

THE OFFICIAL EUROPEAN MARTIAL ARTS MAGAZINE
OF THE ROUND TABLE ALLIANCE

EXCALIBUR

CONNECTION • DISCIPLINE • UNITY • EXCELLENCE

ISSUE 01

AUTUMN 2026



**EUROPE.
ONE PATH.
MANY STYLES.**

UNITED BY VALUES,
STRENGTHENED
BY RESPECT.



**FOR TRADITIONAL
MARTIAL ARTISTS**

PRESERVING HERITAGE,
BUILDING THE FUTURE.



**THE ALLIANCE
IN ACTION**

SEMINARS, GATHERINGS
& PROJECTS ACROSS
EUROPE.



**KNOWLEDGE
WISDOM
CHARACTER**

THE PILLARS OF
A MARTIAL LIFE.



**MEET THE
LEADERS**

VOICES FROM
ACROSS EUROPE
SHAPING OUR
COMMUNITY.



**HISTORY.
LEGACY.
INSPIRATION.**

LESSONS FROM THE PAST,
GUIDANCE FOR TODAY.

HONOR THE JOURNEY.

BUILD THE FUTURE.

SERVE THE COMMUNITY.



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WELCOME

Welcome to Excalibur!

The official publication for The Round Table Alliance and the Global Hapkido Federation. After hours upon hours of exhaustive writing on the subjects of Hapkido, Korean weaponry, practical philosophy for the modern age, and the proliferation of martial arts for middle-aged practitioners, Grandmaster Ernst Jan Rolloos and I finally took the plunge. We put our joint experiences and passions into our own synthesis of martial arts knowledge.

The Round Table Alliance shouldn't be revolutionary. It shouldn't be ground breaking. It shouldn't change how we share our martial experiences, but it does.

Sadly, the ideals of King Arthur's Round Table may be the stuff of legends, but people really are not comfortable with the true tenets of chivalry.

The ideals and principles of the Arthur Pendragon myths are timeless and more relevant than ever. Win the AI Era; these lessons are more crucial than ever!

Within this edition, you will see a glimpse of what is to come. We need to build bridges between our members. Everyone must do their part in propagating our organization and the martial arts that guide us physically, mentally, and spiritually.

So please... this is not the traditional martial arts business model with one or two arrogant old men looking down at us like peasants. It truly is an organization for the people, by the people.

We all need to do our part. Tell us your stories. Share your journey. Let's make something truly ground breaking!

-With sincere respect...

Grandmaster Guy Edward Larke

Vice-President of the Global Hapkido Federation

Editor of Excalibur Magazine



The Sword Beyond the Blade

The Philosophy Behind the
Round Table Alliance
Weapon Program

By Grandmaster
Ernst Jan Rolloos

“

*Weapons do not
make warriors.
Character does.*



THE HAMEL RIVER

Every philosophy has an origin. Ours began with a remarkable coincidence spanning more than three centuries.

In 1653, the Dutch sailor Hendrick Hamel became the first Westerner to document life inside Korea after surviving a shipwreck and spending thirteen years in the country. His writings would become Europe's first detailed window into Korean culture.

Centuries later, Grandmaster Han Jong Doo was born near the village connected to Hamel's story. I was born near Hamel's own birthplace in the Netherlands.

Separated by geography, language and history, these places became connected through friendship.

Over many years, Grandmaster Han and I shared countless conversations not only about techniques but about responsibilities, education, culture and the future of martial arts. These conversations took place in dojangs, over meals, during long journeys and after seminars had ended.

We eventually gave these conversations a name.

The Hamel River.

A river is never static. It flows. It connects landscapes. It carries history while constantly moving towards the future.

A JOURNEY ACROSS TIME

1653

Hendrick Hamel reaches Korea.

2012

First philosophical conversations.

2019

Round Table Alliance founded.

2022

Weapon Program published.

Today

A living philosophy for the future.

3 | MORE THAN TECHNIQUE

To an observer, the Weapon Program appears to teach swords, knives and traditional archery. In reality, these are only the visible instruments. The true curriculum is invisible.

At its heart lies the Nine Strikes and Nine Defences, a structured system designed to establish a common language of movement. The technique develops distance, timing, coordination and tactical understanding, but their deeper purpose reaches far beyond physical performance.



NINE STRIKES – NINE DEFENCES



TECHNIQUE

Nine Strikes and Nine Defences create a common language of movement.



ENERGY

Forward energy transforms mechanics into intention.



CHARACTER

Chivalry gives purpose to technique.

Every strike demands commitment.
Every defence demands composure.
Every exchange demands respect.
As students progress, movement becomes increasingly economical.
Structure gives way to timing.
Technique gives way to understanding.

Success cannot be forced.
The knife teaches consistency.
The bow teaches patience.
The sword teaches responsibility.
Together they develop qualities that remain valuable far beyond the training hall.

THE FUTURE

The Weapon Program was intentionally designed to remain unfinished.

Unlike systems that seek perfection through rigidity, the Round Table Alliance believes that martial traditions remain alive only when they continue to evolve responsibly.

Every seminar contributes new experiences. Every instructor adds perspective. Every generation asks new questions.

Innovation, however, never replaces tradition. It grows from it.

This philosophy has become one of the defining characteristics of the Round Table Alliance. Masters from different countries, different systems and different backgrounds meet as equal, united not by identical technique but by shared values.

“

*Tradition is not preserved
by standing still.
Tradition survives because
each generation carries it forward.*

— Grandmaster Ernst Jan Rolloos



ROUND TABLE ALLIANCE

A neutral alliance of chieftains and masters who pursue higher goals through cooperation, respect and the exchange of knowledge.

Our mission is to preserve tradition, encourage innovation and inspire the next generation of martial artists.



We are different styles.
We are one tradition.
We are the
Round Table Alliance.

明倫堂

Clothes Make the Man... And the Woman

By Sr Master Guy
Edward Larke





February 24, 2002. This day will last in my mind for all my life—my wedding day. Out of fairness who doesn't say that? I was blessed to be married in a traditional Korean wedding. The music, the man-carried carriages, the ceremony, the clothing: it was like out of the Hong Kong movies I watched back home and yet totally different.

It's a practice that is rapidly dying here in South Korea. With the advances in technology, economics and the influx of westernization, a very romantic tradition is in danger of becoming a part of forgotten history. Western style weddings with tuxedos and white gowns are replacing the unique, flowing colourful *hanbok* of Korea.

Which is sad as it is one of the unique and most identifiable cultural points of Korea in comparison with the rest of Asia.

The Japanese have their wafuku, China has the qipao, and Scotland, the world -famous kilt. What about the ancient civilization that is now the Republic of Korea?

Hanbok simply means traditional Korean clothing. It is unique in its smooth flowing design and spectacular array of colours and designs. As one designer put it, *hanbok* is the beauty of temperance and elegance. It is elegant while not being too flamboyant.

When it is sewn, it is flat and has no inseams. This is due to the material being folded over three times before sewing. When it is worn, the skirt flows like grass by a mountain stream. It has no set figure or shape so it can suit anyone, man or woman, and make them look magnificent.

Hanbok can actually be tracked back to the Three Kingdoms Era (*Silla*, *Baek-Jae* and *Gogureo*) that lasted from 57 BC to 668 AD. This can be seen on wall paintings and tapestries. However, the *hanbok* designs that exist today originate from the much more recent *Joseon* Dynasty (July 1392 to August 1910).

Every dynasty in Korean history tried to erase all traces of the previous one, so needless to say almost all of Korea's ancient history comprises of information from *Joseon*. To understand *hanbok*, you also have to understand Confucianism, which almost replaced Buddhism in that era. It heavily promoted castes more than in the past and set the women's movement back a thousand years.

An example is that in previous eras a woman was entitled to equal inheritance as her male relatives. Under Confucianism she was entitled to almost nothing. Another example that still lingers in today's society, is women covering their mouths when laughing. This same method of thinking strongly favored the pen over the sword, resulting in almost all of the traditional martial arts becoming extinct.

The parts of a woman's *hanbok* were typically, a very long billowing skirt or *chima* that started above the breast with the chest bound and flowed down to almost the ground so you could only see the very bottom of the *gotchi* or shoes. Over this was a very short jacket called *jegori* which was tied in the front with a ribbon. This was further accessorized by broaches, pins and cosmetics. Married women wore their hair up in an elaborate hairstyle that framed the top and sides of their face. The style made use of long hairpins called *bi-nyuh*. Young maidens had long pigtailed that were stylized by large red ribbons called *dang-gi* at the end of their hair. Young palace girls had two pigtailed that were woven together into a kind of bun, then accessorized by the ribbon. The order in which women dressed was undergarments (*sok-jegori* or *soggot*) and petticoats/ slips (*sok chima* or *daeshun chima*) followed by an under jacket (a kind of *jegori*) and the jacket (*jegori*). The skirt (*chima*) followed. Finally, the socks (*buseon*) and the shoes (*gotchi*) completed the basic attire. Sometimes an overcoat was worn by upper class ladies that also veiled their faces so men could not see their faces. This was called *changot* or *ssukae chima* for other classes. This is a tragic part of the old *hanbok* design. A popular kind of accessory and hobby was the making and wearing of *norigae*. It was an embroidered incense case worn by women. The designs and tassels attached to it were wide and varied and were true works of art.

A man's attire was similar. The *chima* was replaced by *baji* or pants. In very early days they were narrow to facilitate ease when on horseback, but changed to a baggier style to assist in labour intensive work and for sitting. The *jegori* was also noticeably longer. The process was as follows: underpants, then *baji*, *jegori*, vest (or *jok-gi* which could be worn without *jegori* in hot weather), overcoat (*makoja*), *buseon* and finally *gotchi* or *kotshin*. In very cold weather another warmer coat could be added called *du-roo-maki* that hung to the knees.



Their hair was worn long in ponytails. Men wore carefully trimmed beards, unless they were young or eunuchs. If the man had any kind of position he also wore some kind of hat or helmet if in the military. If the man was of status, a long thin leather belt was worn. If of the military, a long, wide sash was worn to facilitate the holding of bladed weapons. Children's clothes were almost identical to the adults and seemed more colourful. They called them *saek-dong jegori* or rainbow clothes. Often, they were made of different pieces of fabric and pieced together to make beautiful clothes.

Shoes were usually made of deerskin or some similar material. The working class wore shoes made of woven straw or hemp.

The colours and ornamentation varied from era to era and region to region. However, class and position largely dictated the variation of colours and amount of decoration. The working class almost invariably wore just white, sturdy clothes

with little or no ornamentation at all. The only exception was at their wedding. Even then the colours and symbols were subdued. **Scholars**, aristocrats, military officers, ministers, *ki saeng* (Korean-style geisha), *moo dang* (fortune tellers and exorcists), concubines and royalty all had coloured *hanboks* of one kind or another. The type of material, whether it was hemp, cotton or silk, depended largely on one's rank and position in the caste. Many also had a few because the most elegant *hanboks* were not made for everyday use, just ceremonies and special occasions.

Colours were very symbolic. White or *baek* in Korean symbolized purity of spirit and mind. The expression "*baek ee min-jok*" or "people of white" strongly alludes to this idea. Blue (or *chung*), red (or *hong*), yellow (or *hwang*), green (or *nok*) and black (or *heuk*) were also common colours due to their correlation to the Chinese idea of elemental relationships (earth, fire, water, metal and wood). The dyes used were made of a mixture of tree bark and specially selected flowers. The results were brilliant. Today modern dyes are used so the result is louder and not as subtle, so many are returning to traditional techniques. Colours in many cases quickly dictated your station. For example, the king almost always wore red, while a princess almost always had green in her *hanbok*.

Symbols such as Chinese characters (long life, eternal youth, perseverance, etc.) were sometimes stitched with golden or silver thread onto the chest, back sleeves or shoulders of the *jegori*, vests, and robes, as well as animals, stars, the sun and different kinds of flora. (See chart for a few common symbols and their meanings.)
Today, the *hanbok* is mostly seen in traditional television dramas, weddings, Korean New Year or *Seul Nol*, Korean Thanksgiving or *Chuseok* and babies' first birthdays. Sadly, it's usually just women now that don *hanboks* at these ceremonies.
Men wear western-style suits and children wear blue jeans and t-shirts.



Hopefully with the outside world realizing the beauty of this art form, new life will be breathed into the industry.

In short, any practitioner of a martial art should try to embrace aspects of the art's originating country. It's part of the art in martial arts!

Symbols & Meanings

Dragon	- power, authority, usually reserved for the kings and queens
Tiger	- strength, ferocity, ability to drive away evil spirits
Crane	- eternal youth
Twin cranes	- noble gentility
Giraffe	- (more like the Japanese <i>Ki-Rin</i>) good luck, worn by princes
Wild geese	- clouds, power of mountains, order, justice
Peacocks	- auspiciousness, loyalty
Bear	- worn by military officers, no symbols for longevity included



The Pen is Mightier with the Sword

This classic quotation has been used time and time again in various nations for an equally varied number of reasons. The basic reasoning is a reasonable one... eschew violence in favour of rational thought in order to resolve conflicts.

Sometimes though, like most ideas, it was taken too far to the other extreme. In my opinion, the most relevant is during a period of the *Joseon* Dynasty (1392–1637) of what is now North and South Korea, which ironically fell with the Japanese Occupation. The scholars of that era were obsessed with a form of Confucian thought that only almost obliterated Korean martial arts from their country. As many of my grandmasters said, it was no wonder Korea was wide open to the advances of Japan's military might. Although South Korea has come a long way since that period of their history, still the martial arts are seen by many as an activity for preschoolers and those who are incapable of holding ordinary jobs.

The traditional arts of eons ago are gone or nearly gone.

Left is playing classes for small children with 2nd or 3rd-degree black belts or Korean MMA for the older male crowd.

Out of fairness, though, how many practice "true" traditional arts? Worldwide the focus on shiny pieces of tin and pretty ribbons pinned on your chest far outweigh any other concerns. It is no surprise that outstanding skills such as Malaysian Silat, Indian Silambam, or Korean *Taekgyeon* are struggling for the respect they deserve on the international stage.

When one thinks of traditional arts, one of the first images that come to mind is that of weapons, especially swordplay. However, in order to compete in the hustle and bustle of the 21st Century marketplace the techniques are made flashy and the forms more exciting. The school owners cannot really be held to blame... martial artists must feed their families too.

Among those who criticize this kind of performance art or the traditional ones for that matter are those who practice lethal arts with the stick and knife not realizing they themselves are cousins who have just chosen a different path on the same journey. After centuries of division, it would be nice to send an end to the rivalry between our martial arts fraternity.



Perhaps traditional sword forms are a tad outdated. We no longer fight on horseback and brandish a pole arm or flail and shield, but there are far deeper aspects to traditional weapon training than reenacting battles of eons past. This piece will detail some of these traits.

First, weapon techniques build upon each other. I had a strong infatuation with Filipino arts almost 20 years ago but I found them so difficult. After Korean sword training I found so many of the strikes, angles of attack, defenses and evasions were similar. Now I am much more at ease with the Filipino arts I dearly yearned to study.

Another point is like in the Filipino arts; a practitioner does not need to carry a heavy blade on the street. A stick, tree branch, a piece of board, a baseball bat, or a cane can be used with devastating effect in the hands of a swordsman (or swordswoman). The manoeuvres employed result from the correlation of a martial tool and self-discipline (both physical and mental), coming to realize when you need that combination of offense and defense to stay

alive. **When** put into practice, there appears to be an imaginary rectangle for the quick dispatch of assailants using a variety of thrusting, blocking, slashing, and throwing techniques. When seen from a distance, the blade dances in and out, cuts here or there, and even pauses. When considering that the sword acts as an extension of the arm, the swordsman must be proficient in manoeuvres such as slashing, chopping, and thrusting at any angle and any direction. In order to efficiently dispatch an opponent in a life-or-death situation, you must also remember and react in harmony with the laws of inertia

The discipline that is taught in traditional weapons training is unique. Although the blade or stick is an extension of the body, it also acts as a tool to allow the warrior's spirit to come outside of the shell we carry around in everyday life. The weapon is like a device that extends your entire being. The respect you must develop for a live blade becomes apparent when it frees itself from its scabbard or case. If you do bamboo or straw cutting for training, it also forges your muscles and mind more than most kinds of circuit training can ever do. Discipline also comes from the careful care and maintenance of your blades. Especially if they are used in cutting objects for training.



Aesthetic issues come into play as well when talking about swordplay. Not jumping and flinging the sword around, but re-enacting ancient forms in the same way a ballerina would perform Swan Lake. We ARE artists. We should show our pride in that fact.

Lastly are historical and cultural concerns. Across the world the youth of this generation are losing interest in their own (and other nations') culture and history. I strongly believe traditional arts of one's own and others' cultures builds knowledge and appreciation of the world in general. From a traditional art you go into theology, philosophy, ethics, geography, history, literature and so on. Perhaps if everyone stepped out of their comfort zones and did an art or two totally out of their comfort zone they would not just develop more technically, but mentally and spiritually as well.

In these ways I firmly believe in many ways that the pen and the sword, if not one and the same, are naturally companions at the least. As modern martial artists we should aim to be part scholars, part warriors, part philosophers, part artists and part healers. In this way martial arts will truly stand the test of time.





The Importance of the Code of Chivalry for the Modern-Day Martial Artist

Early on, I knew what would influence my life. I was born in 1970, the heart of the Golden Age of martial arts in North America. Due to my father's fascination with tournament Karate and especially a young champion by the name of Chuck Norris, it seemed I was predisposed to favour Asian fighting arts.

At the same time, I was totally enamoured by reading. I absorbed books like water. Fantasy, mystery, adventure... I was living in my own dream world, it seemed. Martial arts and tales of the mysterious Orient flooded my dreams.

These sources of inspiration provided not just entertainment, but a structure for my morality. As I grew older, comics gave way to novels and non-fiction. To my surprise, I found many civilizations throughout human history had elite groups of martial men who were educated, sophisticated, and enlightened- not just British knights and Japanese samurai. The code of chivalry, especially, though, provides a vital ethical framework for modern martial artists, transforming combat training into a practice of personal growth and social responsibility. disciplined and calm public behaviour.

Without a moral compass, martial arts risk becoming mere violence. Here is a basic framework:

Ethical Framework and Self-Regulation

- **Prevents abuse:** Prevents martial artists from using lethal skills for bullying.
- **Governs power:** Ensures physical superiority is matched by emotional maturity.
- **Guides behaviour:** Dictates strict self-control inside and outside the gym.

The Value of Modern Chivalric Virtues

- **Honour:** Demands absolute honesty and integrity in victory or defeat.
- **Courage:** Faces fear during sparring and stands up against injustice.
- **Loyalty:** Fosters dedication to instructors, training partners, and the academy.
- **Humility:** Acknowledges weaknesses and respects the skills of opponents.

Civic Duty and Community Protection

Defends the weak: Directs physical strength toward protecting vulnerable individuals.

Promotes service: Encourages martial artists to be constructive, helpful citizens.

Models leadership: Inspires others through

Preserving Martial Traditions

- **Maintains respect:** Restores traditional etiquette like bowing and shaking hands.
- **Honours lineage:** Links modern practitioners to historical warrior ethics.
- **Elevates sport:** Shifts the focus from brutal violence to mutual self-improvement.

The code of chivalry gives modern martial artists a moral compass, turning physical combat skills into disciplined, ethical self-defense. Key virtues include honour, respect for opponents, humility, and protecting the weak. These traditional values prevent ego-driven violence and foster lifelong character growth.

Core Values

- **Honour:** Keeps your word and acts with total integrity.
- **Respect:** Treats every teacher, partner, and rival with high regard.
- **Humility:** Stays modest despite high skill or winning matches
- **Courage:** Faces fear in training and in daily life.
- **Protection:** Uses your strength only to help and defend others.

Modern Benefits

- **Ego Control:** Stops you from picking fights outside the gym.
- **Mental Focus:** Builds inner calm and sharp concentration.
- **Safe Training:** Promotes trust and care for your training partners.
- **Community:** Creates a welcoming, respectful club environment.



As I mentioned before, most martial traditions share similar values that you should research, promote, and embrace. *Hapkido* creeds, *Hwarang* traditions, and the basic concepts of chivalry blend easily. Try placing these in your *dojo* office or on the inside of your *dojo* door as food for thought, along with moral precepts to pass on to your students:

Dojo Creed: The Way of the Modern Warrior

- **Honour the Art:** Speak with truth. Act with total integrity inside and outside the academy.
- **Respect the Mat:** Bow to your teachers, training partners, and opponents without exception.
- **Master the Ego:** Stay humble in victory. Remain resilient and eager to learn in defeat.
- **Guard the Weak:** Use your physical skills strictly for self-defense and the protection of others.
- **Cultivate Courage:** Face every challenge in training and daily life with a calm, fearless mind.

Implementation Checklist

- **Post It:** Hang a printed copy at the entrance of your training floor.
- **Recite It:** Have students repeat the core lines together before class begins.
- **Live It:** Enforce immediate penalties or mat-cleaning duties for ego-driven behaviour.

Hapkido Creed: The Way of Harmony and Strength

- **Honour the Dojo/ Dojang:** Protect the lineage, truth, and spiritual integrity of *Hapkido*.
- **Flow with Respect:** Yield to force with politeness, honouring every training partner.
- **Master the Ego:** Keep your mind like a mirror, calm and free of pride.
- **Defend the Vulnerable:** Apply joint locks and throws only to redirect aggression and protect life.
- **Cultivate Ki:** Blend internal energy with courage to face all hardships fearlessly.



• **Call Out:** Correct any aggressive, non-fluid behaviour by reminding the student of "Hwa" (Harmony).

The Three Hapkido Principles Applied

- **Water Principle:** Adapt smoothly to life's challenges, using soft persuasion over hard force.
- **Wind Principle:** Deflect negativity and conflict gracefully, keeping your inner peace intact.
- **Harmony Principle:** Balance your physical power with a calm mind to achieve absolute self-control.

Implementation Checklist

- **Opening Bow:** Recite the creed directly after bowing to the flags and the master.
- **Guard Rail:** Remind students that compliance techniques require absolute trust and care for partners.

Formal Hapkido Commands & Principles

- **Honesty & Integrity:** *Ui-ri* (의리) — Act with total loyalty, justice, and truth.
- **Respect & Bowing:** *Ye-ui* (예의) — Show deep courtesy to teachers and partners.
- **Humility & Calm:** *Pyeong-on* (평온) — Keep a peaceful, modest, and ego-free mind.
- **Protection & Justice:** *Jeong-ui* (정의) — Use your skills only for righteous defense.
- **Courage & Energy:** *Yong-gi* (용기) — Face all fears with active, unstoppable bravery



About living in Korea as an Martial Artist

Being born to a Canadian father and a Korean mother, I learned both English and Korean as my mother tongues. Also, Korea was in a trend of dubbing *anime* and dramas from Japan, which exposed me to series such as *Ultraman*, *Power Rangers*, *Kamen Rider* – so called *tokusatsu* (特撮).

Watching *tokusatsu* gave me an interest in action and martial arts, and the first one I ever remember mimicking was a series called “Power Rangers Jungle Fury”. It simply was a 3+2 team fighting against the forces of evil, but they all used different types of *kung-fu* (功夫) also with weapons such as *tonfa*.

That made me into starting martial arts with *kung-fu*, and thanks to my father, I was able to start in my age of 5 which was far young for the minimum age of 6 to start there.

After getting into elementary school, I started learning Taeglish (*Taekwondo* taught with English) from my father. Whenever my dad went to seminar or appeared on TV, I was always with him which pre-disposed to the martial art world.

But we had to stop with Taeglish because there were problems at the sports centre where my father taught. I was still doing *Taekgyeon* (택견) as a family with Teacher Jae-Sik Yang.

We moved to *Seongnam*, in the middle and southern part of the country. Was not friendly to international families. I haven’t gone to *dojang* for a while, but my father kept teaching me *Kisa-do Muye* (his expression of martial arts).

After becoming 7th grade, my father found one *hapkido* (합기도) *dojang* for me which I have been happened to stay for over 6 years. The reason I liked going was so I could do kicks like *Kamen Rider* (仮面ライダー) actors did, and rolling round-breakfall was also my favourite activities to me!

Also, in my youth, a lot of activities at the Korean *dojang* excited me. The one I have actually went was sleep-over parties, *tteok beok-gi*(떡볶이)-parties, skiing, or we sometimes went to *dojang* next place-about 2~3km away for training together.

The last one was possible because my *hapkido dojang* was part of this *hapkido* chain called *Moo Moo-Kwan Hapkido*. But not only the reason I had these interesting chances, but the reason I was able to do this long was probably thanks to my two *sabums* and the *kwan-jang*. 7th grade was not only a big start in my martial arts life, but also for my language skills!

I started studying for Chinese and Japanese not only for normal conversation but for official uses and got HSK 3 at 7th , and JLPT N1 at the end of 10th grade with accuracy rate of 99%!

My middle school time also played a big part in my martial arts life. I started learning kick-boxing and Full-contact Karate from *Sensei Kim Je-Wook*, and learned Mantis *Kung-fu*, *Chang Quan*, and *Nan Quan* with *Sifu Kim Kyoung-Mo*.

Since It was my first time of doing several martial arts consciously, which made me interested in both *kung-fu* and karate because of the difference between *hapkido* and *taekwondo*.

My continuous love for *tokusatsu* and Japanese culture followed by it, I after was very into the Japanese culture and history followed by ancient martial arts and that led me to university and present.



With a passion for Japan, I was able to go to Foreign Language School in Busan. Because I started living in a dormitory since then, it was time for me to learn and practice by myself. I started studying under *sensei Il-Hong Jeang* - my father's friend and teacher- but it was only *Shotokan* (松濤館) *karate* (空手) was great, but it still left me craving more.

The most usable and long-running practice I benefit from was a walking/running method called *nanba-aruki* (ナンバ歩き), an old way of walking and running used by the Japanese before the Edo period.

After graduation, I am a judge, referee, and translator for *Karate* competitions, and also a *sensei* at the same *karate dojo*, teaching *Shotokan*. I have been teaching *karate* for about 3 years or more, and after teaching my students, I got one of my students to win in *kumite* at a recent national *karate* competition.



I also do translation for other martial arts events and other subjects such as *sake*(酒), and also whenever there is an event my father goes!

It is an odd story that my father also started martial arts around my age and did similar martial arts, but I am now also teaching it and writing articles like this.

What makes it unique is that my father never tried to influence me to go this way, and it was all my decision.

One thing different I personally think is that I have been speaking Japanese for 2 decades and I am probably keep going to be digging into the Japanese martial arts, history, and the culture all my life!



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RETURNING TO THE ROOT

ITF Radix and the Spirit of the Round Table

By Roy Rolstad



Tradition in motion: exploring how technical roots can become practical skill.

“In the beginning, you search for answers. Later, you start searching for better questions.”

There is something interesting that happens when you have practiced martial arts for a long time. I started martial arts in 1983. Since then I have trained in different systems, met many teachers, traveled to seminars and camps, competed, taught, worked professionally with violence and self protection, and spent countless hours on mats around the world.

The longer this journey continues, the more convinced I become that no martial art owns all the answers. That does not mean that we should abandon our traditions. Quite the opposite. We should dig deeper into them.

That idea lies at the heart of ITF Radix. It is also why I feel so at home around the Round Table Alliance.

The root

The word radix means root.

When my good friend Master Robert Boer from the Netherlands and I started the ITF Radix project in 2012, the idea was actually quite simple. We wanted to return to the roots of ITF Taekwon-Do and investigate the fighting knowledge contained within the patterns.

Robert and I came from similar backgrounds in some respects. We were both experienced ITF practitioners, but we were also interested in what happened outside the normal boundaries of Taekwon-Do training. We both had professional experience dealing with violence and aggressive behavior. We both enjoyed asking questions. And perhaps most importantly, neither of us was particularly interested in the answer: "We have always done it this way."

The late General Choi Hong Hi created the 24 patterns that form the backbone of International Taekwon-Do Federation Taekwon-Do. These patterns contain hundreds of movements, combinations, positions and transitions. We spend enormous amounts of time learning how to perform them. That is important. The patterns should have structure. Technical standards matter. Without a common form, eventually we would no longer be practicing the same art.

But there is another question. What are we actually doing?

If a movement is called a block, must it always be a block? What happens if we change the distance? What happens if someone grabs us? What happens in the clinch? Can a movement become a release, a strike, a takedown, an off balancing action or a joint manipulation? And what happens when the opponent starts resisting?

These questions became the playground of ITF Radix. Our purpose was never to create another martial art. ITF Radix is rooted firmly in ITF Taekwon-Do. General Choi gave us an extraordinary technical library. Our job is to explore that library and ask what else may be hiding on the shelves.

The first official ITF Radix seminar was held in the Netherlands in February 2013, during the 25th anniversary of ITF Netherlands. Around 160 black belts attended. Since then, Robert and I have presented the project in many countries and met martial artists from many different backgrounds.

And something became increasingly clear. The more deeply we explored Taekwon-Do, the more connections we discovered with other martial arts.

From pattern to fighting



Training detail: practical exploration through close-range movement and control.

Over time we developed a simple four stage model for ITF Radix.

Learn the pattern. First, learn the form properly. Understand the positions, movements, directions, rhythm and technical requirements.

Learn the applications. Explore what the movements can actually do. There may be several applications for the same movement. The correct solution also depends on the person performing it.

Play with the applications. This is perhaps the most important stage. Change the distance. Change the attack. Add movement. Add resistance. Change partners. Make mistakes. Laugh. Try again. Through play, knowledge slowly becomes skill.

Fight with the applications. Eventually the application should become so integrated into your movement that it may hardly look like the original pattern anymore. And that is perfectly fine.

The pattern is the map. The fight is the territory.

This is why we often say that patterns should be standardized, while applications must be individualized. A small person and a large person may solve the same problem differently. Age, strength, mobility, experience, clothing, surroundings and the opponent all influence the solution. Self defense is a personal skill.

Then I found another table



My martial arts life has never existed only inside Taekwon-Do. I have cross trained for most of my life.

I hold 6th Degree in ITF Taekwon-Do, awarded in 2021 under Grand Master Per Andresen in National Taekwon-Do Norway and the ITF. Per has been my mentor since I joined Trondheim Taekwon-Do club in 1993.

I also have a long relationship with Hapkido. In 2023 I received my 6th Degree in Sangrok Hapkido under Grand Master Chang Seong Dong in Korea, and in 2026 this journey continued through the Global Hapkido Federation.

Through Sangrok I became closely connected with Grand Master Henrik Hunstad. Henrik is one of those martial artists I enjoy being around because conversations rarely stop at technique. We can discuss history, philosophy, organizations, teaching, people, tradition and where martial arts might be heading.

Through Henrik and my international network I also became connected with Grand Master Ernst Jan Rolloos and the Round Table Alliance. And suddenly something felt very familiar.

The Round Table Alliance describes itself as a neutral arrangement of senior martial artists who meet on equal footing to develop and integrate new ideas in traditional martial arts.

Traditional martial arts. New ideas. Equal footing. Exchange of knowledge.

That is almost a description of what Robert and I had been doing with ITF Radix since 2012.

No throne at the Round Table

The symbolism of a round table is powerful. There is no head of the table. Nobody sits above everyone else.

Of course martial arts have ranks. I respect rank, lineage and tradition. They give structure to our arts and connect generations. But rank should never prevent curiosity.

A black belt does not mean that the questions have ended. Perhaps it means that you have finally learned enough to begin asking interesting ones.

This is where I believe ITF Radix and the Round Table Alliance fit together so naturally. ITF Radix says: Let us examine our tradition. The Round Table says: Let us examine our traditions together.

That small difference opens an enormous door.

When I train with a Hapkido practitioner, I sometimes recognize a movement from Taekwon-Do. When I grapple in Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, I recognize principles of balance, posture, pressure and control that change how I understand movements in a pattern. When I train Kali Sikaran, the relationship between empty hand movement and weapons becomes clearer.

The techniques may have different names. The uniforms may look different. The histories may be different. The human body is still the human body. Gravity remains gravity. Balance remains balance. Timing remains timing. Distance remains distance. And violence does not care what logo is printed on your dobok.

My other classroom

There is another reason practical application has always interested me.

Since 2003 I have worked as a use of force instructor for the Norwegian Correctional Service. My professional background includes many years in a high security prison, working with violent offenders, psychiatric cases, conflict management, self protection and training prison staff.

That environment teaches you something important. Reality has very little respect for theory. People do unexpected things. They resist. They move. They panic. You become stressed. Perfect technique disappears quickly.

That experience has influenced how I look at martial arts and how I teach ITF Radix. At the same time, I have learned to be careful about claiming that professional experience gives all the answers. A prison environment is one context. Competition is another. Civilian self defense is another.

Again, we return to questions. What is the situation? What is the objective? What principles survive when conditions change?

The arts feeding each other

Today my martial arts training continues in several directions.

I am a Kadua Guro, 1st Degree black belt in Kali Sikaran, a rank I received in 2003. I continue my Hapkido journey through Sangrok and the Global Hapkido Federation.

I also train Brazilian Jiu Jitsu with Roger Gracie Academy in Norway under Elyes Abid at RGA Oslo. I have been a brown belt since 2024 and I am currently working toward my black belt.

Every one of these arts has changed the way I understand Taekwon-Do. And Taekwon-Do changes how I understand them.

Cross training does not have to dilute your original art. Done intelligently, it can help you see your own art more clearly.

When I grapple, I sometimes suddenly understand a movement in a Tul that I have performed thousands of times. When Henrik shows a Hapkido principle, I recognize something. When Ernst Jan demonstrates an idea from his background, another connection appears. When Robert and I start playing with a sequence from an ITF pattern, it may take us into clinching, releasing, striking, controlling or throwing.

Then we go back to the pattern. And there it was. Waiting for us. Sometimes for decades.

The Round Table in practice

This is what excites me about the Round Table Alliance. It is more than collecting highly ranked people in one room. For me, its real value appears when knowledge starts moving between people.

At Round Table gatherings I can stand beside martial artists with completely different backgrounds and explore an idea without first having to prove that my system is better than theirs. That is incredibly liberating.

I do not need Hapkido to become Taekwon-Do. I do not need Taekwon-Do to become Brazilian Jiu Jitsu. Robert does not need to agree with every interpretation I make. Henrik does not need to move exactly like me. Ernst Jan does not need everyone at the table to share the same history. The value lies in the exchange.

This is also why I was very proud when Henrik Hunstad and I were honored as Round Table Alliance Talent Smiths in 2024.

The name itself says something important. A smith does not simply preserve metal. He works it. He heats it. He shapes it. He understands the material well enough to transform it without destroying what makes it valuable. That is a beautiful metaphor for martial arts.

Tradition must breathe

I love traditional martial arts. I have spent most of my life practicing them. For exactly that reason, I want them to remain alive.

Tradition should be more than preservation. A living tradition is transmitted from one generation to another, tested against experience and understood within a changing world.

General Choi himself was an innovator. He organized knowledge, developed techniques, created patterns, changed terminology, travelled relentlessly and presented his martial art around the world.

We honor that legacy by practicing Taekwon-Do seriously. I also believe we honor it by remaining curious.

ITF Radix is our small contribution to that process. We go back to the root. We study what is there. We ask questions. We test. We play.

Sometimes we discover that our new idea is terrible. Good. Throw it away. Sometimes we discover something that works surprisingly well. Then we keep exploring.

That requires an environment where people are allowed to exchange ideas without ego becoming the most important person in the room. That is the Round Table.

Excalibur

Perhaps that is also why Excalibur is such a fitting name for this magazine.

A sword is useless simply hanging on a wall. Its meaning comes from the person carrying it, the principles guiding that person and the skill developed through practise.

Martial arts knowledge is similar. We inherit something valuable from those who came before us. Our responsibility is to study it, preserve what deserves preservation, test what needs testing and pass something meaningful to the next generation.

Robert Boer and I started ITF Radix because we were curious about what was hidden inside the patterns we had practiced for so many years.

I became involved with the Round Table Alliance because I recognized the same curiosity on a larger scale.

Radix digs vertically, down toward the roots. The Round Table reaches horizontally, across traditions. One searches deeper. The other searches wider.

Together, I believe those two directions can tell us something important about the future of traditional martial arts.

We do not need fewer traditions. We need stronger roots, more open doors and more conversations around the table.

And after more than forty years in martial arts, I still feel like I have only started asking the questions.



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Roy Rolstad began martial arts training in 1983 and is cofounder of the ITF Radix Project with Master Robert Boer. He holds 6th Degree in ITF Taekwon-Do, awarded in 2021 under Grand Master Per Andresen of National Taekwon-Do Norway and the International Taekwon-Do Federation. He holds 6th Degree in Sangrok Hapkido under Grand Master Chang Seong Dong and is connected to the Global Hapkido Federation through Grand Master Henrik Hunstad. He is also a Kadua Guro, 1st Degree black belt in Kali Sikaran and a Brazilian Jiu Jitsu brown belt training under Elyes Abid at Roger Gracie Academy Oslo, currently working toward black belt. Since 2003 Roy has served as a use of force instructor within the Norwegian Correctional Service. He also works occasionally in film and television as an actor and stunt performer. Roy is involved in both ITF Radix and the Round Table Alliance.

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