Tracing the inheritance line of traditional martial arts Subak

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At the end of the Joseon Dynasty, Subak's successors all died of old age. It is difficult to inherit the national cultural heritage and hand it down to descendants through individual efforts alone. We all need to take care of it and preserve it.

As with arts that have been handed down by the people, there are no written records related to the genealogy of Subak and Subak Dance.

However, it is possible to look into the context after the late Joseon Dynasty.

Subak successor, Song Chang-ryeol (1932 ~ 2017)

Song Chang-yeol wanted to become a movie star in his youth, and it is said that he stayed for a while in a place called ‘Shin-Film’, which was directed by Shin Sang-ok.

It seems that he is a former movie star, as he has appeared in several films, including a minor role in the movie “The Martyr” directed by Yoo Hyeon-mok. This person's maternal uncle is director Choi Hyun-min, who planned a movie called 'Sorrow in the Sky', which turned half of the Korean peninsula into a sea of tears in 1965.

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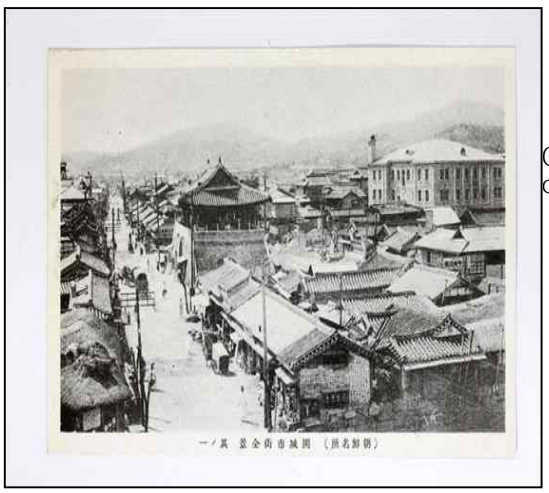
Song Chang-ryeol was born in February 1932 in Bukcheong-gun, Hamgyeongnam-do. In 1938, his father ran the 'Ohara Sewing Association' in Osaka, Japan. From 1938 to 40 he lived in Osaka. He later moved from Japan to Kaesong, Joseon.

Arirang International Broadcasting Interview

At the end of the Pacific War, the factory was requisitioned as a munitions factory (shell manufacturing). His house lived in Manwoljeong. Around 1942, he entered a school called "Japanese Elementary School".

From then on, when Japanese children teased me by calling me 'Josenjin' and hit me, I left school early. I went to the Ohjeongmun factory crying, and my father said, “Why are you coming here crying?”, “Japanese children are josenjin and beat up.”



Gaeseong Nammuntong during the Japanese colonial period

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I trained mainly at Mt. Kimura.

At that time, the father said to Cheon Il-ryong, the foreman of our factory, “My child is being beaten by Japanese children, so please teach me some sports!” So I first learned about Subak.

After about six months, I gained confidence, and after that, I became a troublemaker in Japanese school. When I came home from school, Japanese children would come and overturn the 'kotatsu' in the tatami room, pee on the tatami and run away.

Song Chang-ryeol's training (80's)

2003 Academic conference inviting watermelon dance masters from China (sponsored by

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South Hamgyong Province Residents' Association)

Song Chang-ryeol and Kim Hak-hyeon recognized morphological and technical similarities.

The researchers were Professor Beom Gi-cheol, an international Taekwondo instructor, and Kim Jae-il (Kendo 8th dan), former vice president of the Korean Kendo Association.

Kim Jae-il allowed Kim Hak-hyeon to demonstrate at the Gyeonggi-do Kendo competition, and won the Korea Sports Association Research Award for the thesis that discovered Song Chang-ryeol.

I mainly practiced and learned at a place called Yeougol behind the Kimura Mineral Spring. At that time, the Greater East Asia War was over and nothing could become ours. After that, I started fighting little by little and gained confidence.

In 1944 I was expelled from school for fighting Japanese children. At this time, my father transferred me to Manwol Elementary School, a school in Joseon. Even in the third grade of elementary school, he continued to learn from Cheon Il-ryong and practiced in the backyard of Fox Valley, Kimura Hill, and Gaeseong Red Ginseng Pavilion. It was a time when I was not interested in studying and had nothing to do.

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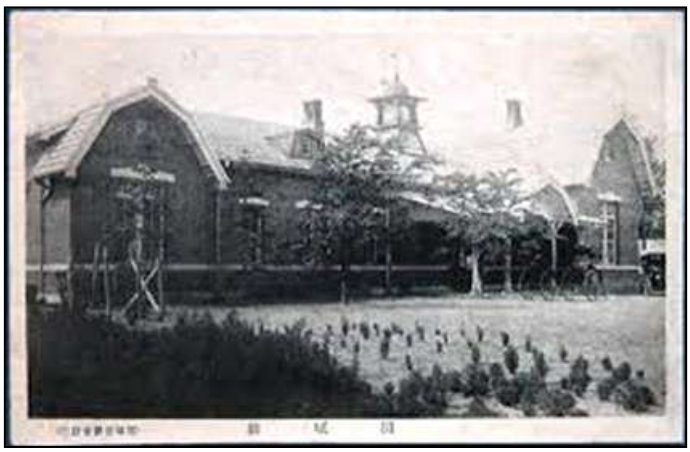

Born in 1919, Oh Jin-hwan, who studied with Min Wan-sik in Gaeseong, trained in subak in the park behind Gaeseong Station.

The late Jinhwan Oh (born 1919), who lived in Seoul, passed away in 2002.

He worked at Kaesong Station before the Korean War, and was taught by Min Wan-sik, the older brother of Min Gwan-sik, who served as the president of the Korea Sports Association at Gaeseong Railroad Park located behind the station.

On December 8, 2002, at the 1st Seoul Traditional Martial Arts Competition held in Geumcheon-gu, Seoul, he left such a testimony.

“What Song Chang-ryeol does is the same as what I learned from Min Wan-shik in the past.”

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Min Kwan-sik, the older brother of the former president of the Korea Sports Association,

Early death as an anti-communist fighter (7th dan in judo in Japan before liberation, participation in national Korean wrestling competitions, private sports training, etc.)

Min Wan-shik with Baek-beom Kim Gu (left)

The place with the yellow border is Manwoldae, the site of the Goryeo Palace.

It is said that this is the place where Song Chang-ryeol practiced. The reddish-brown color below it is Manwol Elementary School (the place where Joseon children went to at the time), to which they transferred after attending an elementary school in Japan, and the orange color is Gaeseong's red ginseng sperm. There was a backyard here, and it is said that he learned from Cheon Il-ryong here as well.

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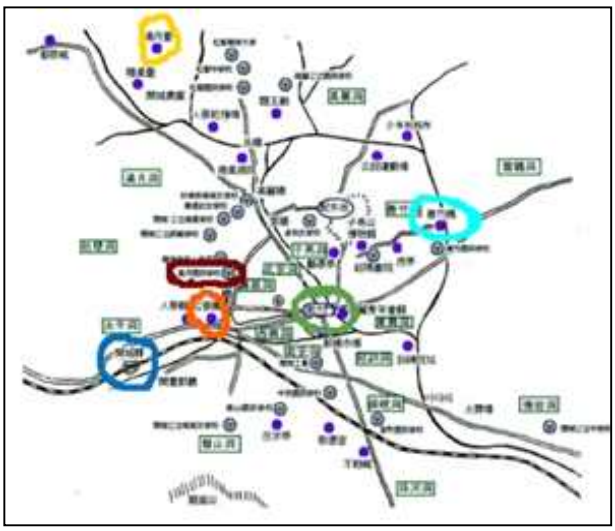

Song Chang-ryeol, who used to write in his lifetime, usually wrote down his skills in a small notebook to guide his juniors, but now he has lost that skill. Since then, he himself has dictated and organized several materials.

Blue is the place where grandfather Oh Jin-hwan, who passed away in 2002, met Min Wan-sik, the nephew of Empress Myeongseong, while working at Kaesong Station.

Green is Gaeseong's Namdaemun Gate, located at the south gate where Cheon Il-ryong, the teacher of Song Chang-ryeol, lived.

Beom Ki-cheol (Ph.D., Atlanta Theological Seminary, USA), an international Taekwondo instructor, presented the value of subyeok in 2002 and said, "Oh Jin-hwan (from Namsan-dong, Kaesong-si) currently resides in Seoul. It was an opportunity to confirm the value of the subyeok as a traditional cultural asset by hearing important testimonies about the subyeok in Gaeseong (Songdo).

In Pilbonggut, an important intangible cultural property, the original form of the subyeok can be glimpsed at least partially. Song Chang-ryeol, a subyeok master living in Gimhae, can be said to be a cultural asset with the prototype of the subyeok.

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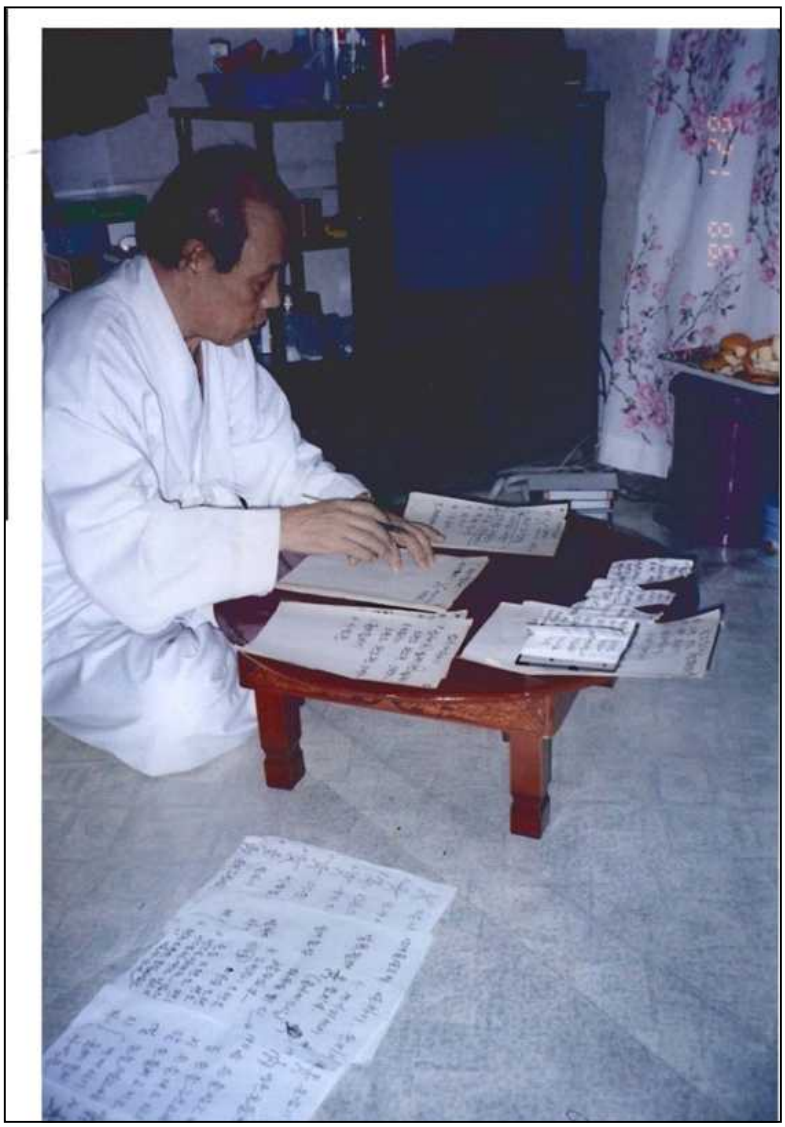

Subak from Dancheon, Hamgyeongnam-do

After Yi Seong-gye founded Joseon, only the people of Hamgyeong-do organized bodyguards. During the Gyeongguk Daejeon, it was legislated that only those from Hamgyeong-do be elected.

There was a Nambyeongyeong in Bukcheong, South Hamgyeong Province, and a bongdae under the jurisdiction of Nambyeongyeong in Dancheon, where soldiers were stationed.

Under these regional conditions, subak could be handed down to

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Hamgyeongnam-do.

***The Chinese Baidu Encyclopedia states that low-ranking soldiers performed the Subak dance, but Yanbian University Dance Professor Han Ryong-gil testified that the Subak dance was known to have been performed by the navy in the past.**

Some people claim that Subak is a hunting dance, but in reality it is a martial art and dance. Add gestures and beats to your Subak moves.

In 2003, the Chosun Ilbo newspaper requested a demonstration from Kim Hak-hyun, who visited Korea for a special feature, and literally retains the original form of ancient martial arts.

The brothers who were famous all over China. In 2006, China's Ministry of Culture reviewed Subak as China's intangible cultural heritage(National Intangible Cultural Heritage).

It's a Subak dance. However, as you can see from the movements, it is different from a simple dance. Hitting, blocking, and martial arts were also included in the content of the dance and were performed in an undifferentiated state.

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They are Kim Hak-cheon and his younger brother Kim Hak-hyeon (former director of Changbai Cultural Center). It is a cultural heritage that is expressed through dance by adding rhythm to the gestures of Subak, an ancient traditional martial art of Korea.

The Ministry of Culture of China reviewed the registration of Chinese national-level cultural properties, blocked the offer, and handed it over to the Korean Cultural Heritage Administration.

Hakcheon Kim published a story about martial arts and dance at the same time in a magazine published in Yanbian, China. In addition to photos and videos, he showed many martial arts such as solo dance and double dance, and not only dance expressions, but also hit each other.

*** An article in the Dong-A Ilbo also had a picture of Kim Hak-hyeon demonstrating, and it was written "Subak, a traditional martial art."**

In 1995, while publishing a series titled Yalugang Icheonri in the Seoul Newspaper, a reporter visiting Changbai Korean Autonomous Prefecture in China took a picture.

Professor Ryu Yeon-san, a Korean-Chinese scholar, also said in a booklet on the way to Goguryeo that the Subak Dance was not just a dance, but a Goguryeo art and martial art.

The Subak from Dancheon, Hamgyeongnam-do was inherited by the late Kim Dal-soon from 1886 to 1962 to his children, Kim Hak-cheon and Kim Hak-hyeon.

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Song Joon-ho, who is in charge of the Korea Subak Association, received a handwritten certificate from Kim Hak-hyun that he is the only successor and is carrying out domestic and overseas teaching activities.

According to the 2018 Korean Sports Association Traditional Martial Arts White Paper, which was investigated and researched by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism in accordance with the Traditional Martial Arts Promotion Act, subaks, including this subak dance, were classified and announced as having been handed down.

In the case of Kim Ryong-chil (poet, Yanbian Writers Association of China), he was in Hamgyeong-do during the time of King Seonjo.

He crossed the Yalu River and migrated to China. Kim Man-seok's hometown is also said to be Hamgyeong-do, but his exact age is unknown.

Subak dance is performed in Pyongan-do (Jagang-do) region, Pilbong-gut (important cultural property) in Jeonnam, and Bitnae Nongak (province-designated cultural property) in Gyeongbuk. In addition to this, artisans survived in Gwangju, Jeolla-do.

In the case of North Korea, it is said that Jeon Han-ryul (1931~), a North Korean

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dancer, discovered the subak dance handed down in Pyongan-do. Between 1955 and 1956, Sonbyeokchum (subak dance), a folk dance of the northwestern region, was discovered.

In 2017, North Korea's Rajin Taekwondo Sanctuary Nam Jong-seon testifies about Subak introduced from North Korea in the office of the president of Yongjeong Vocational University in Jilin Province, China.

In North Korea, this Subak is known as the origin of Taekwondo.

North Korea is famous for its Subak dance, dondolali, and water jar dance.

In August 1956, he received a special prize at the national festival of professional arts organizations and received a silver medal at the 6th World Festival of Youth and Students in Moscow.

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According to the Joseon Folklore Encyclopedia, “The Subak Dance was highly evaluated for its smooth composition and the image of the folk tradition of the people of the northwestern region.

In particular, the modest appearance makes my heart flutter even more.”

During the Japanese colonial era, Choi Seung-hee included Subak Dance in her dance system, and even now, Choi Seung-hee's dance system still dances Andanmu according to the rhythm. Andanmu is a dance commonly seen among Korean-Chinese dancers in North Korea and China, and this Andanmu is a variant of Subak Dance.

Gyeoktamu, designated as a provincial intangible cultural property of Heilongjiang Province in China, is also identified as a subak dance.

From 2013 to 21, the Chinese side designated the martial art Subak as a provincial intangible cultural property of Shaanxi Province, and designated it as a provincial intangible cultural property. There is no reason as the Ministry of Culture of China designated all bare-handed martial arts such as Taijiquan at the national level and even listed them as UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. There are many intentions to preoccupy martial arts.

Culture is what people do and it is contagious.

It is confirmed that it was done until recently in Kaesong, Hwanghae-do, a nearby area, but technically it is not much different from what was done in Dancheon.

The reason can be understood in the social situation of the Joseon Dynasty, when there was no private martial arts school like Japan.

From the beginning of the founding, Joseon eliminated private soldiers and continued for a long time as a central military system.

There are some that grow wild in the private sector, but they are not the same

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as Subak.

*** What was done in the private sector can be confirmed as Gyeokdo in Seoul and Nalparam in Pyongyang.**

The late Ye Yong-hae (former member of the Cultural Heritage Committee) said, “Subak-hee means subyeok in Korean. When I was young, I met several elders near Dongdaemun in Seoul who said they practiced subyeok.”
It is a skill that mainly uses the hands, but I used to imitate it roughly like this.

Kwon Tae-hoon (died 1900-94) said, “The Subak was not a fist, but was quickly stretched out in an open state, and the other person also reached out and bumped into it. It is passed down in folklore as a form of play played by two people tapping each other's palms."

A grandmother who taught subak in Gwangju, South Jeolla Province passed away.

It was confirmed in the doctoral course at Shanghai Physical University in China that the playfulness and basic skills are the same as those introduced from Dancheon, South Hamgyong Province.

Introducing "Subak Dance", a poem by Kim Ryong-chil of the Yanbian Literary Society of China. In June 1997, it was published in the June issue of 'Changbaeksan', a literary magazine in Yanbian.

P132, Poetry <Hometown Pungjeong>.. Subak Dance

Grandpa's Grandpa's Dance
Crossing over the hill of distant times, over again
without fading

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Is it the same as the joy of primitive life?
Subak dance in a yard -

The hood on the head is made from raw tree bark.
I only covered the masculine part a little bit.

dang dang dang dang
I don't even play drums
not even a sound
enough to hold with both hands
sound of wooden barrel
The color of the round sound is also clear
Subak dance, Subak dance -

I was so excited I shrugged my shoulders
hit the wall lightly
beat back and forth
soft and quiet dance
Like the touch of a mother's lullaby
Stuffy and dizzy dance rhythm
As the desire for liberation burns

Are the hands that pulled the tree the same?
Is it the hand that ate the raw meat?
Is the hand holding the lightning the same?
thick thick
big and big
My reddened heart makes a sound
Sea otters glide through the copper hues.

fantastic power beauty
Rhythmic beauty of body mechanics
The beautiful world of awakened souls
our ancestors live in the world

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In addition to this, there are many poems by Kim Ryong-chil, such as "The breath of a winter night, the atmosphere of the countryside, and fragrant memories." This person also passed away while testifying about Subak.

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