol was never officially registered to his role by the ITF. This leaves room for speculation: did the ITF leadership or gen. Choi deliberately refuse to acknowledge Mr. Son U Chol (as well as Mr. Ri Yong Son) by ITF Congress vote, and was it a way of resisting some influencing methods of North Korea? Or was it just about washing their hands from some of the Treasures? Further research is needed of this "non-nomination".

This preliminary exploration demonstrates that ITF Treasurers were not always nominated to their roles through elections in ITF Congresses, and that at times, it was enough to notify members of the change only in the ITF Newsletter. Or, as noticed in the case of the last treasurer, it was even possible to replace a treasurer without any notice, and to appoint new members from outside the elected ITF leadership without informing the members through the usual channels. Whether this was a way to resist or facilitate questionable behaviour with the ITF finances, remains to be discovered. Consequently, the future studies should explore the work of the ITF Treasurers. This is especially vital if one wants to explore possible financial irregularities between the ITF and state actors. To do such, the treasurers need to be identified with certainty. Based on the same name alone, it is not appropriate to link the above names for instance to the Working Party of Korea without absolute certainty of their identity. Thus, this study cannot confirm such connections. I hope future research will identify the ITF Treasurers so that they can be placed firmly in the organisational history of the ITF.

Lastly, this study has not found any evidence of any financial reports shared to the ITF members, only the IAPT/OPTA finances were more openly discussed with members as well as the donations of Mr. Chon Jin Shik. Later, gen. Choi shared details in his memoirs of his own financial relations with North Korea. Certainly, the ITF finance reports were not shared through the available Congress Minutes or ITF Newsletters. In the initial discussions with the ITF members, no further information was gained as I could not find anyone who was able to confirm when or where they might have been shared. Once again, further research is needed.

## 6.5 The size of the ITF and its international scope

Next this study will investigate the promotions of the ITF International Instructors of 4<sup>th</sup> degree black belt or higher, which were published in the ITF Newsletters during 1989-2002. International Instructors were those who graded to 4<sup>th</sup> dan or higher in the ITF International Seminar (also known as IIC, International Instructor Course) The exploration begins from the first available grades published in the ITF Newsletter 4/1989, ending to the ITF Newsletter 3/2002 published after Choi passed away on 15<sup>th</sup> June 2002. Although this Newsletter is published after the death of gen. Choi, the results are still included as they list those gradings concluded before gen. Choi passed away. This is a Newsletter that also NKITF has published on their website, meaning neither party has contested these grading results. I have excluded twelve gradings published in the const.ITF Newsletter 1/2003 and four gradings published in the const.ITF Newsletter 2/2003 even if they were concluded prior to the death of gen. Choi. This is because these are the first Newsletters that NKITF did not publish on their website, hence their content is considered contested although it contains members who still belong to the NKITF.

The data is used to estimate how large the general, certified instructor-base of the ITF was and to give an estimate of the potential size of the common ITF during its last, approx. 15 years. Thus, I analyse the official image of the ITF focusing on these instructors who were formally declared as new degree holders by the ITF, with the authorisation of General Choi. This data does not enclose those below the 4<sup>th</sup> degree, nor those members (especially pioneer masters and instructors) who never promoted themselves in the ITF International Seminars after 1989 and prior to the 2002 splinter. Thus, outside these lists, numerous black belts and practitioners exist. For instance, even the students of those who graded through this system are excluded: all their colour belt students and their black belts below 4<sup>th</sup> degree. During the period 1989-2002, one certified ITF Instructor easily had at least hundreds if not even thousands of students – and especially so the colour belt students and beginners. Some had even whole national associations under them, especially when they were the first of their countries to grade to 4<sup>th</sup> dan. The ITF Masters and Grandmasters also promoted their own students independently from the ITF gradings. Growing seniority on national level meant that gradually the countries were able to conduct their own gradings even up to 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> dan.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> For instance, my name does not appear in these lists as I only gained a 1st dan prior to the death of gen. Choi and the splintering of the ITF. The same applies to most of my teammates. Neither are any of our juniors listed here, all those colour belts who we taught in our club prior to 2002. During the 90s twice a year TamTKD



Naturally, not all of them continued until 4<sup>th</sup> dan International Instructors. To gain a 4<sup>th</sup> dan black belt in the ITF, following the regulations, takes about 10 years minimum. This is considered quick, as all the gradings taken before, need to be passed without delays, a task usually requiring strong athletic skills, even exceptional talent.

Lastly, those who later left the ITF are not omitted from this data as the idea is to give an overall idea of the size of the ITF at the time of each grading. Lastly, ITF Honorary Grandmasters were also omitted: unfortunately, Grandmasters Chuck Norris, Bob Chaney, and Robert Wall, would have made the data “too heavy to handle”. The total number of gradings detected by this study during the researched period is 2501 of which approximately 500 were promoted more than once through the ITF International Seminars. This means that there were at least 2000 instructors around the world which all are expected to have considerable number of students and clubs under them. Now, the present-day NKITF should have in their possession archives of these International Instructors.<sup>253</sup> However, as this study aims to look at what was factually shared and demonstrated officially to the ITF members during the era of c.1985-2002, the statistics that the NKITF might be able to provide – especially if significantly different from these numbers now presented – matters little. As the NKITF is in the control of North Korea, their statistics do not presently have the needed reliability to be used as primary sources in scientific research such as this. To use instead the published gradings, is thus a conscious method to bypass possible disinformation, as well as to focus attention on the image the ITF created about itself to its members. Combining the figures shared here to those claimed by the NKITF, however, would create an interesting base for future studies.

In total 73-78 countries sent their black belts to these gradings (73, if UK is counted as one, and if former Soviet countries are included to the emerging independent countries after 1991; without deductions the total number is 78). The annual grand totals of all countries reveal that

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beginner’s courses attracted easily 30-50 students, 70-80 was a usual number, and at times the courses even met c.100 beginners. Tens of them continued training as colour belts, but usually only a few continued until black belt, even less to 4<sup>th</sup> dan or higher. Hence, the mass of the club are the beginners and colour belts, not black belts.

<sup>253</sup> To the best of the author’s knowledge, the const. ITF lost these archives in the events of 2002. For instance, details of my blackbelt certificate were lost to the NKITF, or what seems to be the North Korean agents who took over the Vienna office (I of course still have my own certificate but the ITF archive details of it are lost, or in the possession of NKITF/North Korea). Presently the const.ITF lists in their database such black belt certificates as “historical black belts”. Hence, I am not the only one ITF blackbelt who’s details were lost to NKITF/North Korea. Which for the sake of privacy alone, is at least somewhat concerning. More research attention on the topic is welcomed.

1995 saw the most international gradings (315), and after 1996 they continued steadily at a higher rate until the splintering of the ITF. In 1989 the available data is possibly partial: the gradings are listed in the ITF Newsletters from August 1989 onwards. The same applies to 2002: the data is collected only of those gradings that took place prior to June 15<sup>th</sup> 2002 prior to the splintering. Below, the distribution of the gradings annually as listed in the ITF Newsletters.

YEAR	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
GRADINGS	75	145	89	64	158	104	315	197	229	206	289	292	274	64

*Image 11 Source: ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.*

The above numbers demonstrate that the ITF steadily produced International Instructors (Masters and Grandmasters included) and that prior to the splintering, the ITF was rather solidifying and growing in number than weakening and decreasing.

Next, in total 75 countries sent their members to grade in the ITF International Seminars. 76, if one counts Master MacCallum who was registered as ITF (Not Scotland or Austria as one might presume based on his nationality or his residence). One member was moved into the ITF Uzbekistan which he represented until 2002, although he represented the USSR until it collapsed in 1991. Otherwise, USSR would appear as having only one international instructor, which does not really help our understanding of the overall distribution of these gradings.

**ALL PROMOTIONS 4th to 9th dan PUBLISHED in the ITF NEWSLETTERS (1989-2002)**

COUNTRY	4th dan	5th dan	6th dan	7th dan	8th dan	9th dan	Totals/Country
USA	273	121	56	17	3	4	474
ARGENTINA	287	101	44	26	7		465
UK*	111	48	27	14	1	1	202
CANADA	102	37	16	6	3	1	165
NORTH KOREA	44	46	45	22	1		158
MALAYSIA	49	29	16	11	1		106
RUSSIA	70	19	6				95
GERMANY	49	17	11	8	1		86
AUSTRALIA	43	17	7	3			70
GREECE	40	21	4	1			66
IRELAND	30	11	8	4	1		54
POLAND	40	6	2				48
ITALY	27	11	5	1			44
NEW ZEALAND	22	8	4				34
NETHERLANDS	15	9	5				29
UKRAINE	19	4					23
COLOMBIA	9	5	4				18
INDIA	11	5	2				18
SWEDEN	6	4	4	3			17
MOLDOVA	15		1				16
JAMAICA	9	5	1				15
JAPAN	10	3	1	1			15
NORWAY	8	5	1	1			15
UZBEKISTAN	8	5	1	1			15
PUERTO RICO	12			1	1		14
TAJIKHISTAN	10	3	1				14
CHINA	11	2					13
BRAZIL	6	4	2				12
CROATIA	9	1	2				12
HUNGARY	9	1	1	1			12
MONGOLIA	11						11
FINLAND	7	3					10
KAZAKHSTAN	10						10
KYRGYZSTAN	8	2					10
NA unclear**	10						10
SPAIN	6	1	2	1			10
FRANCE	6	3					9
PERU	7	2					9
TURKMENISTAN	4	2					6
BULGARIA	5						5
SOUTH AFRICA	4	1					5
ALGERIA	3	1					4
BELGIUM	2	1	1				4
CAMBODIA	2	1	1				4
CZECH REPUBLIC	3			1			4
GREENLAND	2			1	1		4

Figure 5 All International Instructor gradings, listed per number of gradings. Source ITF Newsletters 4/1989-3/2002 (Image continues the next page).

Figure 6 All International Instructor gradings, listed per number of gradings. Source ITF Newsletters 4/1989-3/2002 (Image continued from previous page).

ROMANIA	3	1					4
SINGAPORE	3	1					4
SLOVENIA	4						4
AUSTRIA	3						3
LITHUANIA	2	1					3
PAPUA-NEW GUINEA	2	1					3
PARAGUAY	1			1	1		3
PORTUGAL	1	2					3
VIETNAM	1			2			3
ZIMBABWE	3						3
BELARUS	2						2
INDONESIA		2					2
ITF***				1	1		2
LATVIA	1		1				2
MADAGASCAR	1	1					2
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES		1	1				2
URUGUAY		2					2
VENEZUELA	1	1					2
BOLIVIA	1						1
CUBA	1						1
CYPRUS	1						1
DENMARK	1						1
GEORGIA		1					1
HONDURAS				1			1
ISRAEL	1						1
LIBYA		1					1
MACEDONIA	1						1
NEPAL	1						1
TANZANIA	1						1
YUGOSLAVIA	1						1
<b>Totals/Grade</b>	<b>1481</b>	<b>580</b>	<b>283</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2501</b>

\*From 1999 onwards divided into Wales, England and Scotland (Northern Ireland no data)

\*\*Most likely Uzbekistan during Internation Seminar in Uzbekistan 8-10 Feb 1999 (Newsletter

\*\*\* SG MacCallum (SCO/AUS), expectionally had his NA marked as ITF in the these gradings

Below the top 20 countries with most gradings listed annually. Four of these countries managed to send annually their members to grade in the ITF International Seminars: USA, UK, Canada and Germany. Based on these figures, during the researched period, the ITF grew and solidified on an international scale rather than diminished. This top 20 list also presents several European countries: the members of the AETF (UK, Russia, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Poland, Italy, Netherlands, and Ukraine). Although further research is needed, it appears that the AETF was also the very least solidifying its member base.

TOP 20 MOST GRADINGS ANNUALLY (1989-2002)

COUNTRY	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	Totals/Country
USA	26	23	23	17	23	48	33	36	49	38	45	48	55	10	474
ARGENTINA	3	61			57	5	70	31	61	23	54	52	40	8	465
UK*	3	11	6	5	12	4	30	15	9	22	13	31	30	11	202
CANADA	7	7	7	8	8	5	12	10	9	14	13	30	27	8	165
NORTH KOREA		8	23	4			27	8	35	30	3	5	14	1	158
MALAYSIA	17					1		9	5	11	43	18	1	1	106
RUSSIA				10	3	3	22	3	10	9	10	17	8		95
GERMANY	1	8	11	1	5	1	14	10	11	1	5	10	7	1	86
AUSTRALIA	5	2	1			5	5	5		10	11	15	9	2	70
GREECE	4	3	3	8	2	1	17	2	4	1	9	8	4		66
IRELAND		3		4	2	3	5	10	3	5	7	4	5	3	54
POLAND					5	2	1	10	10	1	9	2	8		48
ITALY		2	3	1	2	4		6	4	5	4	9	2	2	44
NEW ZEALAND			3		6		2	2	4	6	1	1	8	1	34
NETHERLANDS	2				6			7	4	4	1	1	4		29
UKRAINE							11				3		2	7	23
<b>Totals/Grade</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>249</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>218</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>251</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>2119</b>

\*From 1999 onwards divided into Wales, England and Scotland (Northern Ireland no data)

Figure 7. Source: ITF Newsletter 1989-2002.

Next, we investigate the six largest countries where the ITF was represented. Once again, we are looking at the total number of gradings, not calculating the individual highest rank. For instance, UK had 14 masters listed as 7<sup>th</sup> dan. Of these one later gained 8<sup>th</sup> dan but his earlier grading does not become deducted. Thus, the number of UK's 7<sup>th</sup> dan masters is here 14.

Based on the number of 4<sup>th</sup> dan or higher black belt gradings, the ITF had its largest representation in the United States, with 474 gradings in total (below). They also had the most Grandmasters, in total four: Charles Sereff, Hwang Kwang Sung, Van Binh Nguyen and Duk Huy Dang. During the period of 1989 and 2002, the US managed to grade their black belts every year in the ITF's International Seminars.

#### USA

Grading years	4th dan	5th dan	6th dan	7th dan	8th dan	9th dan	Grading total/Year
1989	21	3			2		26
1990	11	9	2	1			23
1991	17	5			1		23
1992	12	3	2				17
1993	13	10					23
1994	30	13	5				48
1995	15	12	5	1			33
1996	21	9	5	1			36
1997	30	13	4			2	49
1998	20	10	6	2			38
1999	23	11	9	2			45
2000	26	9	10	3			48
2001	31	12	7	5			55
2002	3	2	1	2		2	10
<b>Totals</b>	<b>273</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>474</b>

Figure 8 Source: ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.

The second largest representation is found from Argentina (see below), with 465 gradings during the researched period. Although they also had many Master Instructors, unlike the US, they gained no Grandmaster during this period. There were no gradings registered for Argentina during the years 1991 and 1992. Their highest black belts published in the ITF Newsletter were Masters Pablo Trajtenberg, Ricardo Desimone, Armando Grispino, Guillermo Ramisch, Hector Marano, Adolfo Villanueva, and Raul Sosa.

#### ARGENTINA

Grading Years	4th dan	5th dan	6th dan	7th dan	8th dan	Grading total/Year
1989	2	1				3
1990	44	15	2			61
1993	37	10		10		57
1994	4		1			5
1995	40	23	7			70
1996	28	1	1	1		31
1997	43	11	7			61
1998	12	3	4	4		23
1999	35	12	5	2		54
2000	20	20	11	1		52
2001	16	3	6	8	7	40
2002	6	2				8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>287</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>465</b>

Figure 9 Source: ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.

The third largest representation of the ITF, and the largest in Europe, was UK with 202 gradings and one Grandmaster, Rhee Ki Ha. The second highest grading documented was Arthur de Silva, 8<sup>th</sup> dan. UK also managed to gain new grades every year in ITF International Seminars. In UK, from 1999 onwards the gradings were divided by each country: Wales, England and Scotland (there were no gradings listed under Northern Ireland). However, I have kept them listed as UK for statistical purposes (from 1999 onwards 50 gradings were listed as England, 23 as Scotland and 4 for Wales. Prior to the 1999 change, 124 black belts were listed under UK). Master MacCallum is not listed into these numbers as he was listed as 'ITF' in 1994 and 2001 when he gained his Master Instructor titles.

## UK

Grading Years	4th dan	5th dan	6th dan	7th dan	8th dan	9th dan	Grading total/Year
1989	3						3
1990	5	5	1				11
1991	3	3					6
1992	4	1					5
1993	8	1	3				12
1994	3	1					4
1995	14	10	5	1			30
1996	11	2	2				15
1997	3	4	1			1	9
1998	13	3	2	4			22
1999	7	5	1				13
2000	15	8	7	1			31
2001	15	4	4	7			30
2002	7	1	1	1	1		11
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>111</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>202</b>

Figure 10 Source: ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.

The fourth largest ITF representation was in Canada, where there was also one Grandmaster, Park Jong Soo. The next highest ranking recorded black belts were Masters Choi Jung Hwa, Andre Blake and Tran Trieu Quan, each gained 8<sup>th</sup> dan. Naturally gen. Choi Hong Hi was based in Canada too, meaning there was more precisely two Grandmasters present in Canada. Canada was also able to send their black belts to ITF International Seminar on yearly basis.

## CANADA

Grading years	4th dan	5th dan	6th dan	7th dan	8th dan	9th dan	Grading total/Year
1989	5			2			7
1990	4	2		1			7
1991	5		1	1			7
1992	5	2	1				8
1993	6	2					8
1994	4	1					5
1995	6	5	1				12
1996	7	2			1		10
1997	4	3	2				9
1998	9	1	2	1	1		14
1999	9	2	2				13
2000	22	3	4		1		30
2001	14	11	1			1	27
2002	2	3	2	1			8
<b>Totals</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>165</b>

Figure 11 Source: ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.

Then fifth, North Korea, with 158 gradings in total. Their highest-ranking black belt recorded was Master Ri Yong Sok (Li Yong Sok), 8<sup>th</sup> dan. During the years 1993 and 1994 there is no record of North Korea gaining black belts in the ITF International Seminars.

**NORTH KOREA**

Grading Years	4th dan	5th dan	6th dan	7th dan	8th dan	Grading total/Year
1990	1	4	3			8
1991	12	8	3			23
1992		2		2		4
1995		1	24	2		27
1996	1			7		8
1997	5	16	7	7		35
1998	13	13	4			30
1999	2		1			3
2000	2	1	2			5
2001	8	1		4	1	14
2002			1			1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>158</b>

Figure 12 Source: ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.

Last of the large federations to be listed here, is Malaysia, the sixth country with more than 100 gradings in total during the researched period. The ITF Newsletters listed 106 successful gradings in the International Courses. Their highest-ranking black belt in these gradings was Sabree Salleh, but he was expelled from the ITF in 1998.<sup>254</sup> To mention few of the Malaysian Masters who based on the sources were well known to the ITF members: Chew Teck Seong, Tan Eng Kiat, Tan Chek Si and Yeow Cheng Watt. Malaysia did not gain any new black belt gradings through the ITF International Seminars during the years 1990-1993. As Malaysia is considered the first country abroad where Taekwon-Do was introduced, it is expected that they organised gradings outside the International Seminars, as they certainly had senior members present to organise them. Due to the long Taekwon-Do tradition in Malaysia these figures alone do not capture all its size. More research of ITF Malaysia is therefore welcomed.

**MALAYSIA**

Grading Years	4th dan	5th dan	6th dan	7th dan	8th dan	Grading total/Year
1989	9	5	1	2		17
1994			1			1
1996	2	4	1	1	1	9
1997	1	1	3			5
1998	2	7	1	1		11
1999	22	10	6	5		43
2000	13	2	1	2		18
2001			1			1
2002			1			1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>106</b>

Figure 13 Source: ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.

<sup>254</sup> ITF Newsletter 4/1998.



Next, the Master Instructors graded in ITF International Seminars based only on the last, highest-ranking grade achieved. Hence, only the highest grade counts: if the same person has a marking of an earlier, lower grade, it is not counted. Thus, the figure shows more precisely the actual number of ITF Master Instructors and Grandmasters in each country by June 2002. During the researched period, ITF graded in total the 137 Masters and Grandmasters. Together they represented 23 different countries with minimum one ITF Master present in each. Argentina had the most Masters, almost a third of the 8<sup>th</sup> dan Masters listed in total. US had the most Grandmasters, four in total, and many Masters. North Korea also had a high number of Masters, 22 in total. Malaysia and UK had above ten in both (once again, Wales, England and Scotland are treated as one for more comparable statistic; Master MacCallum is added although originally listed as ITF). Somewhat surprisingly, Germany is on the sixth place on this “ITF hierarchy rank”. It had more masters (9) present than Canada (7). But all in all, the countries with more masters correlate with the figures discussed above: Argentina, North Korea, US, UK, Malaysia and Canada remain high also on this list. Europe, under the AETF, had in total eleven countries with 39 Masters and Grandmasters. Hence, when united and collaborating, the AETF was a large bloc of highest-ranking blackbelts – even in comparison with the rest of the world. Alone most were not strong enough to compete against the giants of ITF.

**MASTERS PER COUNTRY (PUBLISHED PROMOTIONS 1989-2002)**

COUNTRY	7th dan	8th dan	9th dan	Totals/Country
ARGENTINA	19	7		26
NORTH KOREA	21	1		22
USA	17		4	21
UK	13	2	1	16
MALAYSIA	10	1		11
GERMANY	8	1		9
CANADA	3	3	1	7
IRELAND	3	1		4
AUSTRALIA	3			3
SWEDEN	3			3
PARAGUAY	1	1		2
VIETNAM	2			2
CZECH REP.	1			1
GREECE	1			1
GREENLAND		1		1
HONDURAS	1			1
HUNGARY	1			1
ITALY	1			1
JAPAN	1			1
NORWAY	1			1
PUERTO RICO		1		1
SPAIN	1			1
UZBEKISTAN	1			1
<b>Totals/Grade</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>137</b>

Figure 14 In this figure, only highest achieved grade counts. Source: Promotions published in ITF Newsletters 1989-2002.

Later, on 14th July 2002, only a month after the death of gen. Choi, ITF listed on its own official website its “Current ITF Masters”. On this list (see below), there were 121 Masters and Grandmasters representing 21 different countries. Although this is data is from after the death of gen. Choi it can be used here as it still listed the Masters who would soon be divided between the const.ITF and the NKITF. On this, the ITF Masters became reduced by 16 when compared to the 137 Masters and Grandmasters on the above list (figure 13). This is a high number in comparison to the total number of masters originally, and a big loss of skill and experience. Comparing these two lists (figure 13 and 14), those who left the ITF, were omitted from this updated online list of Master Instructors, including Master Choi Jung Hwa and two other masters who joined his organisation. Furthermore, a year earlier in July 2001, prior to the CJH splinter, the ITF listed 102 Masters and Grandmasters, who represented also then 21 countries.<sup>255</sup> Even when taking into consideration the new promotions during this time, it still signals that CJH ITF attracted mainly lower level blackbelts to join them and its effect on the Master level was modest.

MASTERS AND GRANDMASTERS LISTED ON ITF WEBPAGE			
Row Labels	MASTER*	GM**	Grand Total
ARGENTINA	24		24
NORTH KOREA	23		23
UK	17	1	18
USA	14	2	16
MALAYSIA	10		10
GERMANY	5		5
IRELAND	5		5
AUSTRALIA	4		4
CANADA	2	1	3
SWEDEN	2		2
AUSTRIA	1		1
CROATIA	1		1
CZECH REP.	1		1
GREECE	1		1
HONDURAS	1		1
HUNGARY	1		1
ITALY	1		1
JAPAN	1		1
PARAGUAY	1		1
POLAND	1		1
PUERTO RICO	1		1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>117</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>121</b>
* Masters, 7th to 8th dan			
** Grandmasters, 9th dan			

Figure 15 ITF listed its “Current ITF Masters” also on its own official website, although somewhat differently. On 14th July 2002, only a month after the death of gen. Choi, there were 121 Masters and Grandmasters on this list representing 21 different countries

<sup>255</sup> Also here, Wales, England, and Scotland (Northern Ireland not listed), are counted together as UK; No West Germany, only Germany listed; Master MacCallum is here marked for Austria as listed originally on the ITF webpage

Next, we will briefly address the ITF National Associations. A year prior to the splintering, between 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2001 and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2001, the ITF listed on its website having presence in 116 countries and regions around the world (as divided by continents: Europe 42, Africa 12, Asia 27, Oceania 5, North America 2, Central America 11, South America 17).<sup>256</sup> This can be compared to ITF Instructor Scott Downey's (CAN) link collection from 1<sup>st</sup> of June 2002. This collection lists over 500 ITF Taekwon-do connected websites per country. Of these, 103 countries have contact details that show at least a national association or a contact person, and of these 52 have more than just one contact or club listed. Thus, these demonstrate that approximately max. 100 NAs can be realistically considered active by the time of the splintering, and c.50 as a minimum. This is further confirmed by Master Choi Jung Hwa connected ITF Taekwon-Do webpage of the late 1990s which listed similar number of countries: 105 national contacts around the world by 1999.<sup>257</sup> Moreover, this study has further detected at least 50 countries accepted as new ITF members during the period of 1985-2001.<sup>258</sup> Of these NAs, 20 did not produce international instructors by the splintering of the ITF. Further research is needed on a national level to see which countries were officially recognised as NAs, and whether they were entitled to vote in the ITF Congresses or not.

Last to discuss are the different awards of the ITF that this study has detected. In total there were at least 37 countries, or their members rewarded during the examined period. For instance, the Outstanding Instructor price was awarded to 75 instructors originating from 32 countries. Canada received the most of these, seven in total, closely followed by Argentina and US with 6. Another important award was the Loyalty Statue, given at least to 26 different Masters and Grandmasters, representing at least 14 different countries. The third, Distinguished Service Award was given at least to 11 countries, the most awarded was Malaysia (13 in total), North Korea (5), Canada (4) and Russia (4). However, this was used to also to award those who were not per se Taekwon-Do practitioners but who otherwise were meaningful to the ITF (for instance, Mr. Chun Choong Lim, as discussed earlier). All in all, when investigating the ITF awards system, also these were distributed between several

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<sup>256</sup> Official ITF webpage, [itf-generalchoi.com](http://itf-generalchoi.com), derived through Internet Archive, captures from 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2001 and 9<sup>th</sup> June 2002, seen 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023 (section countries).

<sup>257</sup> "National Contacts": "Locations A-M" and "Locations N-Z", found on [www.itf-taekwondo.com](http://www.itf-taekwondo.com), (Predecessor of [www.itf-information.com](http://www.itf-information.com), the official website of Choi Jung Hwa. Current website of CJH ITF [www.itf-administration.com](http://www.itf-administration.com)), captured by Internet Archive on 25 Jan 1999, seen 11 Aug 2021.

<sup>258</sup> New member countries as listed in ITF Congress minutes 1988-2001. Next to these, those published in the *ITF Newsletter* 2/1985 have been included as there was no Congress minutes available dating this far back (usually the new member countries were also listed in *Newsletters* but I have not controlled them further than the end of 1988, from where on Congress minutes are available).

countries although those NAs with largest ITF member base and most senior members, were the most awarded. Once again, the awards correlate with the figures demonstrated in this chapter.<sup>259</sup>

## 6.6 Summary on ITF leadership and its Organisational Structure

Why these figures matter and why it was necessary to estimate the number of the ITF National Associations this way, is because their exact numbers were unclear even to the ITF itself, as the Vienna Civil Court papers reveal from 2007. The court papers mention, however, an estimation of maximum c.120 NAs in total, of which c.75-77 were considered “active” NAs, meaning for instance those that could participate in the ITF Congresses.<sup>260</sup> The numbers detected by this research demonstrates similar numbers. For instance, the 70-75 countries that sent their members to grade in the ITF International Seminars, can with certainty be considered as active NAs. The available old websites studied give us an average of maximum c.120 countries where ITF had some contact, even if weakly so. Hence it can be concluded that next to the active c.70-75 NAs that produced International Instructors, there were at least 20-30 more countries where the ITF had presence and NAs were likely forming. Resulting that there were at least, 70 active NAs in the ITF by the time it splintered, while the maximum 120 appears unrealistic and thus is not confirmed by this study. However, the available sources do not reveal which NAs exactly were eligible to vote.

To conclude, during the last over ten years, 1991-2002, the ITF regained strength. Its membership base begun to grow, and its organisation solidify, as shown above. Regardless of the difficulties the ITF had faced since the exile from South Korea as discussed previously, the ITF persevered and by mid 1990s it was again actively producing new blackbelts and International Instructors, it continued organising International Seminars, World Championships, and ITF Congresses. And even when Choi Jung Hwa splintered into his own group in early 2002, its effect on the ITF member-base was limited rather than thorough, albeit it weakened its structures. And although the ITF’s presence in some of the areas might have been light, they were still countries and regions where the federation had established a contact, and thus, they were promising future regions for the ITF to grow.

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<sup>259</sup> Data collected from *ITF Newsletter* 1985-2002 and ITF Congress Minutes 1990-2002.

<sup>260</sup> Decision of Civil Court of Vienna, Austria, GZ: 12 Cg 11/06k-54, dated 13 Aug 2007.

I see these small and young NAs, and those countries which only had some small contact details listed by the ITF, as the federation's international potential around the world. Hence, if the federation was or was to be co-opted, these NAs and potential NAs provided attractive opportunities for state-level influencing as potentially they were easier to manipulate than the larger ones. The countries where the ITF's presence was still clearly nominal, were more vulnerable for outside influencing as less members easily result into a weaker or simpler organisational structures. Strong organisational structures protect members from outside influencing, especially if those structures are well taken care of. Thus, the small and undeveloped NAs provide the state actors an "apolitical" and almost innocent sounding sportive access into the countries they represent. It should be noted that this applies to any sport or institutions and it is not ITF specific.

If in this situation, during all the cacophony of disinformation that took over the ITF in 2002, North Korea invested into co-opting them for example, to gain votes for the Chang Ung group's "surprise" ITF congress during the September 2002 Special Congress in Pyongyang, they would have had little to protect themselves against it. And in fact, 10 of the 43 countries that took part in this congress that would initiate the separation of the ITF and establish the NKITF group, had no certified ITF Instructors, yet alone Masters or Grandmasters, present. In addition, 5 countries had only 1 certified Instructor. Here most certainly more research is needed.

This analysis reveals that the ITF was an international federation and that its membership numbers had again began to grow around the world especially during its last c.7 years. An exploration of the data further reveals that masters, grandmasters, and senior instructors were based in numerous countries. Meaning, that the ITF leadership positions that usually followed the rise in the blackbelt hierarchy, were not in the hands of any one country. Thus, although North Korea had a strong presence in the ITF, it did not dominate the blackbelt hierarchy as it was still a recent member (this does not exude the possibility for North Korea's influence to reside elsewhere). Even if their blackbelt numbers grew quickly during the 1990s, they did not catch up with the senior NAs during the studied period until the splintering of the ITF.

## **6.7 The 2002 ITF Splinter – from 15<sup>th</sup> June to 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002**

The moment gen. Choi became incapacitated, the ITF began to undergo a change which is extremely hard to describe due to its ambiguity. Perhaps this change is the easiest to describe

as exponential growth of disinformation, inaccuracy, weakly grounded accusations and constant mix of fact and fiction which efficiently target the vulnerabilities of the federation.

Fractures begun to appear in the ITF leadership. There is more and more miscommunication and tension between the ITF leaders and senior members. There is rush and pressure to make quick decisions, no time to think as if an immediate doom of the ITF would take over if Mr. Chang Ung is not nominated as the next president immediately. As if the death of its Founder, Leader and President, gen. Choi Hong Hi, would create a state of emergency in an organisation that already had constitution and organisational structure present to nominate the next president legally. If gen. Choi was perfectly capable of stating his will and future of the federation in clear mind only few days before his death, one would presume him to have been able to establish and develop his own organisation, create, and approve its constitution, with same correctness during the decades when he was still full of life. The attempts of GM Hwang Kwang Sung and Master Leong Wai Meng to compromise with those behind acting Pres. MacLellan, and to express that Mr. Chang Ung could be appointed in the scheduled Warsaw 2003, or even later in 2005, and that Mr. Chang Ung was not really elected legally in the Pyongyang Special Congress, were quickly brushed off. The reason to that seems to be no other than North Korea and Mr. Chang Ung.<sup>261</sup> Both GM Hwang Kwang Sung and Master Leong Wai Meng eventually found their positions in NKITF. Whether they were given a chance to choose differently or whether they were pressured, this study is unable to answer.

When NKTKD organised the above mentioned 100<sup>th</sup> day Funeral Memorial in Pyongyang to commemorate General Choi, held 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002, a meeting called ITF Special Congress, was hastily organised by the ITF Consultative Committee.<sup>262</sup> It was led by Master Leong Wai Meng and those who had begun forming behind Mr. Chang Ung. The Special Congress was arranged on the spot, taking place during the Memorial Day. It was never announced to the ITF members four weeks prior through the usual routes such as the ITF Newsletters as the norm had been thus far. Also, the 1988 ITF Constitution states that "A written invitation has to be sent out to the members of the Board of Directors to regular, as

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<sup>261</sup> Letter from GM Hwang Kwang Sung, "Memo Regarding Protocol, 7/6/02", dated 6th July 2002; Letter to members from Hwang Kwang Sung, "GM Hwang Letter to Members, 7/7/02", dated 7th July 2002, AETF Archives, Lublin; Letter to MacLellan, Chang Ung and ITF members "A Call For A Special Congress", dated 10 Oct 2002, AETF Archives, Lublin.

<sup>262</sup> Its members, masters Paul Weiler and Benny Rivera, were absent of these later meetings. Both masters lined with the (const.)ITF, and it seems they were outed from the Consultative Committee by those members aligning with Mr. Chang Ung.

well as to special, meetings 4 weeks in advance”<sup>263</sup>. Also, based on the 1988 ITF Constitution: “The place of the meeting will be fixed by the President to meet the convenience of the members as far as possible.” Acting ITF President Mr. MacLellan was not present in Pyongyang, and hence he could not have fixed any Special Congress to take place there.<sup>264</sup>

Despite this obvious err, an event called “Special Congress“ was arranged in Pyongyang immediately after the memorial service to quickly elect a new president Mr. Chang Ung, the only candidate. During this event, Mr. Chang Ung was made the new ITF President by some ITF members present, although not all who were present were aware that applauding on Mr. Chang Ung’s entry to the congress hall, was counted as a vote by which he was then “unanimously elected” as the new president.<sup>265</sup>



*Image 12. ITF members pictured together with Mr. Chang Ung (the tallest individual in the middle) in the “on the spot” organised Special Congress in Pyongyang on 22nd Sept 2002, Source: Old NKITF official website, News, “Formal Election of the President of the International Taekwon-Do Federation September 22, 2002”, [www.internationaltaekwondo-federation.com](http://www.internationaltaekwondo-federation.com), Internet Archive Capture on 16th May 2003, seen 31 Jan 2022.*

On the same day after his nomination, Mr. Chang Ung gave an Inauguration Speech to those present. His presidential speech reveals a great change to the earlier ITF policies by creating a direct political link between the ITF and North Korean state. In his speech Mr. Chang Ung promised among other things to “re-structure” the ITF Administration, introduce changes to the ITF finance, to amend the ITF Constitution, the constitutions of the NAs, and introduce

<sup>263</sup> ITF Constitution 1988, Paragraph 9.4., p. 5.

<sup>264</sup> “Letter from President Mr Russell MacLellan”, published on ITF official website [otf-generalcoi.com](http://otf-generalcoi.com), dated 25th Aug 2002, captured by the Internet Archive on 6 Sep 2002, seen 19 Dec 2020.

<sup>265</sup> “Minutes of the Special Congress of the International Taekwon-Do Federation, dated 22nd September” 2002, held in Pyongyang, North Korea, pp.1-2, attached with Mr. Chang Ung’s Inauguration Speech with 9 items, pp.1-11, AETF Archives Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące, 2002, ITF.

stricter measures towards the use of ITF website and emails to “eradicate such a phenomenon decisively” as opinion of an individual – ITF Secretariat included. Hence, immediately there was to be changes to very structures of the ITF, and limitations to communication. Mr. Chang Ung further declared that “we will pursue a continuing political, financial and material assistance and support towards ITF from Government and people of DPR Korea.” Confirming hence that he was to introduce a direct political link between North Korean state and the ITF in the future. He also claimed that North Korea was the birthplace of Taekwon-Do.<sup>266</sup> Prior to this, such claims were unheard in the ITF when gen. Choi was still alive. Mr. Chang Ung further assured that “DPR Korea Government and people are protecting and taking care of all this. Requesting ever cooperation and support from them in every way and relying upon them whenever necessary (...). It is also urgently needed for the development and consolidation [of] ITF itself.”<sup>267</sup> These declarations too were new to the ITF members and demonstrate a detectable change to the earlier apolitical and nongovernmental consensus of the federation.

The news about a new ITF President nominated during the Pyongyang Memorial Service quickly reached the ITF acting President Russell MacLellan. Upon receiving the news about Mr. Chang Ung’s sudden nomination, it was quickly disputed, on 27<sup>th</sup> September 2002, by those members forming behind the ITF’s acting President MacLellan.<sup>268</sup> Their line was, as publicly stated already on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2002, that the next ITF President should be elected in the next planned ITF Congress to be held during the Warsaw 2003 ITF World Championships in Poland. Warsaw World Championships had been announced in Rimini 2001 Congress, hence voting for the new president there was in line with the ITF Constitution. The acting ITF President MacLellan affirmed that he or the ITF had no objection of Mr. Chang Ung becoming the next president, but it needed to happen legally. Their line was that even if gen. Choi had nominated Chang Ung as the next president, he still should be elected following the ITF Constitution so that the legal procedures of this power change could be secured as before.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> “Minutes of the Special Congress of the International Taekwon-Do Federation, dated 22nd September” 2002, held in Pyongyang, North Korea, pp.1-2, attached with Mr. Chang Ung’s Inauguration Speech with 9 items, pp.1-11, AETF Archives Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące, 2002, ITF.

<sup>267</sup> “Minutes of the Special Congress of the International Taekwon-Do Federation, dated 22nd September” 2002, held in Pyongyang, North Korea, pp.1-2, attached with Mr. Chang Ung’s Inauguration Speech with 9 items, pp.1-11, AETF Archives Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące, 2002, ITF.

<sup>268</sup> MacCallum, “Situation Following Illegal Meeting”, published on ITF official website [itf-generalcoi.com](http://itf-generalcoi.com), dated 27th September 2002, seen 19 Dec 2020.

<sup>269</sup> MacLellan, “Letter from President Mr Russell MacLellan”, published on ITF official website [itf-generalcoi.com](http://itf-generalcoi.com), dated 25 Aug 2002, captured by the Internet Archive on 6 Sep 2002, seen 19 Dec 2020.



However, the ITF that was forming behind Mr. Chang Ung, continued to process much quicker, hastened, presidential change. This is absurd considering that the 1988 ITF Constitution confirms the Senior Vice President to retain the ITF Presidency until the end of the 6-year term, meaning until the next congress when re-election would take place. Gen. Choi was originally elected for a new term in Rimini in 2001. Acting ITF President MacLellan could have remained in his role even until 2007 (or 2005 if ITF was to follow the decision of the Rimini 2001 Congress). Certainly, there was no rush, nor any "state of emergency" over the presidential change as was claimed by those supporting Mr. Chang Ung.<sup>270</sup> Gen. Choi had not requested in his will for Mr. Chang Ung to become president unconstitutionally and immediately, but most of all, there was already clear procedure for nominating the new president in the constitution. But it was not enough. Those forming around Mr. Chang Ung's leadership pressed on to confirm his swift nomination. Thus, the ITF under Mr. Chang Ung, "specially reconfirmed" his presidency and continued to claim he was "duly elected" in Pyongyang Special Congress. This special reconfirmation of his presidency was made on the 16<sup>th</sup> November 2002 in their ITF Board of Directors' Meeting in Vienna, Austria. In the same meeting they also decided suddenly to move the Warsaw 2003 ITF World Championships to Pyongyang, which was yet another decision based on unconstitutional distortion.<sup>271</sup>

The ITF members that remained behind the ITF President MacLellan, followed the already existing plan, and confirmed the vote for the president to take place in the ITF Congress in Warsaw, Poland, in 2003, as planned. The ITF Congress to take place in Warsaw 2003 was also confirmed in the ITF Special Congress in Vienna, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2002. On 13<sup>th</sup> June the Warsaw 2003 ITF Congress elected Master Tran Trieu Quan (CAN) as the new ITF President.<sup>272</sup> Those ITF members forming behind Mr. Chang Ung did not put forward his candidature in this congress. Instead, they held their own congress a day before, on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2003 in Thessaloniki, Greece. In this congress they unanimously recognised the Special

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<sup>270</sup> Decision of the ITF Board of Directors' Meeting, dated 16 Nov 2002 (ITF under Chang Ung), AETF Archives Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące 2002 ITF.

<sup>271</sup> Decision of the ITF Board of Directors' Meeting, dated 16 Nov 2002 (ITF under Chang Ung), AETF Archives Lublin, Pisma Wychodzące, Pisma Przychodzące 2002 ITF.

<sup>272</sup> Minutes of Warsaw 2003 ITF Congress, Poland, 13 Jun 2003.

Congress held in Pyongyang on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002, approved its minutes and all its decisions, and again reconfirmed their election of Mr. Chang Ung as their president.<sup>273</sup>

In 2007, in the Civil Court of Vienna, Austria, ruled that the ITF Congress in Warsaw on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2003 was valid, and that the election of Master Tran Trieu Quan was also valid. Hence the actual President of the ITF was Master Tran Trieu Quan. Resulting, that the Pyongyang Special Congress on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2002, was not valid, and its decision to nominate Mr, Chang Ung was not valid either.<sup>274</sup> Therefore, the later renominations and reconfirmations made for Mr. Chang Ung's election as president bear no legal substance (e.g., Directors' meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> November and the Thessaloniki Congresses 12<sup>th</sup> June 2003).

Eventually, further court cases between these two ITFs were eventually appealed, also the above court ruling of 2007. To address all these trials is out of the scope of this study. However, in 2014 the two ITFs made an agreement outside the courts, "(...)to stop immediately and forever all court a proceedings, both present and in the future (...)". They also agreed "not to institute any kinds of lawsuits against the other party for whatever reasons...". The document tells a tale of the existence of other courtroom cases between the ITFs which this study has not been able to address. However, based on the below documents, from 2014 onwards, at least these two ITFs remained, or still remain, in legal standstill. This study has not found evidence to contradict the legal status of the const.ITF and their claim to it, especially not so during the researched period which reached as far as the 2003 ITF and NKITF Congresses, and stretched even as far as the 2007 Vienna court hearing on the legal status of the ITFs. It is for the future research to discuss their present legal statuses in more detail and depth, as well as to see what the legal status of the CJH ITF is currently. Certainly, the world of ITF would welcome a study that makes the complicated spirals of these ITF legal battles more comprehensible.

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<sup>273</sup> "Decision of the 14th ITF Congress", Thessaloniki, Greece, 12th June 2003, published in *NKITF Newsletter*, undated (NKITF official website dates it in July 2003, seen 17 Mar 2023). At some point NKITF must have changed their World Champs from Pyongyang to Thessaloniki, but it is unclear when this decision took place.

<sup>274</sup> Decision of Civil Court of Vienna, Austria, GZ: 12 Cg 11/06k-54, dated 13 Aug 2007.

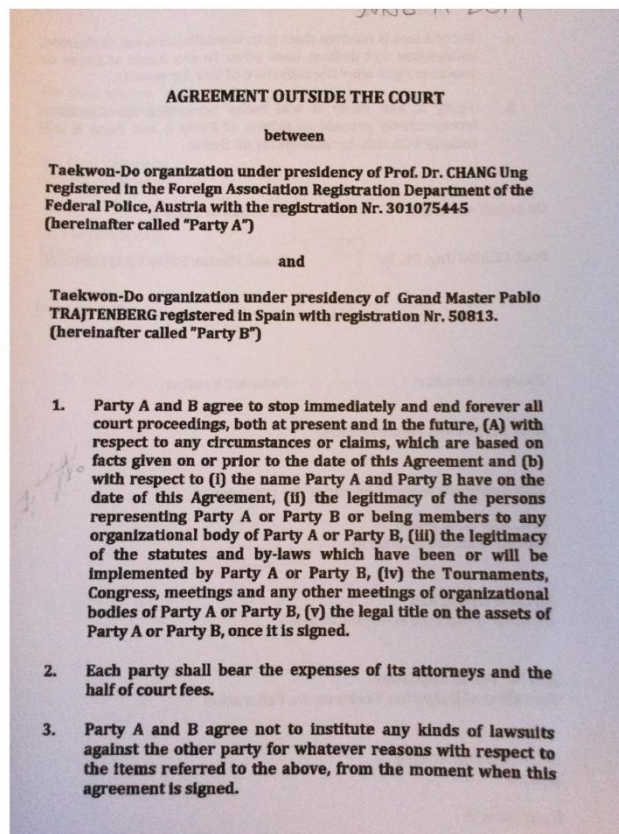
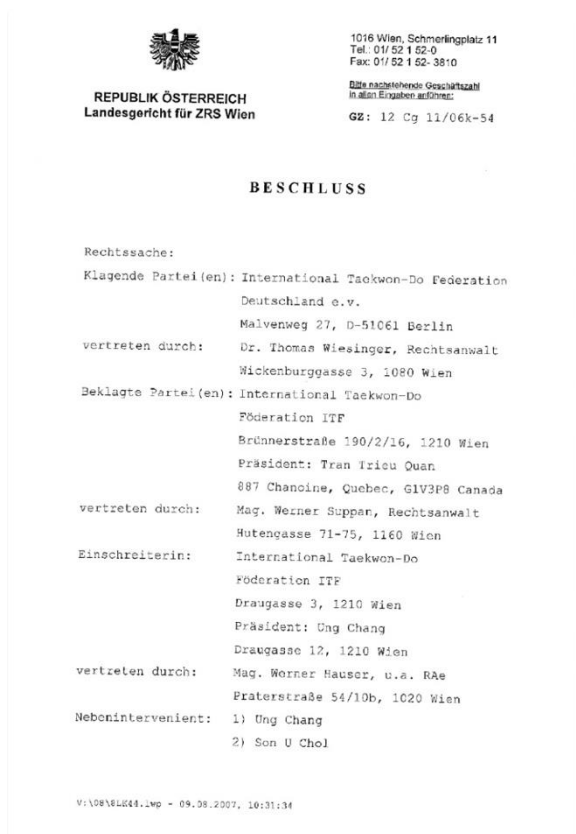


Figure 16 On the left: Copy first page of the Decision of Civil Court of Vienna, Austria, GZ: 12 Cg 11/06k-54, dated 13th Aug 2007. Below: Copy of the first page of an Agreement Outside the Court between the two ITFs (Party A, ITF under Mr. Chang Ung; Party B, ITF legality group, represented here by its then ITF President, Master Pablo Trajtenberg), dated 11<sup>th</sup> June 2014, in Vienna, Austria.

## 7 The Aftermath and Conclusions

The ITF's organisational history is complex. Its position in Korean history is complex, too. To address it properly, far grander research is needed than an MA-thesis. However, even with this initial exploration and partial reconstruction of the ITF's organisational history (covering only the years 1985-2002 in detail), it is possible to see that the ITF was and still is a microcosmos of Korean politics.

The first half of the thesis discussed gen. Choi's political views and his connections with the Zainichi and Overseas Korean Democratic Movements. These connections and contacts largely explain why he and the ITF became so alienated by South Korea, and the WTF connected to it. This research, however, has found no reason to denounce or somehow condemn gen. Choi's connections with the different Zainichi or Overseas Korean opposition groups discussed. They were part of life and politics of Koreans who were displaced around the world, trying to find solutions to the political crisis in both Koreas and to find consensus between them. All that can be stated is that plurality of opinion, interests and values, are as wide among Koreans as they are in different Taekwondos.

We also discussed Master Choi Jung Hwa, the son of gen. Choi. Had Master Choi Jung Hwa remained in the ITF, together with those who today still form the (constitutional) ITF and the many independent ITF groups, they could have created a much stronger counter force against the co-opt attempts of North Korea. By creating his own ITF, Choi Jung Hwa divided in two the membership which could have stood together to defend the ITF's non-governmental status. They (CJH ITF members) believed his claim to leadership was legal. In their minds, they were defenders of democracy and of the ITF's constitution too. This first splintering that Master Choi Jung Hwa caused, raises the question of whether some state-level hybrid interference was (again) behind it; in the end, it served the interests of North Korea. The most likely leader, Choi Jung Hwa, was out, as were some firm supporters of western democracy. In January 2002, in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the US president, George W. Bush, delivered a speech where he declared North Korea to be among the forces of evil. This political atmosphere created the backdrop that amplified rather than repressed the JCH ITF group's desire to defend democracy in the ITF. Thus, the JCH ITF, just like the emerging ITF legality group, represented the democratic forces present in the ITF, those who desired the federation to work as non-governmental and non-political sport institution.

As Mr. Chang Ung's inauguration speech demonstrates, North Korea gained a central role in the ITF immediately after his nomination. It shows how Mr. Chang Ung's entry to the ITF leadership fully opened the doors for North Korea and the official acceptance of its political role and presence in the ITF. Furthermore, his rushed nomination as the new president overruled the usual ITF legal procedures when the ITF Constitution and the ITF's earlier traditions to elect new board members were ignored. In addition, in 2002, North Korea launched its nuclear program, and they were declared the forces of evil. This created the political atmosphere for North Korea when decisions were made for the ITF's future. Considering that the NKITF is now controlled by North Korea, concerns arise whether their ITF now have open door policy also towards the illicit activities that Salisbury has pointed out in his research.

In addition, in few years' time, the ITF Grandmasters and core leaders who first joined the North Korea controlled ITF began resigning, one after another: Grandmaster Hwang Kwang Sung left the NKITF in 2004 to found his own group; Grandmaster Park Jong Soo left in 2010 and remained independent; Grandmaster Rhee Ki Ha left in 2011 and remained independent afterwards; Master Phap Lu, left in 2013 and remained independent (he was the last major ITF core-member to leave the Chang Ung group).<sup>275</sup> Grandmaster Charles Sereff remained independent until becoming affiliated with the ITF HQ, which had splintered from the CJH ITF, in the mid-2010s. The NKITF has become void of almost all the former leaders of the ITF in gen. Choi's time.

The ITF, with acting President Maclellan, managed to resist and protect its legal procedures and the Constitution of the ITF. The events that followed tell a tale of North Korea's co-opting of the ITF, but it also confirms that they could not control the entirety of the ITF and that there was significant enough force present in the federation to counter such methods. When North Korea made the attempt to gain control of the whole ITF, the ITF's acting president Mr. Russell Maclellan and SG Thomas MacCallum, Masters Tran Trieu Quan, Benny Rivera, Pablo Trajtenberg, Tadeusz Loboda, Paul Weiler, among many others, as well as the AETF and what seems to be most of the active ITF National Associations, quickly fortified the existing democratic structures, policies and traditions already present in the ITF to defend the federation and its associations from the fierce political co-opting attempts they

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<sup>275</sup> Letters of resignation to Chang Ung: Gm Hwang Kwang Sung, 21 Jan 2004; GM Park Jong Soo, 11 Apr 2010; GM Rhee Ki Ha, 29 Oct 2011; Master Phap Lu, 28 Nov 2013. Copy of letters AETF Archive, Lublin (found also from the AETF Online Archive).

were facing. Instead of gaining control of the ITF, Mr. Chang Ung and North Korean state behind him, had to face a group of concerned private citizens, ready to defend their organisation against an authoritarian state, a dictatorship: the North Korean state. Hence, although North Korea relentlessly worked to co-opt the ITF, in the meanwhile, the rest of the ITF had not remained ignorant of the future that loomed after the death of gen. Choi. There were simply too many members who aligned with gen. Choi's philosophy, "I shall be the champion of freedom and justice". These members can also be defined as private citizens running their clubs and national associations, their coaches, athletes and sport figures.

The decades long political pressure thus also fortified democratic, non-political and nongovernmental aspirations in the ITF. The ITF's democratic structures and its constitution were known to be imperfect but, as the events that transpired showed, they proved strong enough and correct enough.

It is important to include the different sections of the ITF into research, to bring forth all its structures, because only then it can be understood that, despite the presence of North Korea in the federation, its members were far from being ardent supporters of the dystopian state, and that the ITF had advanced democratic structures compared to North Korea: namely elections for more than one candidate. The accusations of ITF being nothing but a North Korean front office harbouring criminals is inaccurate. It omits the presence of the many National Associations, ITF Country Directors, Board Members and Chairmen presented in this study who managed to protect the legality and the democratic principles of their institution during the tumultuous months and years after the death of General Choi. They believed the ITF was supposed to be – as that was how it was portrayed to them for decades – an apolitical, nongovernmental sports federation that was not tied to any political ideologies. That was the federation they had agreed to be part of and that is what they defended.

Now one might ask about WTF/WT, the World Taekwondo. What is the standing of the World Taekwondo in all of this? After the death of gen. Choi, the North Korean controlled ITF and the WTF/WT have created and continued a close cooperation with each other. The WTF/WT appears to have collaborated only with the North Korea controlled ITF, the firmly government connected NKITF. This is controversial since WT Taekwon-Do is part of the IOC and one would expect the IOC to demand sports connected to them to remain apolitical and separate from state control in the spirit of the Olympic Movement. But there might be a blind spot in the vision of the IOC, a blind spot the size of the Korean peninsula.



Figure 17 Source: "WT and the ITF signed a historic agreement", News, dated 2nd November 2018, [www.worldtaekwondo.org](http://www.worldtaekwondo.org), seen 19th May 2023

To answer the research questions that began this study, the following can be stated.

1. Since the founding of the ITF in 1966 until its splintering in 2002, there is consistent and growing evidence of the ITF's political use by at least South Korea and North Korea. Evidence of other groups or states using the ITF for their political objectives has not been found, unless the ITF members' desires to guide the federation are seen as political. But as they represent many countries, state connection working behind them is improbable. Gen. Choi's connections to the Korean opposition movements created a political connectivity between him and the groups in question. However, the political views of its leader, does not signify that the whole of the ITF shared the same views, or that these views were shared with the ITF. This study has not discovered reason to criticise or condemn gen. Choi's connections with these opposition groups, and instead invites more research attention to address the topic.
2. By the time the ITF splintered in 2002, it had regrown, and was possibly even a larger federation than it was in 1971-1972 when it exiled South Korea. It had begun gaining back its popularity comparable to Taekwon-Do's 1970s boom. And to a more modest estimation, it had grown into a large international sport and martial art federation, especially so from c.1991 until the 2002 splinter. This is demonstrated mainly by the growing number of the new International Instructors promoted in the ITF International Seminars, and by the regular organisation of ITF events, including the ITF Taekwon-Do World Championships during which the ITF Congresses were held. It is also demonstrated through the ITF related primary sources as from the ITF's relocation to Vienna in 1984-1985, the ITF cumulated a regular flow of official ITF documentations through which it has been possible to reconstruct ITF's organisational history. Compared to earlier, there is a clear difference to the period of 1966-

1985, where available documentation is practically non-existent. As shown in this study, since 1985 the ITF grew into a more professional international governing body of Taekwon-Do and by 2002 had begun displaying clearly distinguishable structures of international sport and martial art institution. As an organisation, the ITF contained a plurality of members from different nationalities, no nation or nationality was noticeably over-represented. Its leadership positions, ITF Treasurers aside, were relatively evenly distributed between the different ITF National Associations, and they represented the same plurality as the ITF's member base. It is also noticeable that for instance NKTKDA was not over-represented in its leadership, and instead the central leadership positions, such as the Secretary General and Senior Vice Presidency, were occupied by non-North Koreans. Hence, the ITF leadership and the ITF member base does not provide evidence that the ITF represented any particular political ideology or connectedness.

However, the ITF Treasurers, who are expected to be North Koreans (as other options are too unlikely, as discussed earlier) are the only section demonstrating possible political connectedness, in this case to North Korean state and to its political ideology. Considering how North Korea controls all its citizens, the ITF Treasurers were unlikely an exception to it. During its last c.10 years, the ITF grew and solidified, rather than diminished. By 2002 it had grown into a lively international sport and martial art organisation. This growth in number and professionalism most likely protected it from North Korea's co-opting attempts as larger institutions are more difficult to co-opt. However, the larger size of the ITF made it also more appealing for political appropriation, as it provided more connections around the world, as well wider financial opportunities for North Korean state. The WTF/WT Taekwondo could have also seen this larger, more professional and more international ITF as a growing threat. To diminish and break a competing group, the ITF, into smaller factions was beneficial for the WTF/WWT Taekwondo and the South Korean state who had, at least since 1972, actively removed gen. Choi and the ITF from their (ethnocentric) history of their Taekwondo version. These connections show how politics were surrounding the ITF from all fronts, and the events that transpired, namely the 2002 splintering, demonstrate that the ITF was not fully able to isolate itself from the larger political context of the two Koreas, becoming instead an object of their political appropriation.

3. To answer why the ITF splintered so violently if it was already under the control of North Korea by 2002, this study states the following: The ITF was not yet fully under North Korean state control before the death of General Choi Hong Hi on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2002. The emerging



NKITF, or North Korea behind it, did not manage to conclude their hybrid interference in all levels. Based on the Hybrid CoE's DISARM Framework, they did not manage to create enough segmentation among the ITF members. For instance, although they obstructed communication, they did not manage to cut it between the members. They were not able to convince enough members to rush Chang Ung's nomination, or see sense in it. They did not fully manage to prevent the usual order of things in the ITF bureaucracy: the organisation of international championships and the ITF Congresses, or official communication between ITF members and ITF leadership. The AETF was not fully in their control either, as their NAs were too organised and professionalised to be convinced of anything else except to follow the ITF Constitution and the legal processes of a sport institution. The ITF members were still remaining in contact with each other, organising themselves for tighter collaboration, and the NAs continued steering their institutions amongst the pressure. The many ITF National Associations and their directors, the plurality of representation in the ITF leadership, the multipolar institutional structures of the ITF, the ITF Constitution of 1988, tradition to follow the legal founding of the ITF Constitution (e.g., electing its leaders to serve a limited term), and the authority of gen. Choi Hong Hi's persona as the ITF leader, protected the ITF until his death from political co-opting which, as shown in this study, stemmed from North Korea. These structures limited and slowed North Korea's attempt to gain control from 1980 onwards. But when these ideas of the ITF as nongovernmental and apolitical institution collided with the North Korea tied views of the NKITF, the ITF became splintered.

To conclude, since the 2002 splintering of the ITF, the NKITF has represented those who accepted North Korean state connected ITF, as well as all the members of NKTKDA who have no influence over which ITF they belong to. The members of the NKTKDA, meaning the North Korean Taekwondoists, have no freedom to choose their ITF, and for that reason they cannot be blamed for the splintering of the ITF or collectively accused of any political appropriation. The members of the Korean Taekwon-Do Committee (조선태권도위원회) should be aware that the ITF that was led by President MacLellan after the death of gen. Choi was not against its North Korean ITF members or the ITF National Association of North Korea, he was not seeking to exclude them. The ITF only demanded that Mr. Chang Ung be elected according to the ITF Constitution that gen. Choi had administered.

I hope this research has managed to bring more transparency on research on all the taekwondos and I hope the sources shared through it will facilitate future research also on the ITF.

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