

**The Repositioning of Traditional Martial Arts
in Republican China**

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis, I discuss how practitioners of martial arts in the Republican era of China were engaged in a process of reinventing what embodied the field of martial arts during a time when physical culture was treated as an instrument of nation-building in response to colonial discourses and the process of modernization. Martial arts were repositioned from being a loosely associated field of practice for people who engaged with a set of combative skills that focused on weapons training that championed archery and spear fighting, towards being a recreational activity with a formalized body of knowledge, skills and practices imbued with a Chinese sense of identity suitable for the modern class of urban and educated Chinese citizens. It is my belief that these efforts were a very important factor in why the practice of martial arts today is so closely associated with concepts of self-cultivation.

This repositioning of Chinese martial arts was driven by a schism between the traditionalists who defended the beliefs and practices from the imperial age of China, and the modernists who saw the complete adoption of Western technologies and concepts as the only course for the modernization of China. Due to the shifting politics around education, understandings of the body and its representation in society, the efforts to preserve traditional practices were complicated through the dynamics related to identity and state power. The field of martial arts was criticized by reformists and modernists such as those involved with the New Culture Movement, who argued that China needed to embrace scientific notions of the Western nations and abandon “feudal superstitions.” Within this context, the field of traditional Chinese martial arts was stigmatized by associations with the failed Boxer Rebellion, the diversity of practices and the secrecy that existed between different schools of practice.

In response to the modernity movements that criticized the traditional systems of belief that martial artists drew upon to substantiate their systems of practice as a recreational pursuit, associations such as the *Jingwu Tiyu Hui* and the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* were formed according to Western institutional models as part of the effort to unify and “modernize” Chinese martial arts. The teachers and administrators involved with these institutions wanted to preserve the practice of martial arts, and to accomplish this they had to develop new ways to systemize the training methods, essentially reinventing them by promoting them to a new generation of students in a format that had never existed before.

RÉSUMÉ

À travers cet essai, j'examine la façon dont les pratiquants d'arts martiaux dans l'ère républicaine de la Chine étaient impliqués dans le but de réinventer ce qu'incarnait le domaine des arts martiaux à une époque où la culture physique était traitée comme un instrument de construction de la nation en réponse au discours colonial et au processus de modernisation.

Les arts martiaux ont été repositionnés à partir d'un ensemble de personnes indirectement associés qui se livraient à un ensemble de combats et qui concentraient leurs compétences sur des entraînements aux armes encourageant le tir à l'arc et le combat à la lance, afin de devenir une activité de loisir avec un corps formalisé de connaissances, de compétences et de pratiques imprégnées avec une identité chinoise adaptée à la classe moderne urbaine et de citoyens chinois éduquée. Ceci est ma conviction que ces efforts ont été un facteur très important dans la raison pour laquelle la pratique des arts martiaux aujourd'hui est si étroitement associée aux concepts de la culture de soi.

Ce repositionnement des arts martiaux chinois fut motivé par le schisme entre les traditionalistes qui défendaient leurs croyances et leurs pratiques de l'époque impériale de la Chine, et les modernistes qui, eux, ont vu l'adoption complète de technologies et de concepts occidentaux comme le seul mouvement bénéfique à la modernisation de la Chine. En raison de la politique à travers l'éducation, la compréhension du corps et de sa représentation dans la société, les efforts visant à préserver les pratiques traditionnelles ont été compliquées par la dynamique liée à l'identité et le pouvoir de l'état. Le domaine des arts martiaux a été critiqué par les réformistes et les modernistes incluant ceux qui furent impliqués dans le « New Culture movement », qui a fait valoir que la Chine devait embrasser des notions scientifiques des pays

occidentaux et abandonner leurs «superstitions féodales. » Dans ce contexte, le domaine des arts martiaux traditionnels a été stigmatisé par des liens avec la révolte des Boxers, la diversité des pratiques et la discrétion qui existait entre les différentes écoles de pratique.

En réponse aux mouvements de modernité qui ont critiqué les systèmes de croyances traditionnels dont les pratiquants d'arts martiaux ont fait appel à l'appui de leurs systèmes pour justifier leur pratique comme une forme de loisir, des associations telles que les *Jingwu Tiyu Hui* et le *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* ont été formés selon les modèles occidentaux institutionnels dans le but d'unifier et de , en quelque sorte , moderniser les arts martiaux chinois. Les enseignants et les administrateurs concernés par ces institutions voulaient préserver la pratique des arts martiaux, et pour ce faire ils ont dû développer des nouvelles façons de systématiser les méthodes de formation, les réinventer en les promouvant à une nouvelle génération d'étudiants sous une forme qui n'avaient jamais existé auparavant.

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Introduction

This thesis looks to the Republican era in China (dating from 1912 to 1949 CE) to argue that it was one of the most important periods of time in the evolution of Chinese martial arts, as the entire field of practice was caught up in a process of reinvention as physical culture was treated as an instrument of nation-building in response to colonial discourses and the process of modernization for China. The field of martial arts was repositioned from being a set of combative skills that focused on weapons training that championed archery and spear fighting, towards being a formalized body of knowledge, skills and practices that became a recreational activity imbued with a Chinese sense of identity that was suitable for the modern class of urban, educated Chinese citizens.

Although martial arts remain divided between stylistic differences that came from separate lineages and schools, the fundamental similarities between them make it possible to consider them together as a single field of practice. Due to the process of reinvention and repositioning that was occurring throughout all levels of society during the Republican era, we find a distinct shift in how martial arts were perceived, taught, and trained at this time. This shift was one that came to emphasize aspects of self-cultivation derived from traditional concepts of Chinese medicine, and the development of the perception of martial arts as a peaceful practice that was suitable for the refinement of civilized men.

The appearance of western style academies, associations and institutions engaged with the public dissemination and promotion of martial arts was a critical element of this process. Two in particular are looked at here as an important point for the transition of martial arts into the modern era, the *Jingwu Tiyu Hui* (精武体育会 which literally translates as the Pure Martial

Arts Association, but it is commonly referred to as the *Jingwu* Association),¹ and the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* (中央国术管 Central Martial Arts Academy). The *Jingwu* Association predated the fall of the Qing dynasty (1644 to 1911 CE) and it presented an entirely new approach to martial arts within Chinese society. The teachers involved with this project worked towards a standardization of training methods, made the teachings available through public classes, and defended martial arts from the criticisms of reformists. While the *Jingwu* did have the support of figures such as the revolutionaries Chen Qimei (陈其美 1878-1916)² and Song Jiaoren (宋教仁 1882-1913)³ who also collaborated with the *Tongmeng Hui* (同盟会 Chinese United League, also translated as Chinese Revolutionary Alliance),⁴ it did not have the same degree of government involvement as we see in the Guomindang's (国民党 Nationalist Party, often referred to here as GMD)⁵ role within the *Guoshuguan*.

Opened in the city of Nanjing in 1928 with support and finance provided by the Guomindang, the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* brought together martial arts teachers from different schools to work with political and military figures to establish a nationwide, standardized system of indigenous calisthenics and self-defence by providing a form of centralized regulation over the practice of traditional martial arts through a process of establishing fixed sets that were presented as “nationally” recognized systems of training. The efforts of this academy were not

¹ Morris, 2004, p. 186.

² Chen Qimei was a close ally of Sun Yat-sen, an early mentor of Chiang Kai-shek and one of the founders of the Republic of China. He led forces that occupied Shanghai in 1911, and fled to Japan with Sun Yat-sen where they collaborated on the formation of what would later become the Guomindang. He was assassinated in 1916.

³ Song Jiaoren was a republican revolutionary, and another founding member of the Guomindang. He was assassinated in 1913 after leading the GMD to victory in China's first democratic elections. As with Chen Qimei, Yuan Shikai was suspected as being responsible for the assassinations.

⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 187.

⁵ Also known as the Kuomintang (KMT), the National People's Party, or the Nationalist Party.

limited to Nanjing. By 1933, the academy had expanded to more than three hundred branches, operating in twenty-four provinces and municipalities.⁶ Although the work of this institution was disrupted by the Japanese invasion of Nanjing (where it was closed, and eventually reopened in Taiwan), the *Guoshuguan* presents a project where a group of well-known teachers tried to analyze the challenges for the field of Chinese martial arts, and determine how to create a national form of practice that could bring this field into the modern era. The role of the Nationalist government of the Guomindang in this project was related to their nation-building efforts, where it served as an opportunity to take a position of authority over the field of martial arts as a whole, and subsume it under the body politic the party sought to create.⁷

The *Guoshuguan* and the *Jingwu* Association both represented important steps in the effort to consolidate the variety between different schools and lineages to create a unified system of practice that could serve as a coherent representation of “Chinese martial arts.” This effort towards unification and standardization was an attempt to defend the field of practice against criticisms from those involved in the process of designing a new structure of governance and administration for China, who viewed the traditional practices and systems of belief as superstitious elements of the feudal establishment that had weakened China.

A martial arts journal article from 1934 highlighted the nature of these criticisms, where it pointed out that some of the backwards schools of the time still clung “to factional views, siding only with their own and attacking all others, and cultivating slavish bigotry in all who enter. They are always bragging about themselves but never teach their secrets to others, selling

⁶ Morris, 2004, p. 207.

⁷ Lorge, 2012, p. 223.

their bunkum to the fools who come to study with them, flaunting their artifice and dazzling all with their mystery and wonder.”⁸

While divisions between different schools of martial arts may still exist, with depictions of martial arts in Chinese mythology, literature, cinema, video games and commercial products being so commonplace in the world today, the reinvention of martial arts during the Republican Era led towards the field of practice becoming a celebrated part of China’s cultural history. During the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympics in Beijing, for example, over two thousand people put on a performance of *Taiji Quan* (太极拳, commonly referred to as *Tai Chi*), going through a set of complicated movements together in unison. One version of the official logo of the Olympics was designed as a star shaped like a person performing *Taiji Quan*, referring to the essence of China’s traditional sports culture, which is now seen as “an embodiment of smoothness, harmony, vitality and mobility.”⁹

In many of these contemporary references, martial arts are presented as an ancient practice that has remained unchanged for centuries, connecting with the oldest philosophical beliefs and medical practices. I would argue that we do not find a direct and unbroken line in the development of martial arts. The forms of practice that were trained in the ancient past are not the forms that exist today. Many important aspects of how we understand the training as it exists today has its roots in contesting notions of modernity, identity and state power.

Because of the enormous social and cultural changes of the Republican era, the teachers of martial arts had to establish new parameters that could define a unified body of knowledge for

⁸ Morris, 2004, p. 217.

⁹ Morris, 2004, p. 243.

the entire field of martial arts,¹⁰ and reposition how this knowledge was perceived. In his theory of practice, Pierre Bourdieu points out how these fields of practice function within a certain social hierarchy, and the agents involved are both positioned by, and create a position for, the field in which they are involved. This concept of the field of practice is part of Bourdieu's attempt to make visible the way a social apparatus (*appareil*) functions and how it carries the ideological apparatus (*dispositif*) in practice. This work observes how a field of practice is imagined, formed, and performs the social power vested in it by the socio-political ideology or authority. In similar ways to this dynamic, the Guomindang reinforced a certain form of body politics through their efforts to define identity and culture in what was being constructed as the modern nation of China. While in the context of this thesis I will not be fully engaging with Bourdieu's use of this theoretical concept as a way to develop his critique on how it is constructed in a capitalist society, I find that elements of his work can help us better understand how martial arts were repositioned during the Republican era.

Outline of Thesis

In the first chapter of this thesis, I summarize the historical context, pointing out some of the important developments for martial arts that have occurred over time. With the length of Chinese history, it is impossible to do justice to the full complexity of these historical changes, so the goal here would just be to provide a general perspective on the issues affecting the field of martial arts history leading up to the Republican Era, and an understanding of where martial artists were starting from with their efforts to reposition the field of practice. The Chinese concepts of *wen* (文 civil) and *wu* (武 martial) are discussed here in the context of how Chinese

¹⁰ Vercammen, 2009, p. 126, and Filipiak, 2010, p. 48.

literati have consistently devalued the military side of society and made efforts to marginalize *wu* within the realm of culture. In this chapter, the historical context moves right up to the modernization movements, and the reasons why traditional practices like martial arts were faced with severe criticisms.

In the second chapter, I examine the role of the *Tiyu* (体育 Physical education)¹¹ movement in China, in which intellectuals discussed the role of physical culture as a method to improve the nation. This connected with the belief that to build a strong nation, you needed to create strong citizens. Finding the roots of this movement in the reformists of the late Qing dynasty, I will explain how the *Tiyu* movement was influenced by Herbert Spencer's concepts of the survival of the fittest and the value of an individual's capacity to struggle and survive in a world of limited resources. The public debates over these ideas came to influence the objectives of both the *Guoshuguan* and the *Jingwu* Association.

The third chapter covers the dynamics underlying the social positioning conducted by members of the GMD party. By presenting a brief history of the evolution of the party, I will highlight the instability it faced throughout its history, and demonstrate how its involvement in the field of martial arts was driven by the ways it sought to use cultural practices and the work of creating a modern Chinese nation as tools for reinforcing its authority. An important example of these efforts can be found in the goals outlined in their 1930's project known as the New Life Movement.

Within the fourth chapter I will analyze the mandates of the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* and the *Jingwu* Association and how their objectives may have been influenced by the people

¹¹ *Tiyu* as a concept refers to far more than just physical education, and I will explain more on that in Chapter 2.

involved. As mentioned earlier, both associations worked towards the modernization and unification of martial practices, but the Guomindang involvement within the *Guoshuguan* reinforced an aspect of the project that focused on not just creating an institution that taught a national form of physical culture, but also on the creation of a centralized examination system that granted authority over the field of practice by having a role in the definition of what constituted a “proper” martial arts instructor.

The fifth chapter is the most ambitious, where I explain the aspects of self-cultivation that came to represent the modern identity of martial arts following this work to reinvent and reposition the field of practice. This chapter is an effort to go beyond a mere historiographical reading of martial arts history to engage with a sociological examination of how practitioners understood the process of training, and how they were able to emphasize the potential for a transformation of oneself across different levels of the body and mind. Within the context of this thesis, this Chapter is where I determine what kind of value the people involved with martial arts might have seen in the practices, and why they worked so hard at preserving them.

From this, it is my hope that the reader will gain a better understanding of the ways in which the Republican era featured a dramatic shift in how people in China understood themselves and the cultural practices which they integrated into their lives.¹² Because of the turbulent changes that took place at all levels of society, teachers of martial arts were put in a situation where they had to respond to criticisms of their traditions, and accommodate martial arts training to new concepts of education and a public school system established in the modernization efforts for a “modern China.” The change in the language used to promote martial arts, and the new emphasis on the practice as a peaceful recreational pursuit for self-cultivation,

¹² This remapping is best elaborated upon by Gail Hershatter’s publication in 1996, *Remapping China: Fissures in the Historical Terrain*.

led to an historical change in the perception of these practices, the ways they were taught to new students, and how it was carried forward by this new wave of students.

Limitations of Research

This thesis is largely based around the period from approximately 1895 to 1937. This time marks a very distinct transition in Chinese society, between the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese war in 1895, and the beginning of the second Sino-Japanese war in 1937. The selection of these dates was based not on the combatants involved in the two wars, but on the dynamics that occurred within China during that time. One of results of the first Sino-Japanese war was that the Liaodong peninsula, Taiwan and the Penghu islands were ceded to Japan. The loss of this national territory demonstrated to many contemporaries a stark decline in the ability of the Qing dynasty to protect its borders. Compounding the humiliations that the Qing dynasty had endured in earlier losses in conflicts with western nations, the defeat it suffered at the hands of Japan fuelled the growing movement against the Manchu rulers of the Qing Dynasty, where a growing number of people argued that the foreign Manchu rulers had to be removed, and control returned to the Han that claimed to have ruled China for the most of its dynastic history.¹³ They believed this could restore the harmony that had been lost, and allow them to rebuild and reassert the strength of their borders to protect themselves from more invasions.

Following the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, reform movements and intellectual debates grew in number and intensity. These movements carried through the collapse of the Qing

¹³ This legitimacy of this claim is complicated by issues such as the division into multiple kingdoms during several periods of China's history, the Mongolian domination during the Yuan dynasty from 1271 CE to 1368 CE, the Manchu domination during the Qing dynasty and the general complexity surrounding ethnicity and sovereignty in China.

dynasty in 1911, the formation of the Republic of China in 1912, and the chaotic period of the Warlord era which lasted from the death of a powerful military leader Yuan Shikai (袁世凯 1859-1916)¹⁴ up to 1928 with the conclusion of the Northern Expedition when the Guomindang party assembled an alliance of generals and warlords strong enough to establish itself as a central authority in China. The founding of the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* occurred during a period referred to as the Nanjing decade of 1927-1937, in which the GMD established their capital in Nanjing after the Northern Expedition.

The Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 marked another distinct shift in China's history. The GMD response of withdrawing from many of the invaded regions caused a very negative impact on their popularity amongst the people, and most of the fighting was limited to small, localized engagements. For many reasons ranging from the disunity of political forces, to geographic limitations of the influence of GMD and internal conflicts between Chinese warlords, there was no significant push to retake Manchuria and the occupied territories in the northeast. A full scale war with Japan only broke out six years after the initial attacks. As Japanese forces slowly increased the size of their occupied areas, it was the *Lugouqiao shibian* (卢沟桥事变 Marco Polo Bridge incident) on July 7th, 1937, that truly sparked a full engagement of GMD forces. The bridge was an important link in the supply line with the Pinghan railway from

¹⁴ Yuan Shikai served as the president of the Republic of China from 1912 to 1916. He began his political career with a posting in Korea, where he served as the commander of the Chinese forces in Korea during the first Sino-Japanese war. His power was increased when he was put in charge of the first New Army in 1895, and he served other positions such as the Governor of Shandong, Viceroy of Zhili, Commissioner for North China Trade, Minister of Beiyang, and Prime Minister of the Qing dynasty just before its collapse. Sun Yat-sen granted Yuan Shikai the position of president of the new Republic because of the military force Yuan held with his control over the Beiyang army, which was one of the strongest armies in China at the time. His actions set the foundations for the Warlord era in China by giving more power to military governors and undermining the representative democracy Sun Yat-sen hoped to build.

Beiping¹⁵ to Wuhan, and served as the main passage linking Beiping to the GMD controlled areas in the south.

The outbreak of a full-scale Sino-Japanese war had an enormous impact on the administration and development of China. As more and more people were pulled away from different projects like the *Guoshuguan* so that they could assist with the war effort, many developments were put on hold. As the Japanese forces advanced and captured the city of Nanjing in December of 1937, the people who were involved with the *Guoshuguan* were forced to relocate, many of them losing touch with each other because of the chaos of the invasion and the civil war that followed. A number of them eventually ended up in Taiwan, where they tried to rebuild the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* project. The scope of this study cannot properly cover the events that occurred throughout this conflict, and the dramatic changes that followed, so I have limited this analysis to the point just before the war started in 1937.

Another limitation of this thesis is that the developments of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) during the Republican period have not been included. Founded in July 21st 1921, the CCP had its origins in the modernity movements of this time, and came to control China in 1949 after a civil war with the GMD forces. Starting from ideological disagreements between members of the two parties, the civil war began in April of 1927 as Chiang Kai-shek (蔣介石 1887-1975)¹⁶ decided the CCP as too great of a threat to the rule of the GMD. He arrested and executed

¹⁵ Beiping (北平 Northern Peace) is known today as Beijing (北京 Northern Capital). First called Beijing by the Yongle Emperor of the Ming dynasty in 1421, the Guomindang changed the name to Beiping when they established the capital of the Republic of China in Nanjing. After the Communist Party of China took control in 1949, they established the capital of the People's Republic of China in the north, reverting the name of the city back to Beijing.

¹⁶ Chiang Kai-shek was a significant figure in the Guomindang party, and he served as Chairman of the National Military Council of the Nationalist government of the Republic of China from 1928 to 1948. More details of his life will be discussed throughout this paper.

members of the Communist party, and sought to purge the GMD of leftists. The relation between the two parties and the impact of their civil war is far too complex of a topic to incorporate into the focus of this thesis. Their exclusion from this study is detrimental to historiographical elements of the study, but after reviewing the available materials, I do not believe the CCP had any major impact on the field of martial arts practice until after they came to power in 1949.¹⁷

Sources

The primary sources used for this study are some of the publications made in the 1920s and 1930s in association with the *Guoshuguan*, as well as an anniversary book published by the academy which chronicles a significant portion of their history. A few teachers at this school such as Sun Lutang (孙禄堂 1861-1933)¹⁸ and Yang Chengfu (杨澄甫 1883-1936)¹⁹ published some books in the early twentieth century, and there are also a few articles written by Zhang Zhijiang (張之江 1888-1966),²⁰ one of the key founders and the first director of the academy. For this thesis, I have also consulted some publications by famous martial arts practitioners whose lineage of teachers can be connected to martial artists who taught at associated the *Guoshuguan*. These publications often contain a brief history of martial arts as it relates to the

¹⁷ For those interested in learning about the impact of the CCP on martial arts training after they came to power, an excellent starting point is Susan Brownwell's work in *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic*.

¹⁸ Sun Lutang was originally named Sun Fu Quan 孫福全, and he was born in Wan County, near the city of Baoding in Hebei province. He was a famous teacher who integrated concepts of *Bagua Zhang*, *Xingyi Quan* and *Taiji Quan* together to create his own style called Sun Style *Taiji Quan*. He published several books, and was considered an accomplished scholar of Neo-Confucian and Daoist thought.

¹⁹ Yang Chengfu was renowned a teacher of *Taiji Quan* who was asked to contribute to the *Guoshuguan* project.

²⁰ Zhang Zhijiang's history is explained throughout chapter three, but in essence he was a military figure of Republican China that retired from service to open the Central Martial Arts Academy in Nanjing.

school of the practitioner, though deviations are found between each story and different interpretations of events surrounding the school. Secondary sources include works such as North American publications from the 1960s up to 2012 which describe different aspects of the history of martial arts, and works by teachers who examined the practice and intentions of martial arts training. Many books that appeared relevant to the political, cultural, historical or military history of this period were also consulted, and theoretical works on social theory and conceptions of the body were important to understanding the theoretical dynamics of this study.

Conventions

I have used the Pinyin system of Romanization throughout this thesis, except when quoting another author, where it was left according to the original format. While older books on Chinese history often used the Wade-Giles system of Romanization, Pinyin is currently the most commonly used system. Chinese terms have been italicized, though proper nouns remain in normal font. For the first instance of any Chinese term, I present it in the format of having the pinyin Romanization, the Chinese characters and the translation organized as the following: *zhongwen* (中文 Chinese writing). After introducing the term, in many cases I continue to use that term rather than its translation. Titles of organizations, publications or systems in Chinese are capitalized (such as *Taiji Quan* and *Guoshuguan*) whereas Chinese terms and phrases are left in lower case (such as *zhongwen* and *qi*).

Chapter 1: A Historical Context for Chinese Martial Arts

The field of Chinese martial arts is complicated by the diversity of traditions and styles transmitted by different schools and lineages. There is a polarity between the individuality of each school and the similarities that unite them in the larger context of being part of the same field of practice.²¹ In just a single chapter it is impossible to do justice to the full breadth of Chinese history and how it influenced the practice of martial arts, so the goal of this chapter is just to try and bring more awareness to the general context building up to what represented the field of Chinese martial arts leading up to the process of repositioning that occurred in the Republican era.

Peter Lorge's recent publication on Chinese martial arts serves as an excellent starting point to understand the history of martial arts in China. He presents a study of Chinese martial arts in multiple contexts, not just as military tactics and sport, but also social class, gender relations, ethnicity, philosophy, religion, popular fiction and the performing arts. Lorge was critical of the belief of martial arts having an historical affiliation to peaceful or spiritual practices and argued that martial arts were best defined as the various skills or practices that originated as methods of combat.²² This definition accommodates many performance, religious or health-promoting activities that no longer have any direct combat applications but clearly originated in combat. He saw that, historically, these arts developed physical practices of armed and unarmed combat, which must be understood as military skills, not methods of self defense or

²¹ Demarco, 2000, p. 10.

²² Lorge, 2012, p. 1.

religious activity. Martial arts pre-existed religious Daoism and Buddhism, and were practised outside the religious context of those belief systems.

Through extensive research of the available materials Lorge offers a review of the practice of martial arts throughout Chinese history leading up to the modern era. He has determined that the contemporary understanding of martial arts is inconsistent with most of its earlier practices, and that there is an erroneous perspective on these practices when they are defined in terms of peace, self-defence and religion. While performance of martial arts for ritual and even entertainment purposes seems to be a fundamental aspect of their origins, its association with improved health or self-cultivation practices is not something that featured strongly in its history beyond the Qing dynasty, and he argues that religion was never really seen as an important aspect to skill in martial arts.

One of the problematic issues found within the study of Chinese martial arts history is how often people emphasize that important knowledge about its origins and development is traditionally orally transmitted from martial arts teachers. “Adding to the misunderstanding of the past, this imagined oral tradition seldom places the martial arts in the broader context of Chinese history, or when it does, uses a simplistic, static, and inaccurate description of the past.”²³ Any work on the history of Chinese martial arts has to confront the issue of authenticity because history is often used to “authenticate” systems of training when a teacher tries to validate his practice on the basis of it being the oral tradition passed down through a lineage of instructors. An approach proposed by Lorge to this question of authenticity was to avoid examining any particular system of practice, and to just start from the beginning of Chinese

²³ Lorge, 2012, p. 1.

history and move through the significant phases of its history and the role of martial arts in society.

Going back to the Zhou dynasty (1045 - 256 BCE), archery, and more specifically, archery from a chariot, is what set aristocrats apart from commoners on the battlefield.²⁴ Archery was placed at the forefront of martial skills, and would retain that position even after the invention of firearms.²⁵ Studying some of the earliest records, he saw that hunting, warfare, and violent inter-clan feuding were not just struggles for power but were assertions of identity. The early conception of an aristocrat was often that of an individual who regularly used violence in defense of honor, or to prove his martial skills. The identity of the entire group of aristocrats was based upon the individual use of violence, and thus, martial arts.²⁶

The association of chariot-driving and archery with the upper class would cement a long-lasting connection between these particular skills and noble character, as they came to be included as two of the six arts of *ruxue* (儒学 scholarly studies) proposed by Confucius. The other four arts were far more academic in nature, including the rites, music, calligraphy and mathematics. Amongst the *ru*, chariot-driving evolved into horseback-riding as the chariot fell out of use.

²⁴ Shaughnessy, 1988, p. 194.

²⁵ Recent work on rediscovering ancient practices of archery is demonstrating it would have been far more effective than the earliest forms of guns. In *Arab Archery, an Arabic Manuscript of about A.D. 1500: A Book on the Excellence of the Bow and Arrow and the Description Thereof* by Nabih Amin Faris, it is mentioned that Saracens who fought with the Crusaders were tested to fire 3 arrows in 1.5 seconds. Though this claim was initially rejected by modern archers, the Danish archer Lars Anderson was able to master the art of keeping multiple arrows in the hand while shooting, and has been filmed firing 10 arrows one after another at a record speed of 4.9 seconds, at a strength that could easily penetrate mail armor. He mentioned that some of his research in this practice came from Chinese sources as well as Persian texts.

²⁶ Lorge, 2012, p. 29.

In the Warring States period (475 – 403 BCE), archery came to be imbued with even more concepts of nobility connected to the idea of self and group discipline, order, and self-cultivation. Perhaps due to its association with aristocratic members of society, archery was the first martial art promoted for the positive effects it had on the practitioner. Texts such as the *Liezi* (列子)²⁷ and *Zhuangzi* (莊子)²⁸ made references to the development of a superior mental state through archery, where a “true archer achieved a higher order of functionality that transcended the mere physical performance of shooting.”²⁹

It can be difficult to determine fact from legend within the stories from the Warring States, but they do contain reoccurring elements related to the trope of the heroic martial artist. Skills in combat seemed to be something that was a means to empower men to resist the subordination of society to political control. The martial hero of this time was often positioned as a counterpoint to the state’s monopoly over the licit use of force.³⁰ Men known as *shi* (士 “Knights-errant”) were valorized in history and fiction as a response to the subordination of individuals to the state. Unlike a dismissed government official, the exemplary martial artist could take revenge or prove himself against the political order. For much of Chinese history works of fiction featured righteous heroes often finding themselves at odds with a corrupt state. Those in pursuit of moral virtue made references the ideal of a *junzi* (君子 often translated as

²⁷ The *Liezi* is a Daoist text attributed to Lie Yukou (列圉寇), a circa 5th century BCE Hundred Schools of Thought philosopher, but it is believed to be compiled around the 4th century CE.

²⁸ The *Zhuangzi* is seminal text in daoism, attributed to a philosopher of the 4th century BCE known only as Zhuangzi, or Zhuang Zhou. The importance of this text is far too great for the scope of this paper, but works on the *Zhuangzi* are an important starting point for anyone interested in learning more about philosophical Daoism.

²⁹ Lorge, 2012, p. 52.

³⁰ Lorge, 2012, p. 49.

“noble man”) who represented an earlier, mythical ideal of a moral, cultivated warrior.³¹ Similar to the example with archery, this linked martial arts with a form of moral or mental cultivation of these figures, but it does not indicate a clear system of practice including medical concepts of the body as we see later on. It would appear that, during this time, it was moral cultivation that made one a heroic warrior, and not the training in fighting arts that made one moral.

Armies of the Warring States period had evolved into trained and controlled instruments of violence for the state rather than chaotic assemblages of independent warriors, and the fighting arts shifted from its earlier function as a marker of the aristocratic class to become a tool of state authority. An important factor of this change was the formation of official armies wherein military law was far harsher than civilian law as a result of use as means to order and direct the expression of violence rather than just suppress it. At a time where bringing back the head of a defeated enemy was a means to promotion within the Qin empire (221-206 BCE),³² the ideology of serving the state through licit violence became a sign of morality and self-control.

Licit and illicit violence are culturally defined through a number of institutions, both formal and informal. Mark Edward Lewis’s classic study, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, describes the evolution of a number of linked violent practices connected to changes in political authority and social organization. Even in times of peace, however, martial arts persisted in all cultures. Violence is often a tool of government, or a distinctive feature of the state in the form of a monopoly on the licit use of force.³³ Martial arts in this instance were simply understood as better trained and executed violence. It enhanced the ability to compel others to do one’s will, or to resist the compulsion of others.

³¹ Goldin, 1999, p. vii.

³² However, the existence of the kingdom of Qin predated its time as an official dynasty, when it was one of many kingdoms caught up in the conflicts of the Warring States period.

³³ Lorge, 2012, p. 241.

During what is referred to as the Three Kingdoms and Six Dynasties period (220 - 581 CE),³⁴ the kinds of weapons used and martial arts practiced in China shifted markedly. A heavy influx of different ethnic groups, particularly of peoples from the Steppes, into the different kingdoms that dominated what is regarded as “Chinese” territories, generated a new level of interaction and exchange. Local strongmen all over the land formed bands of men trained in martial arts that were effective below the battlefield level. This phenomenon was bolstered by prolonged exposure to Steppe culture.

With the development of stirrups, horse archery allowed light cavalry to compete with heavy cavalry for dominance on the battlefield, where mobility and the range of the bows offered tactical advantages. Some of these changes reached their maturity by the Tang dynasty (618-907 CE). Armed forces ebbed between different ratios of professional to conscript soldiers, and between more and less culturally Chinese commanders. With the ongoing military conflicts with Steppe peoples at the frontiers, it became particularly useful for culturally Chinese elites on the frontiers to develop some non-Chinese military and political capabilities, even if this could alienate them from the predominantly agricultural nature of most other Chinese people.³⁵

An important innovation of the Tang period was the introduction of military examinations. The formal system of military examinations was instituted in 702 CE during the reign of Wu Zetian. A few men were recommended to higher ranking positions based on their military skills, but this appeared to be a limited occurrence for important command positions. Along with considerations for height and tests of strength, this formal exam had five key aspects: firing an arrow for distance, mounted archery, mounted spear fighting, foot archery, and verbal

³⁴ These included the three kingdoms of Wei, Shu and Wu, the Jin Dynasty, and the Southern and Northern Dynasties.

³⁵ Skaff, 2000, p. 28.

responses.³⁶ Once again, we see the centrality of archery as a military skill, as well as riding and spear fighting. Previously, most officers came from a family of officers.

The period of disunity following the Tang dynasty was known as the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms period (907-960 CE), which was a time where much of China was highly militarized. The particular modes of warfare across different parts of China were more pronounced. Whereas the official armies had to maintain well-developed armies capable of fighting across a wide range of environments from the plains of north China to the rivers of south China, more localized fighting units reappeared during times of disunity and typically fell into categories such as “bandit-rebels whose activities were of a ‘predatory’ nature, local elites who organized forces to protect their community from the depredations of the bandits, and local [former] officials, who now enjoyed unaccustomed freedom from maneuver as a result of the weakness from the center.”³⁷ These were essentially sub-military units predominantly limited to local fighting, but their formation required the broad teaching of at least rudimentary martial arts skills throughout the countryside.

During the Song dynasty (960-1279 CE), society and culture were far more complex and specialized than what was found in the Steppes. The rise of a professional bureaucratic class of highly educated civil service examination graduates who largely did not practice martial arts or lead in war brought about a concomitant subordination of the military categories of society. With the exception of the highest-ranking military families, national-level Song elites did not practice martial arts. Physical skills were, by definition, markers of low status. The shift away from the martial arts required of the founding emperor and generals of the Song was extremely rapid. By

³⁶ Lorge, 2012, p. 111.

³⁷ Graff, 2002, p. 161.

the reign of the second emperor, the younger brother of the first, poetry competitions were more valued in court than martial demonstrations.³⁸

Despite this disdain and subordination of physical skills at the higher levels, martial arts still seemed to permeate much of society during the Song. Over the course of the dynasty it came to develop into regular, mainstream entertainment. Official martial arts performances, government sponsored wrestling and fighting competitions and military examinations took place within an official context, and regular performances such as wrestling or martial arts competitions were held on festive days in the entertainment quarters, or even at village markets or temples.³⁹ This rise of the entertainment quarters and the performance spaces for martial arts was seen by Lorge as the most important change for martial arts in the Song. Martial artists would once again become romanticized for their ability to defy authority in an unjust world, and the practices were seen as a means to empower the individual against larger structures of power, particularly in fiction.⁴⁰

Prior to this new-found emphasis on aesthetics, a martial arts instructor was only really involved in teaching a student the basic use of infantry or cavalry weapons. He occupied a position that is better conceived as that of a specialist for training soldiers, where his responsibilities included the training of conscript soldiers, directing large groups of men, providing combat leadership and generally making farmers into effective fighters. For practical purposes, both armed and unarmed combat used a very limited set of techniques. This simplicity is further emphasized by the need to teach large numbers of students simultaneously, and, in the military, for those students to fight as a unit rather than as individuals. Effective fighting is more

³⁸ Lorge, 2012, p. 118.

³⁹ Lorge, 2012, p. 132.

⁴⁰ Smith, 2006, p. 382.

the product of learning to perform a simple set of techniques with power, speed and accuracy, and doing this correctly against an opponent, than of learning a large number of elaborate techniques or complex theories.⁴¹

The Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 CE) brought in the element of Mongol rule, though Mongol rule became “Chinese” rule, or at least foreign control over an institutionally Chinese government administering what was conceived of as an eternal, natural Chinese territory.⁴² During this period, northern Chinese that demonstrated Steppe characteristics might serve in the military when needed, but southern Chinese (as well as some northern Chinese) were prohibited from practicing martial arts or owning weapons. The Yuan government was very interested in establishing who could legitimately maintain a capacity for violence. During this time, Mongols characteristically fought as horse-archers, and used wrestling as a form of entertainment or competition, though they were cosmopolitan in some significant ways, famously adopting the weaponry and technologies they came across during their campaigns.

In either individual or battlefield combat, as new weapons and techniques were developed there was a re-occurring cycle to the development of weaponry and its use in combat. When a weapon is first produced, it comes in many forms as users search for a balance of form and practice. It then enters a mature stage where there is a fairly narrow range of form and practice, and the weapon’s characteristics are well understood.⁴³ As a reference point for the popular forms of martial arts weapons during its time, *Shuihu zhuan* (水浒传 *The Water Margin*)⁴⁴ lists eighteen different types weapons: bow, crossbow, silk corded lasso, whip, metal tablet, sword,

⁴¹ Lorge, 2012, p. 134.

⁴² Lorge, 2012, p. 155.

⁴³ Lorge, 2012, p. 79.

⁴⁴ A famous work of fiction written in the 14th century.

long sword, chain, truncheon, *fu*-axe, *yue*-axe, *ge*-halberd, *ji*-halberd, shield, staff, *mao*-spear, *shu*-spear and claw head.⁴⁵ There was often greater diversity in the weapons used by individuals as opposed to those used to equip soldiers, but this still helps give a sense of the variety in weaponry at the time.

During the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 CE) a general named Qi Jiguang (戚繼光 1528-1588)⁴⁶ was famous for his leadership and his ability to train and lead soldiers to victory. He went to great lengths to improve and regularize the overall armament of his troops, emphasizing the importance of training. Although he had them do some boxing practices, it was seen as a means to prepare them for weapons training. A book he wrote around 1560 CE titled *Jixiao Xinshu* (紀效新書 New Book on Effective Discipline) serves as one of the key sources for our current understanding of martial arts during the sixteenth century.

Qi Jiguang and other authors of the time were not just assembling lists of styles out of mere curiosity; they were attempting to find the most functional skills available. One of the central issues of the discussion of boxing styles was effectiveness, with a constant comparison of styles, or anecdotes recounting how other practitioners had an ineffective or flawed style. Qi Jiguang complained about the incompleteness of many styles, that they were only good in parts and lacked a comprehensive set of techniques.⁴⁷ In his efforts to develop the most effective methods to prepare men to fight, he had clear concern with what he referred to as *hua quan* (花拳 “flowery boxing”), ineffective and overly elaborate styles that only looked nice. He had a

⁴⁵ Smith, 2006, 274.

⁴⁶ Qi Jiguang was famous for his effectiveness in campaigns against Japanese pirates, where he was reputed for his success at raising new military units from the pool of local militias.

⁴⁷ Lorge, 2012, p. 168.

strong preference for simple, effective training methods that could be easily taught to large numbers of people and produce strong fighting units.

As the Ming dynasty took shape, there was a blossoming of literature and literacy which led to more authors writing about different subjects and in every genre, from fiction to history. Martial arts changed during the Ming dynasty, but the largest shift was intellectual rather than in practice. People began to write about the martial arts in ways they had not before, and authors became much more specific in describing martial arts, not only surveying the available styles in many categories but also providing illustrated accounts of specific techniques. Far more books on military affairs were written during the Ming Dynasty than in any earlier period. Martial arts came to be featured in numerous works on fiction, linking novels, performances, and theater.⁴⁸ This new development featured the publication of two great novels that featured martial arts a strong component of the stories, the *Shuihu zhuan* and the *Sanguo yanyi* (三国演义 *the Romance of the Three Kingdoms*).

This flowering of the intellectual interest in martial arts connected with two concepts that had existed since the earliest records of China's history, and remain at play in people who position themselves in relation to each other; *wen* (文 literate, civil) and *wu* (武 martial, military). They are related to each other as two antagonistic, yet complementary, pathways of human action.⁴⁹ The stereotypes reflecting this polarity can be found in the Chinese tradition of the macho hero represented in ways such as *yingxiong* (英雄 outstanding male) and *haohan* (好汉

⁴⁸ Lorge, 2012, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Di Cosmo, 2009, p. 4.

good fellow) being counterbalanced by a softer, cerebral male tradition such as the *caizi* (才子 the talented scholar) and the *wenren* (文人 the cultured man).⁵⁰

Wen is generally understood to refer to those genteel, refined qualities that were associated with literary and artistic pursuits of the classical scholars, and can thereby be partly interpreted as a leisure-class masculine model. This type of masculinity is best typified by the image of groups of men writing poetry for mutual amusement or to mark a memorable occasion. *Wu* was conceived as embodying seven virtues which were the qualities “that suppressed violence, gathered in arms, protected what was great, established merit, gave peace to the people, harmonized the masses and propagated wealth.”⁵¹ *Wu* is therefore a concept which embodies the power of military strength but also the wisdom to know when and when not to employ it. *Wu* attributes of physical strength and military prowess were cultivated by large sections of male society – from elite Tang polo players to Qing street acrobats. In practice, *wen* can refer to a whole range of attributes such as literary excellence, civilised behavior, and general education, while *wu* refers to just as many different sets of descriptors, including a powerful physique, fearlessness and fighting skills.⁵²

A disdain for the military by scholarly officials meant that throughout most periods of Chinese history, the balance between the two concepts often swayed in favor of *wen*. “The military examinations, rankings and posts, though parallel to the civil ones, were explicitly disesteemed by the literati.”⁵³ Generally speaking, it was difficult for a warrior who was illiterate

⁵⁰ Louie, 2002, p. 8.

⁵¹ Louie, 2002, p. 14.

⁵² Louie, 2002, p. 133.

⁵³ Song, 2004, p. 80.

or unfamiliar with Confucian teachings to be promoted to senior posts at the command level.⁵⁴ A phrase dating back from the Song dynasty said “A good piece of metal does not become nails, and a good man does not become a soldier” (好铁不打钉，好男不当兵 *haotie bu dading, haonan bu dangbing*).⁵⁵ Unfavourable stereotypes of generals and military figures reflected the bias against *wu* aspects of society by many civil officials.⁵⁶ The differences between the perceived values of *wen* and *wu* could also be seen in the records of the civil examinations and the military examinations. Although both were channels towards official positions in much of Imperial China, Ma Mingda (马明达 1943-) noted in his studies on martial arts history that the records of the military examinations were less valued. Ma Mingda is a respected contemporary scholar of martial arts history, who advocated for archival research into the development of the traditions of martial training. He was both a martial arts teacher and a practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine, which gave him an insider’s perspective of the training, though it also may have given him a certain bias. From his archival work, he pointed out that more attention was paid to archiving the records of civil examinations and preserving associated documents. In contrast, the records of military examinations are incomplete and, for certain years, quite unreliable.⁵⁷

Even though Confucius advocated skills such as archery and driving chariots, and he himself could be considered a member of the knight-errant class of his time, he argued for the supreme value of the moral man over the warrior or functionary. He argued that rulers should hire moral men who had cultivated themselves through *wen* aspects of study. These good men would be better able to run a government and assist a ruler than men whose only qualification

⁵⁴ Song, 2004, p. 80.

⁵⁵ Louie, 2002, p. 18.

⁵⁶ Ryor, 2009, p. 228.

⁵⁷ Kennedy and Guo, 2005, p. 89.

was skill in a particular job. A good ruler needs to employ good men, and the positive effects of this configuration of leadership would spread throughout society to its great benefit. For Confucianism, the emphasis was clearly on the intellectual aspects of study and the quality of written essays. The *wu* elements of *ruxue* declined over the centuries, and by the Ming era most scholars concentrated solely on literary studies.⁵⁸ This concept carried over throughout most of the imperial age in China, where social order came to be based on the image of the Confucian scholar-gentleman.

Even the members of the military families that typically rose to official positions were not completely without *wen* cultivation. Some of these military figures were known to be active in writing poetry; receiving, commissioning, and collecting works of art; and even practicing painting. The bias against military men as indiscriminating and uncultivated men of action by many civil officials has disproportionately influenced the perception of these men.⁵⁹ Qi Jiguang was known for his literary pursuits, and also collected paintings and took an interest in art. Two noted literati of the day, Wang Daokun (汪道昆 1525-1593) and Wang Shizhen (王世貞 1526-1590) thought highly of his poetry, but other scholars criticised how acquiring a literary reputation only attracted self-styled “recluses” who parasitically clamored for his writing and patronage. As many generals and fighting men made their reputations in frontier conflicts, scholars tended to painted a picture of the frontier where fortunes made by the lowest sorts of people.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Graham, 1994, p. 31.

⁵⁹ Ryor, 2009, p. 242.

⁶⁰ Ryor, 2009, p. 224.

Despite these expressions of disdain for *wu*, throughout the social history of imperial China important roles have been attributed to military aspects.⁶¹ During the Ming, some literati were known to have been immersed not only in the practical side of military matters but also in the emblematic and symbolic aspects of martial life. Regarding the collected writing of many prominent intellectuals, writers, and officials, one sees that swords, swordsmen, and swordsmanship occupied a large part of the literati imagination.⁶² A variety of sources describe a situation where there was more fluidity in civil-military relations than is generally acknowledged, with the prevailing opinion urging the separation of civil and military roles in society.

Regardless of which side an individual favored, it is indisputable that *wen* and *wu* were perceived to be essential for men of substance. The Confucian *Analects* touches on this paradigm in the phrase “Worthy men of virtue know the greater principles, and unworthy men know the smaller principles. There is no man who does not have something of the way of *wen* and *wu* in him.” (贤者识其大者，不贤者识其小者，莫不有文武之道焉 *xianzhe shi qi dazhe, buxianzhe shi qi xiaozhe, mobu you wenwu zhi daoyan*).⁶³ For many Chinese men however, achieving *both* concepts of *wen* and *wu* was tantamount to achieving power over both body and mind.⁶⁴ In the late Ming, there was a drive towards *wenwu shuangquan* (文武双全 “being well versed in both *wen* and *wu*”).⁶⁵

“At that time [Ming] athletics were still admired, young students practised boxing, fencing and archery, and riding and hunting were favourite pastimes. Thus bodily strength was one of the recognized attributes of a handsome man. They are depicted as tall and broad shouldered, and the nudes of the erotic albums show them with heavy chest and muscular arms and legs... Under the Manchu occupation the martial arts were monopolized by the conquerors, and as a reaction the Chinese, and more especially the members of the literati

⁶¹ Ryor, 2009, p. 220.

⁶² Ryor, 2009, p. 230.

⁶³ *Analects*, XIX.22, Translation slightly edited for clarity. Louie, 2002, p. 11.

⁶⁴ Louie, 2002, p. 116.

⁶⁵ Song, 2004, p. 35.

class, began to consider physical exercise as vulgar and athletic prowess as suited only to the 'Ch'ing barbarians,' and Chinese professional boxers and acrobats."⁶⁶

During the Qing dynasty, the Manchus promoted *wu* elements, because of the martial elements of their own Steppe culture. Hong Taiji (洪太極 1592-1643), who reigned as emperor from 1626-1643 expressed "What I fear is this: that the children and grandchildren of later generations will abandon the old [Manchu] way, neglect shooting and riding, and enter into the Chinese way."⁶⁷ This comment demonstrates there was a distinction between the literary mannerisms of China in comparison to the more physical lifestyle of the nomadic Manchu people.

The martial influence of the Qing dynasty was such that by the mid-eighteenth century, contemporaries acknowledged that some connection to military success, whether through soldiering, strategizing, logistics, historiography or otherwise was, if not prerequisite to, then certainly instrumental in the achievement of a successful political career.⁶⁸ While the Manchu rulers of the Qing dynasty monopolized the military power and set limitations on the capacity of anyone outside of the *Baqi* (八旗 Eight Banner) armies⁶⁹ to engage in martial training, the Revolt of the Three Feudatories of 1673-1681 pressed them to make these limitations even more severe. The revolt was led by the Han general Wu Sangui (吳三桂 1612-1678), and the Manchus sought

⁶⁶ Gulik, 1961, p. 188.

⁶⁷ Waley-Cohen, 2009, p. 283.

⁶⁸ Waley-Cohen, 2009, p. 285.

⁶⁹ The Eight Banner armies formed the basic framework for Manchu military organization. The banner structure called for eight separate organizations each for Manchus, Mongols and "Han-martial," being the Chinese who joined the Manchus before the fall of the Ming. Many of the Han soldiers who volunteered to served under the Manchus, including high concentrations of the Muslim Hui minority in some regions, were classified into the *Lüying* (綠營 Green Standard Army) which operated as more of a constabulary force next to the official armies of the Eight Banners. This military framework drew new apparently ethnic distinctions and created a new elite status based on martial roles, distinct from Chinese elites whose claim to elevated social status rested on their superior education and literary accomplishments.

to prevent the possibility of another rebellion by enforcing strict laws regarding the possession of arms. Bannermen were faced with prohibitions as well, where they were restricted from practicing a trade or doing manual labor. Ideally, from the perspective of the Qing government, the privileged bannermen would maintain a loyal and effective military force in return for government economic support. By living apart from the subject population in their own garrisons, working and functioning within their particular banner, the bannermen kept a strong group identity,⁷⁰ and were able to maintain the characteristics of their Steppe homelands.

There was a significant relation of the *wu* aspects of society to the lifestyles of the Steppe people in the north, and during the Qing there was an even more explicit case for this within the Manchu prohibitions over certain martial aspects of society which led towards the further disdain of it by scholars who identified themselves as Han and felt subjected to foreign domination throughout the Qing dynasty. Any male who was not Manchu was constantly reminded of his subjugation through a pig-tail or “queues” they were forced grow and maintain. Regardless of how scholars and thinkers tried to cast the relative positions of martial and civil as categories, brains or moral cultivation might create inner strength, but it in a direct confrontation they would often be overcome by brawn.

This created a further divide in the distinctions between *wen* and *wu*, and Confucian scholars shifted away from the relative balance that was encouraged during the Ming, which led to the bookish, frail self-presentation that came to stereotype Confucian scholars.⁷¹ “Masculinity was mainly defined in the political and public realm, and this was particularly true for the Confucian literati, who regarded self-cultivation, and more importantly, political achievements

⁷⁰ Lorge, 2012, p. 187.

⁷¹ The criticisms of Confucianism for “weakening the bodies of students” and promoting the stereotype of the “sick man of the East” is elaborated upon in the second chapter with a closer examination of the modernity movements.

as the primary criteria for genuine manhood. Therefore the male anxiety came to be driven by frustrations in the pursuit of political power and fame.”⁷² This politicized construct of masculinity became a kind of “master narrative” of ideal man in the society. It may be argued that it was through this discursive interplay that this masculinity was produced, manipulated and controlled by imperial power.⁷³ The image of the fragile scholar and the bodily rhetoric of *wen*, as a signifier of knowledge and civility, became the dominant version of the male body in a society that encouraged the production and training of obedient subjects and subservient bureaucrats.⁷⁴

For various reasons beyond this *wen-wu* paradigm, the late Qing dynasty proved to be a difficult era of Chinese history. The mid-nineteenth century in China was a panorama of conflict, racked by incessant civil strife, political upheavals, foreign incursions, and natural catastrophes resulting in famine and widespread banditry, especially in the northern provinces and along the coast. All this led to a steep increase of the need for private security, which marked an important stage of the development of martial arts schools and how they were perceived in society. Despite Qing limitations of the private possession of weaponry, there was a distinct rise in the number of local militias as well as a growth in *biaoju* (镖局 private protection agencies, also known as *baobiao* 保镖).⁷⁵ Most of these agencies were run by professional martial artists, and they served to escort the transport of goods and to protect banks, pawn shops, the homes of the wealthy, and other commercial enterprises.⁷⁶ There were two basic forms of protection agencies, *huyuan* (护

⁷² Song, 2004, p. 64.

⁷³ Song, 2004, p. 91

⁷⁴ Song, 2004, p. 84.

⁷⁵ Kennedy and Guo, 2005, p. 138.

⁷⁶ Henning, 1981, p. 176.

院 compound guards, literally “protecting the compound”) and *zoubiao* (走镖 traveling guards). Secret societies, bodyguard agencies and town militias flourished during this time of chaos.⁷⁷

Within of this economic boom in protection services, the fighting arts were seen as a viable career path, as opposed to being something intended for health maintenance or spiritual growth. Many of the people who practiced these arts were uneducated farmers who studied in order to join their local militia or to obtain a job as a bodyguard or caravan escort. Some students may have seen a practicality in learning how to defend themselves, but there was this stereotype amongst many of the educated people that martial arts were closely associated with low-class ruffians, for whom fighting was a common occurrence. As Sun Lutang wrote in the preface to his book *Xingyi quanxue* (形意拳学 The study of mind-body boxing) “There was a prejudice in the old days that literates despised martial arts, and that martial artists were short on literary learning.”⁷⁸

In this environment, anyone involved with the field of martial arts was expected to be capable of fighting. True enough, many famous martial arts teacher had a history in which they had been tested in the real world of violence.⁷⁹ In the biographies of many of the renowned teachers during the Republican era, there are plenty of references to people fighting and overcoming bullies, bandits and gangsters. Considering the economic benefits that would come with having the status of being a teacher, there would have been incentive for others to challenge

⁷⁷ Philip Kuhn discusses this chaos of the late imperial ages at length in his 1970 publication *Rebellion and its Enemies in Late Imperial China, Militarization and Social Structure, 1796-1864*.

⁷⁸ Though included in the republication of Sun Lutang’s text, this quote was made by the translator in his preface, it was not written by Sun himself. Sun, 1915, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Apparently when Sun Lutang was studying with the renowned teacher Cheng Tinghua (程廷华 1848-1900), Cheng encouraged Sun to go out and test himself in the world, emphasizing he should study more from other teachers and hinting that he should develop more real-world experience. Sun, 1915, p. 21.

them to prove that they were the better martial artist and should be the one to lead the students, and receive the financial rewards and status associated with the position of running a school.

After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, there were numerous issues causing a negative perception of martial arts. For many people, particularly peasants and labourers, they had a quick association of martial arts with the soldiers, guards and ruffians who harassed them and threatened them with violence in many circumstances. An unfortunate experience many people were exposed to was the severe taxes levied during the Qing dynasty, and moving into the warlord era, harassment was commonplace and it was the soldiers and fighting men who would go out to enforce orders, collect taxes and requisition property, manpower and goods, typically without the acquiescence of local civil administrations.⁸⁰ From 1912 to 1931, the armies of China did not fight a single foreign foe for the defence of the integrity of the country. The conflicts were defined by numerous power struggles, and it was typically the common people who were the unfortunate source of funding for many of these armies.

While many fighting men were guards, soldiers and thugs who enforced the power of others, Paul Cohen found in his study on the Boxer Rebellion that town militias also trained martial artists to simply protect their farmlands and households from theft. However, the official stance of the Qing dynasty was against the private ownership of weapons and the training of martial skills that could be used against them. The ability for those other than Qing soldiers to perform martial training, particularly weapons training, was a complicated issue which increased the necessity for discretion and secrecy.

⁸⁰ Ch'en, 1979, p. 4.

One of the most prominent factors for the criticisms of martial arts was the link that the practices had with the Boxer Rebellion which took place from 1898 to 1901.⁸¹ It was an anti-foreign rebellion led by the *Yihe Quan* (义和拳 Boxers United in Righteousness), who did not actually practice the type of training found in curriculums of later associations such as the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan*. The use of the term “boxer” in this rebellion can be misleading. Those affiliated with the *Yihe Quan* actually trained in ritualized forms of what could be described as spirit-possession. Although these sects identified themselves as boxers, and brought people together under the pretext of protecting local communities and preserving traditional social and moral values, their training was not coherent with the forms of martial arts we find within the training at the *Guoshuguan* and the *Jingwu* academies.

While some people understood the difference between the ritualistic practices of the *Yihe Quan* and the physical training of traditional martial artists and village militia organizations, many other people perceived a clear connection between the two and called for an elimination of anything related to boxing practices. In truth, content of the “boxing” practiced by the new Boxers United in Righteousness was clearly religious in nature, including invulnerability rituals, mass spirit possession, the swallowing of charms, and the recitation of spells.⁸² The characteristic features of the rebellion, from its name and principal slogans to its practice of mass spirit possession and beliefs in the invulnerability its followers were given, all reflect forms of ritual

⁸¹ The Boxer Rebellion was set in motion by a culmination of conflicting issues, and a breaking point from the pressure of diminished food supplies resulting from a series of natural disasters, mismanagement by a corrupt administration and foreign efforts at colonization. The failure of this rebellion to expel the foreigners in China resulted in an invasion of China by an Allied force of European and Japanese armies. The ordeal is well described in Paul Cohen’s *History in Three Keys*, and Joseph Esherick’s *The Origins of the Boxer Rebellion*.

⁸² Cohen, 1997, p. 26.

practices that were built on superstitions and fears that existed in a difficult period of the Qing dynasty.⁸³

In Esherick's work on the origins of the Boxers, he argues the true nature of their practices were not derived from sectarian or martial arts groups which happened to have the same name many years before. The popular culture of the area served as the strongest influence amongst the sources for the distinctive boxer ritual repertoire. Its influences drew upon popular religion and the dramatic tales of local opera.⁸⁴ The Boxers sought to quite literally embody the values of the heroes of China's martial arts tradition: loyalty, integrity and selfless altruism, and through this, receive the fantastic abilities they believed these deified heroes possessed.

The New Culture Movement of the early twentieth century, which advocated the virtues of science and reason, saw the Boxer Rebellion as the representation of everything that was objectionable and threatening about the old culture. The Boxers became a trope in arguments over modernization and how people of the new Republic of China should react to the foreign presence in their major cities. In many ways, the Boxers came to be perceived as being the embodiment of superstition and irrationality, and all the things that served to weaken the people of China.⁸⁵

The main reason for the animosity of modernists in Republican China towards the Boxers was the damage caused by the anti-foreign rebellion. The response of foreign countries to this rebellion was to form an allied military force, which included the participation of Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Because the Boxers of this rebellion relied solely on the powers they were promised from ritual

⁸³ Cohen, 1997, p. 17.

⁸⁴ Esherick, 1987, p. xvii.

⁸⁵ Cohen, 1992, p. 84.

performances, they were butchered in large numbers when they faced organized and well-armed military units of foreign countries. This allied military force used the rebellion as an excuse to attack and occupy the city of Beijing on August 14th of 1901, when it was the capital of the Qing dynasty. The swiftness with which this army swept aside Chinese military forces served as concrete evidence for the military superiority of the foreign nations. Key defensive positions were overwhelmed in mere days, sometimes hours. The complete failure of the Boxers who sparked the conflict, as well as the imperial armies who also failed to stop the allied invasion, served as a powerful argument for those who believed that the abandonment of the traditional ways was a necessary step towards building a stronger nation.

Such national humiliations were a major contribution to the animosity towards the failure of the Qing dynasty to keep pace with the developments in the West. In the Republican era, an ongoing motto was “In service to society, under the guidance of the scientific spirit, for the realization of our ideal of the creation of a New China.”⁸⁶ This strong orientation towards the future and notions of modernity was a response to the failures of the past. The emphasis on Westernization focused on the aspects of how the Republic of China needed to become equal in power with Western nations to receive fair treatment on the world stage. The land concessions of the Treaty of Versailles of 1919 had sparked a heightened antagonism when German rights over Shandong were given to Imperial Japan after six months of negotiations with international powers at the Paris Peace Conference. These results from the Treaty of Versailles stirred the

⁸⁶ Motto on the frontispiece of the first issue of *Xin Qingnian* (*the New Youth* journal) which appeared in 1919 (Unschuld, 1985, p. 244).

political aspects of these modernization movements which became known as the May Fourth Movement.⁸⁷

In the minds of these modernists, the Chinese polity could no longer be effectively governed by Confucian cultural values which had dominated intellectual developments in China up to the end of the Qing dynasty.⁸⁸ The students and intellectual leaders of this movement stressed Western ideas of science and democracy. Traditional Chinese ethics, customs, literature, history, philosophy, religion, and social and political institutions were fiercely attacked. Liberalism, pragmatism, utilitarianism, anarchism, and many varieties of socialism motivated the movement.⁸⁹ There was a revision, if not an outright rejection, of the belief “in the uniqueness of indigenous culture and in the universality of its underlying principles.”⁹⁰ Under chaotic conditions of political upheaval and warlord rule, “Chinese public opinion for the first time in modern Chinese history had an opportunity to express itself. The voice of the new intelligentsia, conveying the public feeling of national humiliation, was widely heard throughout the country.”⁹¹

The May Fourth Movement was not just an event that occurred on May 4th, 1919. It was the culmination of the dynamics that followed China’s contact with Western civilization, with the influx of new ideas, belief systems, social structures, and scientific practices. Chow Tse-

⁸⁷ This was an anti-imperialist (targeting western imperialism and colonization) cultural, political movement that had a definitive launch with large student protests on May 4th, 1919. The protest fought for five resolutions; to oppose the granting of Shandong to the Japanese under former German concessions, to draw awareness of China’s precarious position to the masses in China, to recommend a large-scale gathering in Beijing, to promote the creation of a Beijing student union, and to hold a demonstration that afternoon to protest the terms of the treaty of Versailles. Chow, 1960, p. 4.

⁸⁸ Chang, 1971, p. 297.

⁸⁹ Chow, 1960, p. 1.

⁹⁰ Unschuld, 1985, p. 230.

⁹¹ Chow, 1960, p. 21.

Tung summarized the key phase quite well when he explained that “during the first phase, some new intellectuals concentrated on instilling their ideas in the students and youth of China. During the second phase an all-out attack on tradition and conservatism was launched principally by students, and the movement was carried beyond purely intellectual circles.”⁹²

Facing this attack on traditional culture, teachers of martial arts tried to communicate the value of the training practices through modern rhetoric, and had to determine how they could present it as a modern, nationwide recreational practice of indigenous calisthenics and self-defence. Fortunately the martial arts did have a strong history of being associated with popular entertainment, with sources going back to the tenth century of the Song dynasty with the practice of martial arts in special amusement districts where practitioners demonstrated routines and “show fights” and theatre and opera groups incorporated elements of martial arts into their performances.⁹³ Various forms of martial dances can be found across Chinese history, and Lorge saw these as not just being used for physical training, but also emotional, mental, and spiritual training as well. They served to legitimize certain groups by creating lineages of practice, or physical histories, through the regular repetition of orthodox patterns,⁹⁴ and they also served as influences for the development of later forms of entertainment.

One of the more challenging endeavors for martial arts instructors was to determine the best way to improve the general understanding of martial arts as a way to maintain health. Most people did not yet understand it as a health-related practice due to the common public perception was that it was something practiced by so many ruffians and superstitious trouble-makers. Amongst all the examples discussed to this point, very few could be easily connected to concepts

⁹² Chow, 1960, p. 6.

⁹³ Filipiak, 2010, p. 34.

⁹⁴ Lorge, 2012, p. 31.

of self-cultivation, where the training with weaponry or unarmed methods of combat could be understood as having positive physical or mental benefit of practice. The earliest examples could be seen in the practice of archery, but those examples were strictly based on the improvement of the mind, not one's physical health.

Up to the Qing dynasty, the available evidence seems to indicate that martial arts were understood simply as a method to enhance an individual's ability to fight. This remains the case with many schools even today, but a significant number of martial artists beginning in the nineteenth century, or possibly somewhat earlier, gave increasing attention to the other effects of training by integrating concepts taken from traditional forms of Chinese medicine and philosophy, and in Chapter 5 I will elaborate on what these concepts were.⁹⁵ This reinvention of the emphasis in martial arts training among a certain group of literate practitioners had a disproportionate effect on the overall understanding of the martial arts because unlike most illiterate martial artists, their accounts of the martial arts were published in books that came to be widely disseminated inside and outside China.⁹⁶ However, shortly after this effort began to take root, China entered the Republican era, and these traditional systems of belief came under attack by modernists and reformists and these martial arts teachers had to turn around and determine how best to explain these traditional concepts under the modern rhetoric of the efforts to create a modern Chinese nation.

The National Essence Movement of 1916 – 1929 featured a direct attack on practice of Chinese Medicine. While some efforts at creating modern forms of medical care in China sought the preservation of Chinese medicine and the integration with western practice, there was a shift

⁹⁵ We see these concepts in Republican era publications on martial arts such as those by Sun Lu Tang. Sun, 1924, p. 3.

⁹⁶ Lorge, 2012, p. 198.

underway at this time towards the wholesale Westernization of medicine. This shift was fostered by the general disillusionment with traditional Chinese culture, and anger towards the failure of the Chinese Republic to address the problems of the country and to prevent foreigners from violating China's sovereignty.

This attack on Chinese medicine carried over into the Scientism Movement of 1929-1937, where there was a desire for an alternative completely removed from the values of the past. Science was based on the methodical search for objectively reproducible truth, and people followed principles such as the one outlined by Hu Shih (胡适 1891-1962)⁹⁷ in 1923, when he stated "Ever since the beginning of reformist tendencies in China, there is not a single person who calls himself a modern man and yet dares openly to belittle science."⁹⁸ The Ministry of Health⁹⁹ followed the idea that Chinese Medicine had to create a medical infrastructure along the lines of Western medicine in order to create a system of national healthcare.¹⁰⁰

This criticism of traditional Chinese medical practices impacted the field of martial arts, because all the aspects of training linked to health maintenance employed these traditional concepts of the body and how it functioned. Within the Ministry of Health, western-trained

⁹⁷ Hu Shih was a Chinese philosopher, essayist and diplomat. He is widely recognized as a key contributor to Chinese liberalism and language reform and an influential figure of the May Fourth Movement. He was nominated for a Nobel prize in literature in 1939, and served as the president of Peking University.

⁹⁸ Unschuld, 1985, p. 230.

⁹⁹ The Ministry of Health was founded in 1928 by the Guomindang, to create a medical infrastructure along the lines of Western medicine in order to create a system of national healthcare. It was supported by two groups, a domestic board of Chinese medical and public health specialists and political appointees, and an international council of "honorary advisers," who were integrated so that the Ministry could "benefit from the experience of international and other foreign health organizations through foreign experts." Croizier, 1968, p.60.

¹⁰⁰ Taylor, 2005, p. 6.

doctors such as Yu Yunxiu (余云岫 1879-1954)¹⁰¹ sought to outlaw Chinese Medicine in 1929, viewing it as a “national embarrassment and a public menace.” He believed that old-style medicine did not obey scientific principles of objective truth, the medical administration was not unified, public health constructions stagnated in many aspects, and that it represented the stigma of “The Sick Man of the East.”¹⁰²

While traditional concepts of medicine had been connected with martial arts to flesh out the content of the practice and work towards a balance of *wen* and *wu* that would be more appealing to intellectual figures, these efforts were complicated by the harsh climate of the Republican era and the desire to rid society of these traditional belief systems as part of the efforts to transform China into a modern nation-state. Those who wanted to create a modern field of practice for martial arts had to respond to the intellectual movements and the discourses they generated. Through this process, the early 20th century became a significant turning point in the ways that people viewed Chinese martial arts.¹⁰³ It was only with the passage of time from the tragedies of the Boxer Rebellion and the exerted efforts of people associated with projects such as the *Jingwu* Association and the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* that people became more accepting of the idea of martial arts as a recreational activity suitable for people of the modern age. These efforts came to emphasize the capacity of martial arts to promote a positive transformation that could allow Chinese people to shed the criticism of being the “sick man of the East,” which led towards a repositioning of how the practices were perceived by the general public, as well as the new generation of students.

¹⁰¹ Yu Yunxiu was responsible for the proposal of “Abolishing Old-Style Medicine in Order to Clear Away the Obstacles for Medicine and Public Health” at the first National Public Health Conference, Scheid, 2007, p. 199.

¹⁰² Scheid, 2007, p. 213.

¹⁰³ A point was reiterated in an introduction by the translator, in Sun, 1915, p. 4.

Chapter 2: The Role of *Tiyu* Leading up to 1928

As a time of dramatic change within intellectual thought, the transition from the imperial age into the Republican era marked a very important shift in the course of the traditional schools of martial arts. During the Republican era, modernization movements touched every sphere of life, with multiple discourses developing at the same time. The main focus of these movements was the integration of western technologies and scientific practices as a part of the effort to move beyond the imperial age of China and create a strong, modern nation. The field of physical culture and how people understood the human body became important issues in this process, and they were discussed at length in what came to be known as the *Tiyu* movement.

Throughout most of the *Tiyu* movement, traditional practices and systems of belief faced heavy criticisms from those involved in the process of designing a new structure of governance and administration for China who viewed these beliefs as superstitious elements of the feudal establishment that had weakened China. The practice of martial arts in China fell into a space in between the field of traditional beliefs that people wanted to eliminate from Chinese society¹⁰⁴ and the aspects of *Tiyu* movement that sought to use physical practices and gymnastics to strengthen the bodies of the people and to transform them into strong citizens.¹⁰⁵

Following the work by Robert Morris on the history of physical culture in Republican China, we find that a “useful search for the roots of modern Chinese physical culture must begin with a study of late Qing self-strengtheners, reformers, and revolutionaries who, alarmed by imperialist advances over the Chinese empire, looked to individual bodily strength and physical

¹⁰⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 185.

¹⁰⁵ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 20.

fitness as the key to larger issues of national and racial survival.”¹⁰⁶ Morris’s work on physical culture in Republican China fits within a new wave of academic work related to the field of Chinese martial arts that features a much broader examination of how the practices fit into the context of Chinese civilization than we find in earlier publications, particularly those written by practitioners who mainly sought to position the style they were learning into an historical lineage. Morris included Chinese martial arts as a component of his exhaustive work on physical culture and the roots of Olympic sports in China leading up to their hosting of the 2008 Olympic Games.

The Self-Strengthening Movement of 1861-1895 represented one of the first major movements towards the study of Western knowledge, which was set in motion after the series of invasions by foreign powers. The movement faced many difficulties, as China struggled between reformists who advocated state sponsorship of programs to acquire Western scientific knowledge and the traditionalists who believed that such approaches neglected the importance of Chinese knowledge and values.¹⁰⁷ Initial studies of Western modernization were piecemeal rather than systematic, incorporating new information and techniques into traditional knowledge.¹⁰⁸ Prior to this movement, the intellectual impact of the west on China remained superficial. “Except for a small number of scholar-officials in positions of official responsibility and a few figures of marginal status in treaty ports, Western influence had hardly penetrated into the scholarly world of China.”¹⁰⁹ Figures, such as the reform leader Kang Youwei (康有為 1858-1927),¹¹⁰ identified that Confucian scholarship at this point was largely composed of Han learning and Song learning,

¹⁰⁶ Morris, 2000, p. 878.

¹⁰⁷ Croizier, 1968, p. 39.

¹⁰⁸ Scheid, 2007, p. 204.

¹⁰⁹ Chang, 1971, p. 4.

¹¹⁰ Kang Youwei was a scholar, noted calligrapher and a political thinker engaged with the reform movements of the late Qing dynasty. He worked towards the establishment of a constitutional monarchy, and while his writings were influential, his political ideology was never put into use.

which meant it had two aspects: cultivation of the personality, and practical statesmanship.¹¹¹

Within this, many “Confucian” thinkers envisaged a universal empire as the only desirable form of political community. One of the prominent views of the traditional gentry-literati was their “general and enduring consensus on the central values and institutions of the traditional order.”¹¹²

Alternative forms such as the city-state and nation-state, which figured so prominently in Western traditions did not exist within Confucian culture.¹¹³ This underlying rejection of alternative forms of the state and the associated values of statesmanship and citizenship led to shortfalls in previous attempts to incorporate western learning, as scientific concepts or technical skills did not compose a significant component of the official education system which trained officials during the Qing dynasty, and those from the west were initially studied with skepticism and distrust.

Western intellectual influences only really began to take root in the 1890s as a wave of political thinkers experienced a sustained contact with a wide range of western learning that would not have been possible before with all the limitations on the ways that foreigners could enter China, how the people under the Qing rule were unable to leave, and the lack of reliable translations of Western publications. European science and technology as a whole challenged the Qing economy as well as the intellectual basis of the Qing worldview. One of the responses to this European challenge was to portray European technology and science as an external and peripheral knowledge or practice, in contrast to the internal and fundamental Chinese culture.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Chang, 1971, p. 42.

¹¹² Chang, 1971, p. 122.

¹¹³ Chang, 1971, p. 28.

¹¹⁴ Lorge, 2012, p. 189.

This approach was seen as a way to allow the retention of Chinese values while the society remained hesitant to adopt Western objects and practice.

These intellectuals exposed to western learning came to be deeply involved with the central problems and concerns of traditional thought. People began to question some of the core cultural values and institutions of the traditional systems of thought. An increasing number of newspapers, schools, and study societies were established, which started to pull the debate on the necessary intellectual changes away from the limited sphere of a few isolated scholar-officials. This dialogue on the issues faced by the Qing dynasty spread to wider and wider circles of the gentry-literati who became involved in these open publications and collaborations, which led to larger and more public intellectual debates in the late 1890s.¹¹⁵

This period of time marked a prominent shift in not only the ability of intellectuals to study Western learning, but also the type of knowledge that scholars encountered when they had chance to travel abroad. Previously, military technology and political institutions had been viewed as the most important subjects to learn from the West. This newer wave of intellectuals, unlike the reformers who had preceded them, paid more attention to ethics, ideas, and principles rather than just the techniques of industrialization and material construction.¹¹⁶

As these scholars brought back these new forms of thinking, the opportunities for them to enhance their influence or achieve success became more diverse as well. The traditional course of “good scholarship leading to official posts” had developed into different paths. Talented students went abroad wherever possible for further education, and returned to join the civil service, or open their own business, edit periodicals, write essays and novels, or become teachers,

¹¹⁵ Chang, 1971, p. 121.

¹¹⁶ Chow, 1960, p. 366.

lawyers, accountants and doctors.¹¹⁷ This created an ever-growing class of educated people who understood more and more of the mechanics of society, where students were no longer being groomed solely for a career as an official.

Within this changing intellectual environment, an eminent Confucian trained scholar and translator named Yan Fu (嚴復 1854-1921)¹¹⁸ planted the seeds of the *Tiyu* movement with his argument that a driving force of the development of Western civilization was a Darwinian vision of reality that prized the ideals of dynamism, evolution, and the struggle for survival and prosperity. As a response to the scarcity of resources in the world, Yan Fu found in western societies there was a greater emphasis on how the struggle for existence amongst people within a society would be not only inevitable, but even desirable. A distinct shift from notion in Confucian training that emphasized harmony and balanced measure, Yan Fu felt that “it is this struggle for existence which leads to natural selection and survival of the fittest – and hence, within the human realm, to the greatest realization of human capacities.”¹¹⁹

Another leading intellectual of the era, Liang Qichao (梁启超 1873-1929)¹²⁰ shared this perspective. In his view, even while ideals of internationalism, great harmony, and universal love could be morally sublime, they were antithetical to the value of competitiveness which Liang

¹¹⁷ Ch'en, 1979, p. 11.

¹¹⁸ Yan Fu was a Chinese scholar who was selected to study at the Navy Academy in Greenwich, England. After his return to China he failed to pass the Imperial Civil Service Examination and he taught at the Fujian Arsenal Academy, followed by the Beiyang Naval Officer's school at Tianjin. His writings became famous after 1895, and he was celebrated for his translations of the works by western thinkers such as Adam Smith, Thomas Huxley, Herbert Spencer and John Stuart Mill.

¹¹⁹ Chang, 1971, p. 65.

¹²⁰ Liang Qichao's writing was widely read in the early twentieth century and they are credited with playing an important part in forging the basic outlook of early Chinese intelligentsia.

saw as essential to the progress of human society.¹²¹ Traditionally, Confucianism included a commitment to *xiushen* (修身 self-cultivation),¹²² but this was not conceived of as sufficient in itself. *Ren* (仁 benevolence) was an element held in higher regard, where the imperative of cultivating the moral character of an individual aimed at developing people capable of helping others to pursue moral cultivation.¹²³

It did not seem that Yan Fu and Liang Qichao believed that value of struggle was something that could replace moral cultivation, but it was seen as something worthy of development and further exploration. Liang Qichao began to examine traditional thought in new ways, bringing forward arguments such as how the law of Karma in Buddhism could serve as the antithesis of fatalism, and evidence of the value of struggle. Liang said that “Buddhism teaches belief in effort without fate; even if it says there is fate, then fate is purely something which can be shaped and swayed by human effort itself.”¹²⁴ His drive towards creating a new future for China could be found in statements such as “If there is only the present, then there is not the slightest meaning and value. Only for the future does the present take on meaning and value.”¹²⁵

With these discussions on survival of the fittest and the value of struggle, *Tiyu* came into debates on the importance of an individual’s capacity for struggle, and how they could be strengthened in order to fight for themselves and for their loved ones. An article written by Yan Fu in 1895, titled *Yuan Qiang* (原强 The Origins of Power) was one of the earliest essays that

¹²¹ Chang, 1971, p. 157.

¹²² A careful preservation of the body was an important aspect of how one venerated the ancestors, as the body is inherited from them. Care would even be given to a person’s hair and fingernails. This element of Confucian reinforced the oppression faced by Han people under the Manchus, when they had to shave their foreheads and keep their hair in a queue as symbols of submission.

¹²³ Chang, 1971, p. 8.

¹²⁴ Chang, 1971, p. 179.

¹²⁵ Chang, 1971, p. 177.

used the term *Tiyu* in a manner which represented concepts such as sports, physical education, physical fitness, and recreation. The term *Tiyu* derived its meaning from Yan's analysis of Herbert Spencer's formulation of the trinity of moral, intellectual, and physical education. In Yan Fu's formulation, *Tiyu* consisted of "energy, dynamism, struggle, self-assertion, and the fearless realization of all human potentialities on ever higher levels of achievement."¹²⁶

Surrounding the developments of the *Tiyu* movement, Lu Zhouxiang has discussed in his research on the building of a modern Chinese nation state, that sport "contributed to the shaping of a national conscious among the Chinese people and greatly consolidated the unity of the newly established nation state. It became an essential part of Chinese nationalists, politicians and educationalists' strategy to achieve national salvation and revival."¹²⁷ At this time, sport was seen as a link between the dual responsibilities of citizens to keep healthy and fit in body and mind, and to work and unite with their fellow Chinese people. In this domain, Lu argued that sports was seen in Republican China as a valuable tool in the construction of the nation state.

The articles in Liang Qichao's biweekly journal called the *Xinmin Congbao* (新民叢報 New Citizen Journal) built the logic of the *Tiyu* movement.¹²⁸ He criticized the legacy of the "weak Chinese body, which had everything to do with the absence of concepts of progress, public morality, and duty in China."¹²⁹ Liang saw *jingzheng* (竞争 competition) as *jinhua zhi mu* (进化之母 the mother of evolution). He argued that not only must there be deliberate self-cultivation, but also competition to test oneself against others and to develop oneself in the pursuit of victory.

¹²⁶ Morris, 2000, p. 880.

¹²⁷ Lu, 2011, p. 1030.

¹²⁸ This journal was intended for Chinese readers though first published in Japan on February 8th, 1902. It ran until 1907, after releasing ninety-six issues.

¹²⁹ Morris, 2000, p. 879.

The calls for technological and military innovations, constitutional reforms, and the remaking of intellectual features addressed the issues made obvious by military failures and the weak positioning China faced on the international stage. The *Tiyu* movement represented an important branch of this system of thought. Not only did the administrators of China face a call to modernize the bureaucratic system and improve the technology used for industrial and military purposes, but also a call to modernize the people and to create an ideal citizen for the modern face of China.

As it developed, *Tiyu* became “a totalizing and systematic ideology of personal behaviour and its physiological implications, which was invested with definite ideals of the relationships between the individual and the national body, and between the individual body and personal character.”¹³⁰ However, within this ideology it would appear that misguidance and mishandling of important issues was a constant problem for the reforms of the Republican period. Intellectual trends and the shifting debates on modernization would often undermine the indigenous physical practices of China such as martial arts. At times it seemed that the future of the field of martial arts would be decided by people who had little to no understanding of what this field actually consisted of.

One of the key problems with this entire movement was that the lack of a focused and deliberate effort to design the most effective form of physical practice from an amalgamation of the materials available. The arguments demonstrated more of a chaotic amalgam of ideologies, political movements, and attempts to completely redefine what would be identified as “Chinese Culture.” Modernists pushed to move away from anything connected with traditional belief

¹³⁰ Morris, 2000, p. 877.

systems, as they saw these beliefs as the cause of the weakness and subsequent collapse of the empire.

The general appeal of Westernization prevailed in many aspects of society, so traditional forms of physical culture often came to be disregarded in favour of the complete adoption of foreign practices. Ma Mingda found that “serious research was lacking for the evaluation, dissemination, and creative development of indigenous physical culture, and the academic discipline specifically created for its study suffered many weaknesses, including superficiality, lack of interdisciplinary perspective, and an inadequate theoretical framework.”¹³¹

Physical education is predominantly a construction of socio-cultural developments, created by people for people on the basis of particular goals and values.¹³² People are not just taught how to move, they are taught how to move in specific ways. Often these movements are developed through games, dances and etiquette surrounding the body, and all of these practices play a subtle role in the social cohesion of communities. Official, or state-approved forms of physical education followed guidelines for instructing the behavioural manner expected from a proper citizen of that state, which becomes particularly important in the process of building a nation.

The national field of physical education in China became the domain of Western forms of sports because they were perceived as something closely linked to modernity.¹³³ The influx of these new political objectives and modern conceptions into the understanding the development of the body and the various systems of practice made the traditional forms of Chinese physical culture seem obsolete, with some people deliberately trying to relegate them to history. Martial

¹³¹ Ma, 2009, p. 5.

¹³² Loland, 2006, p. 60.

¹³³ Morris, 2000, p. 899.

arts and indigenous games were pushed into marginal positions within the overall formation and development of this national field of practice, and it was only due to this process of repositioning that some of them were kept.

Within *Tiyu*, the strong orientation towards Western practices led to the promotion of Western sports such as track and field, gymnastics, and ball games introduced by missionary schools.¹³⁴ While there was no obvious link between sports and Christianity, missionaries found that sports and physical education was a path for them to move beyond simple evangelism into a broader effort to reshape Chinese society.¹³⁵ In 1896 the Educational Association of China (EAC) declared that the Christian schools no longer existed solely to speed conversions or to train a native clergy, but also to impart a good general education.¹³⁶ This meant that Chinese students were not just being given religious teachings, but a type of education with instruction in Western subjects similar to what the missionaries themselves had.

Missionaries began to promote sports and physical education for several reasons. In part, physical training was intended to help improve student health, for the missionaries tended to regard their students as sickly, frail and prone to wasting illnesses. They believed that exercise could build them up and help prevent disease.¹³⁷ How missionaries perceived their students took on larger significance as the missionaries applied it to their perception of China's political and

¹³⁴ Graham, 1994, p. 24.

¹³⁵ Missionary schools began teaching subjects such as mathematics, astronomy, music, history and geography. They justified these new subjects by associating them loosely and idiosyncratically with the evangelist enterprise, with explanations such as how mathematics was useful for everyday life, that history could show China what had been and where the country stood amongst the nations of the earth, and that geography could demonstrate how much more of the world existed outside of China. Graham, 1994, p. 28.

¹³⁶ Graham, 1994, p. 28.

¹³⁷ This perception of vulnerability to disease was somewhat accurate. Trachoma, malaria, smallpox, the plague, and particularly tuberculosis were rampant in late nineteenth-century China. Mission schools were sometimes forced to close temporarily because of outbreaks of illness among their students. Graham, 1994, p. 29.

national health. As China was seen as "the sick man of Asia," American missionaries projected this pejorative assessment of China's health back onto the bodies of their students and in so doing reconfirmed their superiority over the Chinese. Vigorous health was also an aspect of the missionary concept of masculinity, which they perceived as related to national strength. American schools touted the rhetoric of creating men who were courageous, decisive leaders and team players. This effort to reshape their students to embody the American image of strong citizens was also a component in the missionary's sports and physical education agenda.¹³⁸

Throughout their work, missionaries drew on their own gender ideology, in particular, "their construction of masculinity within a religious or Christian context. 'Christian manhood' was two-fold: first, physical strength, stamina, and muscular development were important; the second half was character-possessing personal virtues such as courage, courtesy, honesty, self-discipline, diligence, and sportsmanship."¹³⁹ Character training was an important aspect of teaching physical education to girls as well as to boys. Physical education in the mission schools opened up new social spaces for Chinese women and girls; the gymnasium, the track, and the basketball court were places where girls with unbound feet¹⁴⁰ could assert their physical presence in a forthright, competitive way that was previously unknown to traditional Confucian society.¹⁴¹

The missionary schools that encouraged young girls to do sports, which required healthy, unbound feet, were controversial to those who saw these unbound feet as being associated with a

¹³⁸ Graham, 1994, p. 30.

¹³⁹ Graham, 1994, p. 32.

¹⁴⁰ The practice of *chanzu* (缠足 footbinding) was a practice that originated in the early Song dynasty (960-1279). It was a painful and debilitating custom, based on a perception of tiny feet being more feminine and beautiful. It was symbolic of the degree of patriarchy within Chinese society, as women with bound feet had difficulty walking or doing anything on their feet without assistance.

¹⁴¹ Graham, 1994, p. 43.

low social standing. Footbinding was seen as a hindrance by these schools and teachers encouraged family heads to come and watch their girls do outdoor physical activities and observe what a great hindrance their bound feet were.¹⁴² Mrs. Archibald Little, the celebrated founder of an anti-footbinding society, had the following to say about Chinese girls in the 1890s: “Instead of a hop, skip and a jump, with rosy cheeks like the little girls of England, the poor little things are leaning heavily on a stick somewhat taller than themselves, or carried on a man’s back, or sitting sadly crying. They have great black lines under their eyes, and a special curious paleness that I have never seen except in connection with footbinding.”¹⁴³

With the growing interest in all forms of Western practices, the redevelopment of the education system created an opening for the adoption of Western sports into the official curriculum and the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA) took full advantage of this opportunity at the end of the nineteenth century.¹⁴⁴ Since the YMCA had established its first branch in Shanghai in 1876, it was well situated to have an important role in the promotion and dissemination of Western sports. The faculty of the YMCA in China organized some of the first sports tournaments in the country, as in Tianjin and Shanghai in 1902, and they even organized China’s first National Games in Shanghai in 1910.¹⁴⁵

As Darwinian and Spenserian concepts based on the survival of the fittest gained favour in the intellectual arenas in China, the YMCA’s emphasis on fitness and competition served as a key factor to its acceptance. The YMCA’s guiding symbol of a "three-self" formulation of the complete individual as being healthy in body, mind, and spirit fit in nicely with some of the essays sympathetic to modernity movements, such as those of Yan Fu.

¹⁴² Gimpel, 2006, p. 322.

¹⁴³ Gimpel, 2006, p. 323.

¹⁴⁴ Morris, 2000, p. 889.

¹⁴⁵ Ma, 2009, p. 10.

According to the principles of the new scientific culture inherently linked to these modernity movements, martial arts were not seen as something appropriate for modern forms of physical culture. The field of practice received criticism because many of the intellectuals saw it as representative of everything that these “modern men” wanted China to leave behind. The principles and theories that had been integrated into newer systems of martial arts practice used concepts from ancient philosophies, and that meant that at their core the goals of training were unquantifiable and therefore unscientific. The criticisms often ran along the lines where the martial arts “belonged to the wandering *jianghu* [江湖],¹⁴⁶ not to the enlightened classes of urban China. It left no written records that could be spread among the masses. The field was heir to a legacy of secrecy and division, clearly the exact opposite of what was needed to unify the nation.”¹⁴⁷ The division between different schools of martial arts stood as one of the greatest faults within the field of practice. It made it difficult to determine the difference between proper and improper training, and most teachers did not want to openly present what they saw as the most important elements of mastering their style of practice.

The disillusionment of the New Culture Movement with traditional Chinese culture was founded on the cynicism felt by the people when the newly formed Republic of China failed to address problems that had contributed to the downfall of the Qing dynasty. Scholars such as Chen Duxiu (陈独秀 1879-1932),¹⁴⁸ Lu Xun (鲁迅 1881-1936)¹⁴⁹ and Hu Shih made their

¹⁴⁶ The literal translation is rivers and lakes, but it is a reference to vagabonds, drifters and itinerants of the countryside. The term was often associated with entertainers, swindlers and quacks, though its exact usage could be the subject of a debate that goes beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁴⁷ Morris, 2004, p. 193.

¹⁴⁸ Chen Duxiu is an extremely important literary figure of the twentieth century in China. He was an educator, philosopher and politician. A leading figure in the May Fourth Movement, he was involved in the foundations of the *New Youth* journal, as well as the Chinese Communist party.

criticisms of Confucian culture public through journals such as the *Xin Qingnian* (新青年 *New Youth*), which was founded in September 1915. It is widely identified with the high tide of the “all-out Westernisation” in twentieth century China. In the name of science and democracy, this journal had spearheaded an attack, first, on aspects of the Chinese national character; and then, more explicitly on Confucianism.¹⁵⁰

These writers called for the development of a new form of Chinese culture, one based on global standards that championed democracy, science, and egalitarian values.¹⁵¹ In this discourse on modernity, they included martial arts as a subject of their criticisms of traditional practices. In an article in a 1915 publication of *New Youth*, Lu Xun stated that “I do not mind if some people think martial arts is a special skill and enjoy their own practice. This is not a big matter. However, I disagree with the propaganda of traditional Chinese martial arts because educators promote martial arts as a fashion, as if all Chinese people should do the exercise, and most advocates promote martial arts in a ghost-like spirit. This social phenomenon is dangerous.”¹⁵² Lu Xun felt that the traditional concepts being applied to martial arts were unscientific and based on superstition. He worried that their promotion might result in a similar outcome to that of the

¹⁴⁹ Lu Xun was the pen name of Zhou Shuren 周树人. Zhou Shuren was another major Chinese writer of the twentieth century, he was a short story writer, editor, translator, critic, essayist and poet. He was an influential figure of the May Fourth Movement, and the Communist party held his work in high regard even though he never actually joined the Chinese Communist Party. He worked at the Ministry of Education, and taught at several important colleges and universities in China.

¹⁵⁰ Uberoi, 1995, p. 115.

¹⁵¹ It is important to note that these three figures did not work together in harmony on this project. All three were writers for the *New Youth* publications, but they did not always agree with each other. They are listed together here in the context that the fundamental aspects of their work moved against the continuation of traditional practices such as Chinese martial arts, and they all agreed with the literary trope of the boxers (from the Boxer Rebellion) as a symbol of all that had weakened China.

¹⁵² *Xin Qingnian*, 15 October 1915, translated by Grant Jarvie and Tony Hwang.

Boxer Rebellion.¹⁵³ In 1918, Lu Xun once again denounced the promotion of martial arts: “There are many now who actively support and advocate boxing. Remember, this was advocated in the past, but then it was pushed by Manchu kings and princes; now it’s Republican educators. . . . These educators take these old ways, ‘passed down from a mystic woman of the highest heavens or some such, to the Yellow Emperor, and then to some nuns,’ now called ‘new martial arts’ or ‘Chinese calisthenics,’ and tell youngsters to practice.”¹⁵⁴

Chen Duxiu’s opinion on the preservation of martial arts could be seen in a criticism of a program designed by General Ma Liang (马良 1864?-1947). “We have already had enough of the 1900 ‘Spirit Boxers,’ but now we are supposed to teach Commander Ma’s martial arts in school. Do not once allow the ‘extraordinary feats of strength, chaos and spirits,’ of which even Confucius did not speak [because of their supernatural content], to come and ‘deceive the next generation.’”¹⁵⁵ Ma Liang had published some manuals under the title *Xin Wushu* (新武术 *New Martial Arts*) in 1917 for use by military and police organizations, and he was pushing for the integration of martial arts into the public schools.¹⁵⁶ Chen Duxiu fought this proposal, as it conflicted with his aim to effect a complete dismissal of any elements of China’s cultural heritage linked to what he saw as mystical or superstitious beliefs.

Chen Duxiu saw value in physical training; his criticisms of the classical education system was that it over-emphasized literary memorizing and neglected physical exercise. In a publication of the *New Youth* journal, he wrote “Whenever I look at our educated youth, I see that they have not the strength to catch a chicken, nor mentally the courage of an ordinary man.

¹⁵³ Jarvie and Hwang, 2001, p. 13

¹⁵⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 193.

¹⁵⁵ Morris, 2004, p. 194.

¹⁵⁶ Green and Svinth, 2010, p. 343.

With pale faces and slender waists, seductive as young ladies, timorous of cold and chary of heat, weak as invalids-if the people of our country are as feeble as this in body and mind how will they be able to shoulder the burdens to go far?"¹⁵⁷ He was influenced the approach of Yan Fu and Herbert Spencer in advocating the trinity of wisdom, morality and the body. While Chen Duxiu argued that a student's physical strength is one of the essential elements in present educational policy, he disagreed about putting martial arts in the school curriculum because of his anti-traditionalist position. He insisted on three warnings on sport - no martial drill, no boxing and no violent competitive games.¹⁵⁸

The value of physical education was understood by modernists not solely because of their desire to overcome the stigma of being the "sick man of the East." The Western thinkers who inspired their work also advocated for the necessity of physical culture within the education system. In one of his speeches given at Nanjing University in 1919, John Dewey¹⁵⁹ claimed that "Mass physical education development is the most urgent problem for every country today. Can China approach this mission? It is better to improve personal and mass hygiene, teach knowledge of physical education in society rather than focus on military education and military training which only applies to military schools."¹⁶⁰ During this time of Westernization in China, John Dewey became one of the most influential American intellectuals on psychology and social

¹⁵⁷ *Xin Qingnian*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Uberoi, p. 117.

¹⁵⁸ Jarvie and Hwang, 2001, p. 13

¹⁵⁹ 1859-1962, John Dewey was an American philosopher, psychologist and educational reformer whose ideas have been influential in education and social reform. A stern advocate of democracy, Dewey considered schools and civil society as major topics needing attention and reconstruction to encourage experimental intelligence and plurality. Dewey asserted that complete democracy was to be obtained not just by extending voting rights but also by ensuring that there exists a fully formed public opinion, accomplished by effective communication among citizens, experts, and politicians, with the latter being accountable for the policies they adopt.

¹⁶⁰ Jarvie and Hwang, 2001, p. 6.

affairs in China due to the relevance of his work to the social reforms underway, and the two years he spent promoting his ideas in China from 1919-1921.

Other aspects of this movement included the ways in which classical Chinese writing was positioned as the written language of scholars and officials and deemed unsuitable for the movement geared towards the people and the youth of China. Figures such as Hu Shih proclaimed as they introduced a new form of vernacular Chinese referred to as *bai hua* (白话) that a dead language like classical Chinese could not produce a living literature. The objective ran along populist trends, with the hope that people with little education could be able to read more texts and articles. This fostered a new literary establishment, which involved publishing houses, journals, literary societies and universities, which gave form to an entirely new literary and intellectual scene around the years 1910 to 1930. The *New Youth* journal was one of these publications, and it became a forum for the debate of why China was weak, and how Confucian culture could be blamed.

As with the others who criticized the epithet of the “sick man of Asia,” martial arts instructors rallied together under the banners of the groups such as the *Jingwu* Association, and later the *Guoshuguan* to reinvent the “scholar’s appearance” that had for so long been the ideal for Chinese men. As these intellectuals were arguing over expected forms of a proper, modern citizen, Pierre Bourdieu’s theory on habitus becomes an appropriate concept for how this scholarly appearance was embodied. Bourdieu describes habitus as a system of generative schemes that are both durable (inscribed in the social construction of the self) and transposable (from one field to another).¹⁶¹ At an unconscious level, these schemes influence how people understand themselves, and how they understand their ability to act upon the world they perceive

¹⁶¹ Lipuma, 1993, p. 116.

around them. In this instance, the “scholar’s appearance” is a reference to a form of habitus, a generative schemes of traits and dispositions.

This appearance connected with the habitus expected of a proper Chinese gentleman in traditional society, whereby he spent his time cultivating *wen* virtues, studying books or writing calligraphy, contemplating the finer details of philosophy, rituals and the cosmological links which motivated everything on subtle levels. As discussed in the previous chapter, muscular bodies were seen as something distinctive of the lower classes, associated to those engaged in manual labour. Cultured and successful people were not supposed to have developed muscles.

The paradigm of *wen* and *wu* can be interpreted through concepts of class habitus that mediates human agency through the development of certain perceptions and life-practices in response to objective social conditions.¹⁶² Because of the ways in which conditions of existence can be formative of a person’s preferences, these conditions can act as a method of social reinforcement. “The habitus implies a ‘sense of one’s place’ but also a ‘sense of the other’s place.’ ... Agents classify themselves and expose themselves to classification by choosing, in conformity with their tastes, different attributes, clothes, types of food, drinks, sports, friends, which go well together and which they also find agreeable or, more exactly, which they find suitable for their position.”¹⁶³

Human beings become socialized into a hierarchy through the dispositions and perceptions they develop according to their understanding of themselves and the world in which they live. The way people perceive the world in which they live is influenced in very powerful ways by institutions set in place to guide their growth and education from childhood. From

¹⁶² Harvey and Sparks, 1991, p. 172.

¹⁶³ Bourdieu, 1987, p. 132.

childhood, dispositions and perceptions are fed to people through various channels and relationships that connect with cultural forms and the conditions of social categories.

These cultural forms embody, sustain and reproduce the social field in which they exist.¹⁶⁴ The people who decide how these social activities are preserved thus become an important component of the social fabric of a community, as their decisions impact how these activities are transmitted to the next generation, and how they can serve to strengthen or weaken social hierarchies. Although teachers in Republican China knew nothing about the theories of Bourdieu, they were caught up in certain dynamics of society that he outlines, and the Guomintang were active participants of this reordering of social hierarchies. As I will elaborate on in the next chapter, the Guomintang were actively taking on the role of state authority within these new social hierarchies of the modern Chinese nation, where they worked at redefining the social power of different fields of power, and subsuming them under national institutions that were granted the authority over the recognition and certification of what could and could not exist within that field.

While it is framed in a context of social power and authority, habitus is a concept that integrates the mind, body and society in a fundamental way, and martial arts as a bodily practice is quite interesting when considered in the model of habitus because it can be categorized in so many different ways. The practice simultaneously represents a system of self-defence, a holistic health exercise, an aesthetic dance-like art, a recreational activity, a form of moving meditation, and a relic of Chinese antiquity. This complexity within the practice consolidated itself around the principle of self-mastery, which infers a complete transformation of the body and mind, with a continual refinement of the mental processes and philosophical understandings. While this was

¹⁶⁴ Lipuma, 1993, p. 27.

not historically a key aspect of martial training, it came to be an emphasis of various martial arts systems in the Republican era.

The teachers who tried to create a new perception of their practices by publishing books, articles and essays, and participating in associations such as the *Jingwu* and *Guoshuguan* were caught up within this process of positioning. Because of the developments underway at this time with the *Tiyu* movement, in addition to the restructuring of social hierarchies that followed the collapse of the Imperial era, these martial artists had an unique opportunity to integrate their field of practice into these discussions on physical culture, the need to create a new sense of Chinese identity, and the search for a way to strengthen the people of China. As teachers argued that participation within the field of martial arts would lead toward positive transformations in an individual, they had to reply to the question of what role this individual would have, or should have in a modern China. While they may not have been aware of it, in essence they argued that the form of habitus generated by the practice of martial arts would give rise to set of social practices that was desirable for the position in society they wanted martial arts to occupy.

Chapter 3: Positioning Undertaken by the Guomintang Party

With the disunity of the Warlord Era that defined much of Republican China, members of the Guomintang party were engaged with trying to establish themselves at a place where people believed that they had the right to legitimize culture and create a new form of citizen. This was a project they undertook in the mid-1920s after a very difficult period of factionalism within the party and struggles against those who opposed them. One of the goals of the GMD party members was to strengthen their political position by defining themselves as the guardians of China's cultural heritage.

This chapter looks at the development of the GMD party to determine the approach it took towards building a modern Chinese nation, and how the field of Chinese martial arts fell under these efforts. This would explain their involvement in the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan*, and draw out some of the underlying objectives of the institute. I argue that a number of the party members in Nanjing saw the *Guoshuguan* as another opportunity to reshape Chinese culture, legitimize their fledgling government, and further their efforts towards building a modern Chinese nation in which they could act as a centralized authority over what would constitute a proper citizen. It certainly was not the only project the GMD used to accomplish their goals, nor would it be their most important, but it does have a strong connection with the repositioning of Chinese martial arts in Republican China.

Throughout most of the early twentieth century, the GMD was far from anything that could represent a centralized authority in China. Much of the party's existence relied on tenuous relations with generals who could easily turn against the GMD and the party had to contend with

localized power bases controlled by warlords. To understand the scale of the conflict, Jerome Ch'en put it into the terms that if we were to define a warlord as any officer who held the rank of brigadier-general or above, then China had about 1,300 warlords over the period from 1916 to 1932.¹⁶⁵ The number of biographies available on the great warlords who influenced the political changes of the time only represents a small minority of the number of the ones who lived at that time. All efforts to grow and build a nation were undermined by the power struggles of these military figures. It is estimated that upwards to eighty percent of the entire revenue of the nation was illegally diverted by the warlords, and schools, houses and institutions alike were often closed and occupied by soldiers as barracks.¹⁶⁶

The Guomindang was a bureaucratic political party with an awkward upbringing from its roots as a subversive movement constituted by a network of secret societies, and it lacked the raw military power it needed for its goal of the unification of China.¹⁶⁷ Having to navigate complicated alliances and personal relationships to build this military backing, this effort to define themselves as the “guardians of China’s cultural past” was demonstrated in the GMD’s support of art forms and practices such as the martial arts. The party members wanted people to perceive them as having a symbolic role that they could balance against the military power of the warlords and generals.

Going back to the history of the party, we see that, following the collapse of the empire in China, the republic that Sun Yat-sen (孫逸仙 1870-1925)¹⁶⁸ and his associates envisioned did not

¹⁶⁵ Ch'en, 1979, p. 6.

¹⁶⁶ Chow, 1960, p. 260.

¹⁶⁷ Letsz, 1982, p. 48.

¹⁶⁸ Sun Yat-sen was a revolutionary and political leader commonly seen as the father of modern China. He played an important role in overthrowing the Qing dynasty, and served as the first provisional president of the Republic of China.

take root. The revolutionists lacked an army, and the power of Yuan Shikai began to outstrip that of the newly established parliament. The GMD could be understood as an amalgamation of smaller groups or societies, including the group that Sun Yat-sen was originally part of, the *Tongmeng Hui*.

The Guomindang also had its foundations in the *Xingzhong Hui* (兴中会 Revive China Society), one of the organizations that sought to overthrow the Manchus of the Qing dynasty and reform China. The three slogans of this society were: expelling the Manchus, restoring China to the Chinese, and creating a republic. Since the imperial administration in traditional Chinese society did not tolerate opposition, members of societies such as this had to operate in absolute secrecy, and discovery would typically result in torture and death. While the *Xingzhong Hui* was not the only secret society that quietly planned the downfall of the Qing, fierce debates surrounded the relations of power that divided these groups and even the *Tongmeng Hui* that Sun Yat-Sen worked with was formed by loosely associated factions, with various centers of power each independent of the others.¹⁶⁹

These divisions fed into a fear of internal strife. It seemed clear that uncoordinated and separate provincial uprisings would bring chaos as they had done in the past when dynasties were overthrown.¹⁷⁰ Many of these fears were realized as the revolution started not as an orchestrated movement but with a blunder. A bomb exploded at a revolutionist's headquarters in Hankou, and officials investigating the incident found lists of *Tongmeng Hui* members and contacts. Panic broke out amongst those associated with the planning of the uprising, and knowing that exposure to official jurisdiction meant death, revolutionary members of the army

¹⁶⁹ Yu, 1966, p. 52.

¹⁷⁰ Yu, 1966, p. 42.

mutinied in self-defence. The uprising, though anticipated by the central division, took many of the revolutionary leaders by surprise.¹⁷¹

Military figures took control while the political groups, isolated in the distance they had given themselves from the central administration to safely plan the foundations of a new republic, were left ill-prepared to control the events that followed. Factionalism grew even deeper during chaos with prior loyalties, diversity of goals, differences in ideology, divergences in tactics and strategies, and the conflict of strong-willed personalities.¹⁷² Many of these military figures dreamed of China as a strong, centralized and unified state, but they became impatient with the inherent rigidities which arise from a territorial division of powers in a federal scheme, and lacked confidence in the ability of politicians to guide Republican China.¹⁷³

The concept of parties, meaning the existence of two or more competing political groups, was alien to the very basis of traditional Chinese political thought and practice.¹⁷⁴ This was demonstrated in November 1915, when Yuan Shikai, who was legally the president of the newly-born Republic, ordered the GMD dissolved and its members removed from parliament. Within a few months, he suspended parliament and the provincial assemblies and forced the promulgation of a new constitution as a part of his efforts to extend his powers. Even with this, Yuan's ambitions still could not be satisfied; and, by the end of 1915, he moved to re-establish the monarchy with himself as emperor. Widespread rebellions ensued, and numerous provinces declared independence. Losing many of his supporters, and facing a growing opposition as other military leaders began to turn against him, Yuan Shikai died in June of 1916.

¹⁷¹ Yu, 1966, p. 62.

¹⁷² Yu, 1966, p. 49.

¹⁷³ Yu, 1966, p. 74.

¹⁷⁴ Yu, 1966, p. 6.

The chaos following the death of Yuan Shikai became known as the Warlord Era, during which regional generals and warlords competed with each other for resources, soldiers, territory and influence. No single leader was strong enough to assume a centralized position, so each carved out his own territory, making and breaking alliances with others to secure power. This caused a shift of control even further from centralized authorities to territorial bases in a constant state of flux, where “the size of political authority varied from multi-provincial alliances, to single-province enclaves, to sub-provincial garrison commands.”¹⁷⁵ This continued up to 1928, when the conclusion of the Northern Expedition¹⁷⁶ marked the beginning of the "Nanjing decade." However, even as old warlords were deposed, new ones persisted into the 1930s and 1940s. The GMD struggled to keep its allies under control, which was a great problem throughout the Japanese invasion and these military divisions culminated with the outbreak of a full scale civil war, which they ultimately lost. Even after the victory of the Communist Party in 1949, deals and alliances with regional warlords were negotiated to ensure their cooperation with the changing political systems of mainland China.

From 1916 until the Northern expedition in 1928, the Beijing government was subject to the whims of those who controlled the armies. The country split into various semiautonomous areas, each governed by a military figure.¹⁷⁷ In the most significant ways, China became divided

¹⁷⁵ McCord, 2002, p. 189.

¹⁷⁶ Also known as *Beifa* 北伐, this was a military campaign led by the Guomindang that lasted from 1926 to 1928. The main goal was to unify China under the Guomindang banner and end the rule of local warlords. While they had managed to unify much of the south through alliances and build a powerbase in Guangdong province, the north remained in control of warlords. Three powerful warlords were the main targets of this campaign; Zhang Zuolin (张作霖 1875-1928) in Manchuria, Wu Peifu (吴佩孚 1874-1939) in the Central Plains region, and Sun Chuanfang (孙传芳 1885-1935) on the east coast.

¹⁷⁷ Yu, 1966, p. 142.

between the north and the south. In the midst of all this, the GMD found themselves having to establish the different channels through which they could build their influence and control.

By 1924, the GMD was still very far from a party of big landlords, capitalists and powerful warlords. It was more of a collection of small property owners, lower-tier warlords, salaried men and intellectuals. At this point, the party began to develop a new emphasis on the technique of winning the masses by presenting a challenging ideology (redefined in the light of changing conditions), with an emphasis on propaganda activities.¹⁷⁸ This connected to the reorganization of the GMD, to combine Chinese traditional concepts with Western methods to create a new appreciation of all things traditional.¹⁷⁹ The process appeared to be that they first had to reorganize the party so that it could be transformed into a modern political party with ideological and organizational solidarity. Second, they took leadership of the administrative structure in Canton and the military academy in Whampoa, and third, they began to send party cadres to work among the workers and peasants so as to promote social change.¹⁸⁰

Yifeng yisu (移风易俗 transforming customs and common practices) was a concept featured on the agenda of imperial governments, but few were properly armed with the ideological understanding or technical capacities to probe deep into everyday cultural practices.¹⁸¹ The GMD involvement in projects such as *Tiyu* and *Guoshu* reflected the direct application of the theories on social positioning. The role of culture in people's livelihood and the channels that bind a society together meant that it was extremely important to the management of the masses. Understanding how to control the dynamics of culture represents an

¹⁷⁸ Yu, 1966, p. 171.

¹⁷⁹ Yu, 1966, p. 177.

¹⁸⁰ Ch'en, 1979, p. 178.

¹⁸¹ Li, 2001, p. 31.

important form of symbolic capital and power. Within the reorganized party, a number of influential veteran politicians believed in the value of China's traditional civilization because it was the very basis of their own education. They shared notions about the functions of culture and discipline as organizing forces in society which could be traced back centuries in the political culture of China.¹⁸²

In subsequent years, the GMD became, as it never really had been before, a revolutionary party that reinforced its legitimacy by its self-appointed role as this guardian of the past.¹⁸³ A renewed focus on establishing schools for the training of civilian cadres rapidly began to change from the free-wheeling and contentious revolutionary party it had been in the early 1920s into a huge patronage system.¹⁸⁴ They worked with nationalist and culturalist views on many issues touching on national life and reached into an increasingly diverse range of social circles and fields of practice. GMD schools emphasized morality and nationalism, and the independence of educators was diminished by stress on technical subjects and the supervision of the Ministry of Education and the party.

This movement drew its influence from the ways in which the emergent form of governance, acting as the sovereign state, could grant itself the role of reshaping society and of maintaining social order to help legitimate and preserve its sovereignty. Education played a vital part in this program, and had an overtly political function, the training of an individual who stood as a member of a nation formed by a collection of citizens. Physical culture functioned along these parameters in nineteenth century France, where gymnastics became a form of physical training that could contribute to the reshaping of society, to the "forging of the free but docile

¹⁸² Letsz, 1982, p. 2.

¹⁸³ Letsz, 1982, p. 102.

¹⁸⁴ Letsz, 1982, p. 106.

citizen.”¹⁸⁵ After the GMD solidified their power in 1927, their government policies were based on anti-imperialism and self-strengthening, and “sport and physical education were used to serve the consolidation on national unity, cultivate patriotism and build up the physical strength of the people.”¹⁸⁶

One of the key institutes in the efforts of GMD to create their revolutionary soldiers was the Whampoa Military Academy, which was intended to be the cradle of for the GMD’s social revolution. The leaders of the Whampoa Academy sought to create the officers and leaders of the “party army,” which would combat the far-reaching corruption of warlords in Republican China.¹⁸⁷ Self-sacrifice, loyalty, discipline and, if necessary, martyrdom for the revolution served as the guiding ideals taught at this academy. Many of the officers who led the Northern Expedition were trained at Whampoa.

Even more complicated than the education of citizens, the education of soldiers incorporated a special form of political education. Expected to risk their lives for the nation, their devotion to this ideology had to be an ideal as powerful as a religion. The GMD built up the notion that “to be a real revolutionary soldier, to protect the nation and win the respect of the people, it was necessary for the soldier to cultivate *zhi* (知 knowledge), *ren* (仁 compassion), and *yong* (勇 bravery).”¹⁸⁸ Many soldiers receiving this training came to see themselves not merely as fighting men, but as members of a revolutionary vanguard. Most of them had witnessed the cruelty and selfishness of warlords first hand, and the idealism of the project was driven by the concept of creating soldiers of a new order, something more than just another warlord army.

¹⁸⁵ Harvey and Sparks, 1991, p. 178.

¹⁸⁶ Lu, 2011, p. 1048.

¹⁸⁷ Letsz, 1982, p. 191.

¹⁸⁸ Letsz, 1982, p. 73.

The curriculum of this academy was influenced by Chiang Kai-shek's six training principles:

Teach them to be men
Teach them to be modern men
Teach them to be modern Chinese men
Teach them to be soldiers
Teach them to be modern soldiers
Teach them to be modern Chinese soldiers¹⁸⁹

This drive for a military academy did not simply rise out of propaganda movements and party reforms. Generals and politicians alike understood the very real need for quality soldiers and officers capable of leading and organizing men. The quality of troops in China was notorious for being extremely low. Most of them were untrained, having been recruited from the peasantry, along with a mix of small craftsmen, bankrupt merchants, dropout students and workers returning from abroad.¹⁹⁰ In 1927, a GMD officer criticized the men he commanded, describing them as follows:

The quality of our troops was not very good. Few could read. The majority were dull and illiterate. Most of them were drifters with no profession and bullies or riff-raff from market towns. The expression "Good iron is not made into nails, good men do not become soldiers" really fits. Their aim in becoming soldiers had no basis in feelings of wanting to serve the nation or the people, but came instead from their desire to use the army as a hotel. When they were stymied in civilian life, they would run into the army, take their two meals a day and forget their problems. Thus, every day there were deserters and every day new men were taken in to fill the gaps. As soon as they had a little training they would run off and in a few days a new bunch would come in.¹⁹¹

Many soldiers were apt to desert in the middle of a battle, and when they deserted they had the tendency to cast away their weapons. Of those deserters who held onto their guns, many of them would join bandit armies formed from disbanded or disorganized soldiers. This problem

¹⁸⁹ Letsz, 1982, p. 201.

¹⁹⁰ Ch'en, 1979, p. 78.

¹⁹¹ Letsz, 1982, p. 72.

was persistent enough for Li Yuanhong (黎元洪 1864-1928)¹⁹² to have remarked “When disbanded, soldiers change into bandits; when reorganized, they become soldiers again.”¹⁹³

Many soldiers either lacked an awareness of the political issues at hand, or an affection for the figures leading them. Following many victories, men often just switched sides to the winning party. It was more of a paying job to fight for one side or the other than some campaign they actually believed in. The army of the Fengtian clique¹⁹⁴ doubled the strength of their army from 170,000 to 350,000 with the men who crossed over onto their side after a battle. Feng Yuxiang was well known for growing his army from two divisions and six brigades to eight divisions and eleven brigades by recruiting from the armies of his foes.¹⁹⁵ Almost overnight, he became a deciding factor in the success of the Northern Expedition. Military leaders were caught in a position where they had to continually bestow favours, and as the size of their armies grew they needed an increasing amount of resources in order to outbid the offers of their potential rivals and maintain the loyalty of their followers.¹⁹⁶

Some people in the GMD wanted to push for a *shehui junshihua* (社会军事化 the militarization of society) and model its political activities and national consciousness on forms developed by the army. A goal of this transformation throughout the people was to see that

¹⁹² Li Yuanhong was an officer of the Qing dynasty who was recruited by the revolutionaries despite having fought against them in the beginning. He served as president of the Republic of China after the death of Yuan Shikai, from June 7th 1916 – July 17th 1917, as well as a second term from June 11th 1922 – June 13th 1923 after President Xu Shichang was forced out.

¹⁹³ Ch'en, 1979, p. 82.

¹⁹⁴ One of several mutually hostile cliques or factions that split from the Beiyang Clique during the warlord era. It was named for the Fengtian province, now known as Liaoning, and led by Zhang Zuolin, who was fiercely anti-republican. Enemy of the Northern Expedition led by Chiang Kai-shek, Zhang retreated north until he was eventually assassinated in 1928 by Japanese forces that supported him for a short period of time. His son, Zhang Xueliang (张学良 1901-2001), took over leadership and pledged loyalty to Chiang Kai-shek.

¹⁹⁵ Ch'en, 1979, p. 54.

¹⁹⁶ Ch'en, 1979, p. 102.

“boundaries between spheres of society would dissolve and a new spirit, like the Whampoa spirit, would provide direction and a focus for the energies of the nation.”¹⁹⁷

The efforts of the GMD to position itself as being able to legitimize and protect culture in their efforts at nation building link with Michel Foucault’s concepts regarding the role of institutions. Foucault argued that the rise of modernity has required the “disciplining” of “docile” bodies.¹⁹⁸ Discipline in this sense refers to the result of the institutionalization of schools, hospitals, prisons and factories where there is a process of individualization that emphasizes the individual as a locus of social production and control. The discipline of others and self-discipline were posited as two qualitatively different forms of bodily discipline.¹⁹⁹ The institutional discipline of others entails a negation of the body where it is developed and categorized in a way that reinforces the sovereignty of central authorities. The body is relegated to the status of a commodity which is selectively developed to realize its utility for specific goals, many of which are tied to labour and productive capacities that can address the needs of a nation state.²⁰⁰

This is a process tied in with Foucault’s criticism of bio-politics. At the level of bio-political production of the individual and the population, techniques of discipline and government craft the bodies of individuals as bodies capable of work, and create their needs and interests as members of a population. Foucault points out that “there are not first relations of production and then mechanisms of power that modify or disturb them. Mechanisms of power are an intrinsic part of all relations, and in a circular way, are both their effect and cause.”²⁰¹

¹⁹⁷ Letsz, 1982, p. 218.

¹⁹⁸ Foucault, 1979, p. 222.

¹⁹⁹ Uberoi, 1995, p. 110.

²⁰⁰ Ingham, 1985, p. 47.

²⁰¹ Foucault, 1979, p.2.

Bio-politics actually serve to introduce and define populations before acting upon them, where the individual body or population does not pre-exist relations of power. Power is not generated by itself, but there are sets of procedures that serve to establish, maintain and transform it. The authority to create laws framed by the permitted vs. the prohibited, as well as the judicial power to select punishments to be accorded to specific crimes and even kill people who act against these laws, represents sovereign power that establishes a relation of power in bio-politics where the life of populations becomes the target of the articulation of power. In the efforts of the GMD to establish themselves as the “guardians of China’s cultural history,” in addition to their claim of sovereignty over the newly founded institutions, and the drafting of a new system of law for the modern nation of China, there are very strong indications that the approach undertaken by the GMD to establish their power had elements similar to the nature bio-politics.

These theoretical concepts surrounding the political interest in the body certainly come to bear when we look at GMD’s project entitled the *Xin Shenghuo Yundong* (新生活運動 New Life Movement). On February 19th, 1934, Chiang Kai-shek inaugurated the New Life Movement in Nanchang, Jiangxi, with goal of “revolutionizing” Chinese life. Although the program was ultimately unsuccessful, it still provides some insight into the Guomindang’s perception of their role in society, as well as what they targeted as China’s “most serious problems and how they could be resolved.”²⁰² The leadership of the GMD blamed the material and spiritual “degeneration” of the people for China’s continued crisis, and to address this Chiang Kai-shek launched a movement aimed at a behavioral reform across the country.²⁰³ While the focus on morality had some elements of the traditional Confucian models, the New Life Movement built

²⁰² Averill, 1981, p. 596.

²⁰³ Dirlik, 1975, p. 945.

on a combination of elements from Western Christianity, nationalism, authoritarianism and even some aspects of fascism.

The Guomindang designed the New Life Movement as a modern movement to address modern problems, in a country besieged with corruption, factionalism, and opium addiction. The concept behind the project was that national salvation lay in hygienic activities and purging unhealthy habits of the body and mind from the people. The New Life Movement had connections to the intellectual and social mobilization that dominated Chinese politics in the 1920s. Student and labor movements in the cities and peasant movements in the countryside represented the emergence of new social forces onto the political scene. With the growing number of urban professional careers available, as well as the need for factory workers in the efforts to industrialize the nation, urban labor emerged as an important political force for the modernization of China and the development of a market economy. The social involvement of the intelligentsia in the twenties became organized political action over time.

The New Life Movement connected with this growing realization in the value of the peasants, students and workers for political goals. For much of Chinese history, these social categories were largely irrelevant to political work that focused on scholar officials. In realizing the potential use of the people, the GMD leaders wanted to set in motion a massive movement that focused on *junshihua* (军事化 “militarization”), along with *shengchanhua* (生产化 “productivization” or a renewal of productivity), and *yishuhua* (艺术化 “aesthetization” or a renewal of aesthetics) as the core changes that the movement hoped to bring about.²⁰⁴

The impetus of this movement was a perception Chiang Kai-shek had of the common people of Republican China. He felt there was unbearable filthiness and disorder in every aspect

²⁰⁴ Dirlik, 1975, p. 972.

of their lives, and an overabundance of hedonism and laziness in people. His criticisms were that most people seemed to have no sense of the value of time, and that they were careless, negligent and irresponsible. Chiang saw many of the common people as being both physically and spiritually decrepit. “To sum up in one word, the life of the average Chinese at present is barbaric (*yeh-man*) and devoid of reason (*pu-ho-li*).”²⁰⁵

The promotion of principles of behavior that were to constitute the public morality of the “New Life” of China was a key feature of the movement. Six main principles were promoted: orderliness, cleanliness, simplicity, frugality, promptness and precision. At times this list also included harmoniousness and dignity, though all these principles could be summarized under the fundamental aspects of “cleanliness” and “discipline.”²⁰⁶

Highly controlled by the political and military elements of the party from the beginning, mass demonstrations were organized through bodies such as state sponsored schools.²⁰⁷ They worked towards a *zhengshihua* (正式化 “politicization”) of the people and a push for them to overcome an indifference to politics in order to better understand the political situation and actively participate in reform movements. However, the New Life Movement was not intended to extend political participation to the people and have them challenge the existing structure of authority. Rather it was to mobilize them “in support of state goals, to convert them into voluntary functionaries of a bureaucratic machinery that encompassed the whole nation.”²⁰⁸

The policies and nationalist programs laid out by this movement covered areas of local control, education, and agrarian reform, but the emphasis on morality and hygiene at the top

²⁰⁵ *Yeh-man* in pinyin is *yeman* 野蛮 and *pu-ho-li* is *bu heli* 不合理. Dirlik, 1975, p. 954.

²⁰⁶ Dirlik, 1975, p. 956.

²⁰⁷ Dirlik, 1975, p. 950.

²⁰⁸ Dirlik, 1975, p. 953.

levels proved problematic. The divide between the upper level ideologies and the ground level necessities for execution plagued the movement with poor planning, bureaucratic ineptitude and a failure to accommodate to entrenched local elite who were determined to retain their power.²⁰⁹ In addition to the basic conceptual and organizational challenges, a major problem was the bewildering array of organizations, agencies, and bureaus established by the provincial and central government levels to direct the movement.²¹⁰ Many of these groups developed their own specialized figures throughout what Averill Stephen described as the “lower stratum of the elite,”²¹¹ which included a variety of different leadership roles including lineage heads, village elders, militia captains, traditional local schoolteachers and dispute mediators. Many of these people became involved with smuggling, extortion, opium growing and other illegal practices as this Movement brought in new resources and further reaching connections.

Studying how the New Life Movement was applied in Jiangxi, Stephen Averill found that the exact characterization of the movement was problematic. It was by no means the “cosmetic approach to ‘national regeneration... built on the toothbrush, the mousetrap, and the fly swatter’ which characterized the New Life Movement.”²¹² The project became a complex program aimed at far more than simply the return of law and order. Through various programs for local control, education and gradual land reform the government intended to produce “a prosperous, peaceful and well-educated citizenry which would be concerned with national affairs and responsive to government wishes.”²¹³

²⁰⁹ Averill, 1981, p. 596.

²¹⁰ Averill, 1981, p. 612.

²¹¹ Averill, 1981, p. 621.

²¹² Averill, 1981, p. 627.

²¹³ Averill, 1981, p. 627.

Although this might be a short summary of yet another large and complex movement of the Republican China, a noteworthy aspect is how the New Life Movement served as a concrete example of the GMD's recognition of the necessity of engaging the general population in the political process if it wanted to achieve its goals. It demonstrated the realization that an effective government "demanded the ability to serve as an agent of change, to transform society in the direction of greater national cohesion and unity of purpose."²¹⁴ Not only was the engagement of the general population important for political reasons, but it was also key to the labor force and productive capacities of the nation.

This drive for health, hygiene and discipline in the New Life Movement indeed linked with the *Tiyu* movement that preceded it. In a speech titled as such, *Tiyu Yu Xin Shenghuo* (体育与新生活 Physical Culture and New Life), made in 1936 by Meng Guangpeng (孟广澎 1887-1959),²¹⁵ a focus on the body of the common person related to its potential for labor and production:

"Production, in China with its weak nation and poor people, is naturally of paramount importance... The most important factors in production are capital, land, and labor, and everyone knows that of these, labor is the most important... The source of labor is the human body – without strong bodies there of course could be no powerful labor for production, agriculture, or handicraft work. To increase efficiency one especially needs healthy bodies. In the great enterprises of Europe and America, for the sake of rationalization, the health of all workers is especially emphasized. Workers are supervised not only during working hours but event during rest time. Equipment and counselling are provided so that their bodies can stay healthy."²¹⁶

²¹⁴ Dirlik, 1975, p. 976.

²¹⁵ Meng Guangpeng was a renowned social scientist who was recruited by the Guomindang party in the Republican era, serving in administrative duties within the military where he rose to the rank of a Major-General.

²¹⁶ Morris, 2004, p. 122.

Another speech, made by Shao Yuanchong (邵元冲 1890-1936)²¹⁷ as he represented the Central Party Department at the 4th National Games on April 1st of 1930, highlights the importance of physical fitness for the masses, and also gives credit to the value of martial arts:

“We should know that in the past, when the masses were interested in physical fitness and martial arts, they always paid attention to the individual rather than the entire society’s physical fitness (*shehui tili* [社会体力]) or competition with other nations of the world. Now we must make sure that physical fitness and martial arts are taken to the masses and that the masses pay attention to physical fitness and martial arts in order to make the *minzu* healthy and strong. This will be the success of racial nationalism (*minzu zhuyi* [民族主义]).”²¹⁸

Considering the divisions within the GMD party and its need to reinforce its social positioning to counterbalance the military strength of the generals and warlords they faced, and the internal policies that took hold in regards to becoming the “guardians of China’s cultural history” as well as the goals of transforming the people through projects such as the New Life Movement, it becomes somewhat clearer why the GMD would have wanted to become involved with a martial arts academy that had the ambition of becoming a national institution. It fed directly into its efforts to pull together a unified China with itself at its core, and it represented an institute involved in education and a reformation of the body, which had important links to traditional culture, military practice, and the notions about the transformation of the people.

The Guomintang took these efforts of establishing sovereignty over the education system to the point where they made an official decree in 1927 aimed at banning any schools that did not have their official involvement or approval. According to the decree, all schools in China had to

²¹⁷ Shao Yuanchong was a senior official within the Guomintang party, who rose to become the incumbent minister of the propaganda department before his death at the Xi’an incident when Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek was arrested and kidnapped by Marshal Zhang Xueliang, who wanted to force the GMD and the Communist Party of China to make peace so that the two could act as a unified front in the face of the Japanese invasion.

²¹⁸ From the *Quanguo Yundong Dahui Zongbaogao* (全国运动大会总报告), Morris, 2004, p. 103.

register under the government. Foreigners could no longer be president or the chairman of the directorate, schools were not allowed to force students to practise religion, and further decrees were published to ban religious activities in schools in 1929.²¹⁹ This was a direct response to the growing number of missionary schools and foreign institutions like the YMCA, and the presence of foreigners within a domain now perceived as essential for the formation of proper citizens.

Political initiatives within physical culture and the practices they entail are undertaken primarily for purposes of social cohesion and control. In this, they connect with Foucault's conception of the disciplines of the body as forms of domination and integration to the social order within modernity.²²⁰ As sports and physical education are determinate life-style practices, in Bourdieu's view they are therefore reflexive with specific class conditions and relations and can be instrumental in expressing identity. As such, sovereignty over sports and physical education becomes a step towards the construction and reproduction of specific relationships of power, and fall into the nation building efforts of this era, along with the invention of what would constitute a modern Chinese culture.

Within a socio-political-cultural dimension, Deborah Kapchan discussed how performing genres such as the martial arts become significant in as much as they can create new and hybrid identities. Actors use them “to maintain, reinforce or revise social imagination according to their interests. As a discursive field where the traditional past meets the contemporary invention of tradition, genre is a crossroads – of time and space, of convention and creativity, encoding history and determining the future.”²²¹

²¹⁹ Lu, 2011, p. 1039.

²²⁰ Harvey and Sparks, 1991, p. 183.

²²¹ Kapchan, 1999, p. 209.

Interpreting these formations of social relations, categorization and habitus as forms of cultural memory, Kapchan speaks of how we “live in the body as presence.” We are possessed by the repetitions that we perform each day, and by the sights and sounds that we experience through our bodies. But we are also always involved in the coming to terms with cultural identity, the codification and objectification not only of other cultures, but of our own.²²² Martial arts represented a field of practice at a “nexus of citizen-state relations, body disciplines, and the manipulation of tradition,”²²³ during a time when this tradition was being compared to, and integrated with, concepts of modernity.

The training at the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* was not as specific to the interests of the GMD as other institutes such as the Whampoa Military Academy, but the *Guoshuguan* certainly would have been an institution it would have seen beneficial to its work. For the purpose of this thesis, understanding the complexity of the issues that surround a political party is important to understand the dynamics underplaying the decision of political figures consider taking on a project such as the *Guoshuguan* as a means to act upon the field of martial arts practice. This form of political involvement in a cultural institution emphasizes the ways in which martial arts practitioners would have been influenced by the socio-cultural dynamics at play throughout the Republican era.

²²² Frank, 2006, p. 12.

²²³ Gainty, 2007, p. x.

Chapter 4: The *Jingwu Tiyu Hui* and the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan*

Having covered so many different aspects of Chinese history, and the underlying dynamics that took place during the Republican era, it is clear that the *Jingwu* Association and the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* occupied an important stage in the evolution of Chinese martial arts. This chapter looks at what the objectives of these associations were, along with the potential motivations of the people involved. In both organizations, they were not just involved in a preservation or maintenance of martial arts, but also a reinvention of it, and the development of its potential as a form of recreation imbued with an inherently Chinese sense of identity. This would have been a distinct break from earlier roles of martial arts in Chinese society.

Founded in the middle of the *Tiyu* movement in 1907, the *Jingwu Tiyu Hui*, was originally known as the *Jingwu Ticao Xuexiao* (精武体操学校, the Pure Martial Calisthenics School), until it was renamed in 1916.²²⁴ *Jingwu Tiyu Hui* was a project initiated by a group of martial arts practitioners who sought to preserve and develop Chinese martial arts and to guarantee that these systems of practice would survive the transition from traditional to modern China. This association had a vital role within the conflict between traditionalists within the field of martial arts and the intellectuals fighting for the complete adoption of Western forms of physical culture. Some contemporary martial arts historians such as Brian Kennedy and Elizabeth Guo go so far to claim that the *Jingwu* Association was the school that saved the traditional martial arts of China.²²⁵

²²⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 186.

²²⁵ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. ix.

The *Jingwu* Association signalled a turning point in the organization and promotion of martial arts. It was the first public Chinese martial arts training facility, and the first association to position Chinese martial arts as a sport or recreation. The *Jingwu* Association used books, photographs, magazines, and even film to promote the development of Chinese martial arts. It even ranked among the earliest institutions in China to place women's programs on an equal footing with men's programs.²²⁶

The women's program at the *Jingwu* Association opened in 1917, and within a year, it operated in several schools in Shanghai.²²⁷ The *Jingwu* Association's anniversary book contains a number of essays by women who participated in the *Jingwu* program. The general theme of these essays was that in the new, modern, scientific China, people should be able to move past the belief that gender could be a limiting factor to physical or martial arts development.

The idea of bringing together different styles of training and developing their strongest elements was not something started by the *Jingwu* Association. We find an earlier example of this approach taken in *Jixiao Xinshu*, with the chapter on hand-to-hand martial arts, "*Quanjing Jiyaopian*" (拳经解要篇 Classic of Boxing, Chapter on Essentials) where Qi Jiguang took the best parts of popular boxing styles and organizing the material into two parts: the written framework with basic principles, and illustrated examples.²²⁸

Unlike Qi Jiguang, who worked to prepare soldiers for war, the *Jingwu* Association sought to build a place where people could just walk in, sign up and learn Chinese martial arts. This aspect of openness was critical to their efforts to reinvent the field of practice as a form of health maintenance and recreation. While teachers at the *Jingwu* Association did not want to

²²⁶ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. x.

²²⁷ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 15.

²²⁸ Henning, 2006, p. 11.

abandon the traditional forms of martial arts, they did not defend the ways that these forms had previously been taught. While they still included competitive training that had a relation to fighting, they sought to foster the public understand of martial arts where the fighting aspect was only one part of something greater.

The *Jingwu* Association pushed for the incorporation of a modern mindset into the traditional forms of practice, following the slogan of “Scientize martial arts, and spread them to the millions.”²²⁹ In this, the *Jingwu* Association encouraged the movement away from traditional schools and forms of teaching. In many ways, it followed the concepts of achieving modernization through westernization, describing the benefits of martial arts through western concepts used in the debates of the *Tiyu* movement and encouraging the study of western practices. It was the first sports organization to combine Western and Chinese physical culture, teaching not only Chinese martial arts and military training, but also Western sports such as gymnastics, athletics, football, basketball, volleyball, tennis and swimming.²³⁰

The *Jingwu* project was intended to create a tangible shift in the way that Chinese martial arts were commonly perceived as the domain of soldiers and bodyguards, and stop any connections from being made with the Boxer Rebellion or any superstitious elements of training. As a public association built on Western principles, the people involved with the *Jingwu* Association wanted martial arts to be a form of recreation with cultural attributes, and even an intellectual pursuit appropriate for the modern, Westernized citizen of the new Republic of China.

The *Jingwu* treated martial arts training as an ideal youth activity. It was physically demanding, meaning it could help students become strong and healthy, and it had the potential to

²²⁹ Morris, 2004, p. 192.

²³⁰ Jarvie and Hwang, 2001, p. 12.

instill in a sense of pride in a Chinese person's cultural heritage.²³¹ But in order to convince others of the utility they saw in the practice, the directors of the *Jingwu* Association had to work against all the negative public associations of the martial arts, such as boxers being illiterate, violent or immoral. Novels such as *Shuihu zhuan* reinforced stereotypes linking martial arts with fighting and outlaws, where the main characters spend most of their time divided between drinking bouts, immoral sexual liaisons, street fights and running from the law.²³² The popularity of this book within literary culture over the years influenced a certain expectation for the common martial artist to be some type of brigand or vagabond. Through their actions to cultivate important links to powerful political figures, and demonstrate through commercial acumen and the institutional format of the association, the leaders of the *Jingwu* Association wanted to assert that "true" martial artists did not possess negative qualities like those seen in *Shuihu zhuan*, but instead they had the intellectual abilities necessary in the modern world ready to face the challenges ahead.

One of the most important projects of the *Jingwu* Association worked to separate the effective and useful aspects of Chinese martial arts training from the practices connected with the rituals of spiritual possession used in the Boxer Rebellion.²³³ The teachers involved with that association wanted to foster the idea of applying Western principles of scientific study separate fact from fiction in martial teachings. They had to distance the training from the perception of having any affiliation with the Boxer Rebellion. To achieve their goals, members of the *Jingwu* Association incorporated many Western strategies and took some revolutionary initiatives. They emphasized written texts, welcomed women's participation to the world of modern martial arts,

²³¹ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 63.

²³² Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 88.

²³³ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 86.

and reached to a broader audience so that they could promote the practice of Chinese martial arts.²³⁴

The *Jingwu* Association served as an important forerunner to other martial academies that opened in the 1920s and 1930s. It laid out new possibilities for unification of martial arts and played an important role in improving the general perception of their field of practice. The Chinese public learned about the activities of the *Jingwu* Association inside the pages of New Culture Movement journals and newspapers, as many of the driving members of the *Jingwu* were also members of the New Culture Movement.²³⁵ They incorporated Western sports and intellectual activities into the *Jingwu* facilities to defend traditional systems of practice by creating a new field of physical culture for China; one firmly based in the indigenous practices that could be learned from respected teachers open to the incorporation of new ideas that could refine and improve the training methods.

The vision of the *Jingwu* Association for the traditional Chinese martial arts included the importance of using scientific sports methods to ensure that the traditional practices would not only stay alive but remain vibrant and develop with the growth of modernity in Chinese society.²³⁶ This reflected the goal of the *Jingwu* to raise the overall level of Chinese culture, to connect with the rhetoric of these social movements and to ensure that the practice of Chinese martial arts was positioned as something more sophisticated than simply the activity of uneducated guards or soldiers. When the original hall of the *Jingwu* Association was damaged in a typhoon, and they had raised the funds to build a new space, they designed it to resemble a

²³⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 203.

²³⁵ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 8.

²³⁶ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 26.

Western-looking facility.²³⁷ It was planned as a place in which the polarizations of Western and Chinese, science and culture, intellect and body could all be brought together.

Huo Yuanjia (霍元甲 1868-1920),²³⁸ a co-founder of the *Jingwu* Association, was made into a symbol of the “new Chinese citizen” they hoped to create: an individual who was well-educated, physically fit, morally upright, proud, and able to stand up to physical challenges from any source, whether on the *leitai* (擂台 raised platform),²³⁹ the sports arena, or the battlefield. There was an understanding amongst the people involved that the *Jingwu* Association relied on the pillars of society, which they identified as journalists, politicians, business people, academics, military officers, and women’s organizations.²⁴⁰ They understood the potential of these different elements of modern society to influence how martial artists were perceived and to improve how they were positioned within society.

One of the *Jingwu* Association’s early victories in the popularization of martial arts was that they were included in the first National Games of the Republic of China in 1910, in a three-day program of what were called *Guocao* (国操 national callisthenics) demonstrations.

Organized by Chen Tiesheng (陈鐵生),²⁴¹ the program consisted of one hundred and seven martial arts exhibitions, all scored on the basis of five standards: orderliness, spirit, strength,

²³⁷ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 29.

²³⁸ Huo Yuanjia was a Chinese martial arts and co-founder of the *Jingwu* Association. He was considered a hero in China for defeating foreign fighters in highly publicized matches.

²³⁹ The *leitai* was a traditional arena for challenges between different schools of martial arts. They were also used by the community for theatrical performances and other communal events.

²⁴⁰ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 12.

²⁴¹ Chen Tiesheng was a journalist and editor who started the *Jingwu* Association’s literary efforts in 1916. He wrote many articles for popular magazines and newspapers to promote the *Jingwu* Association program. Chen Tiesheng “*Di san jie quanguo yundonghui guocao*,” in Morris, 2004, p. 81.

posture and dress.²⁴² This involvement in the National Games represented a significant advancement in effort to create a place for martial arts within the modern field of sports. The *Jingwu* went on to build their organization up to where they had forty-two branches by 1929, with over 400,000 members spread through China and South East Asia.²⁴³

The initial work of the *Jingwu* Association had made some progress, but by the 1920s there were still many criticisms of the field of martial arts, even by other teachers. Wu Zhiqing (吳志青 1887-1949)²⁴⁴ pointed out that martial arts were still not openly discussed, petty factions kept their skills secret, many schools in the martial arts world were dominated by the “supernatural,” “sorcery,” and “occult talk in total darkness,” and that the terminology of martial arts was too abstruse and obscure for the masses to understand.²⁴⁵

Wanting to take pioneering efforts of the *Jingwu* Association even further, the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* (中央国术管 the Central Martial Arts Academy) founded in Nanjing, the heart of the Guomindang controlled Republic of China as a centralized institution for the practice of martial arts. While many of the teachers involved might have had a personal interest to help preserve martial arts, the financial and political contributions to the *Guoshuguan* was driven by their efforts in nation building, as well as their growing authority over the education system in China.

Founded by Zhang Zhijiang, who was named the director of the academy in the National Government decree # 174 on March 15th, 1928,²⁴⁶ the academy was opened with the support of

²⁴² Chen Tiesheng, “*Di san jie quanguo yundonghui guocao*,” in Morris, 2004, p. 81.

²⁴³ Jarvie and Hwang, 2001, p. 12.

²⁴⁴ Wu Zhiqing was a leader of the Chinese Wushu association of Shanghai during the 1920s.

²⁴⁵ Morris, 2004, p. 217

²⁴⁶ Morris, 2004, p. 205, and Filipiak, 2010, p. 43.

the GMD party and Nanjing heavyweights like He Yingqin (何应钦 1890-1987),²⁴⁷ Kong Xiangxi (孔祥熙 1881-1967),²⁴⁸ and Yu Youren (于右任 1879-1964).²⁴⁹ The GMD supported the academy with a funding of 4,000 *yuan* (元 Chinese unit of currency, tael) per month, with overseas contributions of an initial 250,000 *yuan* at the founding of the program.²⁵⁰ The goals of the academy were to generate a new culture of martial arts instructors, enhance the health of the people, standardize teaching materials, improve research, create a centralized examination system, and to promote the value of Chinese martial arts to the young nation state of the Republic of China.²⁵¹

The people in charge of the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* sought to construct and disseminate an official and coherent ideology situating the *Guoshu* (国术 national arts) they taught as a scientifically and rationally based native Chinese sport.²⁵² *Guoshu* refers to a field of practice that combined a mixture of different styles of martial arts, with agonistic competitions in bare-handed and weapon fighting at its core. *Guoshu* is believed to originally be shorthand for

²⁴⁷ He Yingqin was one of the most senior generals of the GMD during Republican China and a close ally of Chiang Kai-shek. He was a general instructor at the Whampoa Academy in 1924, and recruited with a number of the students into the National Revolutionary Army, where he started as the commander of a division before working his way up to become the Minister of Military Administration Department of the GMD government.

²⁴⁸ Kong Xiangxi, often known as Dr. H. H. Kung, was a wealthy banker and politician of the early twentieth century. He was highly influential in determining the economic policies of the GMD government in the 1930s and 1940s. He was the Minister of Industry and Commerce for the party from 1928-1932, served as the Minister of Finance from 1933-1944 and even the Premier of the Republic of China from January 1st 1938 to November 20th 1939.

²⁴⁹ Yu Youren was an educator, scholar, calligrapher, and revolutionary politician. After a tumultuous period for him during the revolution, in 1927 he was a standing member of the Nationalist government committee, and appointed the Director of Audit. In 1932, he was the Director of the Control Yuan, while he continued his work on calligraphy with the compilation of a few books.

²⁵⁰ Filipiak, 2010, p. 47.

²⁵¹ Vercammen, 2009, p. 126, and Filipiak, 2010, p. 48.

²⁵² Morris, 2004, p. 216.

Zhongguo wushu (中国武术 Chinese martial arts), which became imbued with the notion of representing “National Skills.” This reflected the effort to connect the martial practices to the same categories as *Guohua* (国画 national painting), *Guoyi* (国医 national medicine), and *Guoyue* (国乐 national music), which emphasized their indigenous qualities. The invention of this new term for martial arts reflected the effort to give martial culture a modern, scientific and national packaging, as when the *Jingwu* Association first started calling martial arts *wushu*.²⁵³

Zhang Zhijiang served under the warlord turned Guomintang general, Feng Yuxiang (冯玉祥 1882-1948).²⁵⁴ Zhang Zhijiang was one of the five generals of the Northwestern army and a former *dutong* (都统 military governor) of Suiyuan province,²⁵⁵ who was sent to Nanjing to serve as an official liaison to Chiang Kai-shek after Feng Yuxiang agreed to stand behind the GMD. Using this *guanxi* (关系 personal relations)²⁵⁶ with some of the most powerful political and military figures of the time, Zhang Zhijiang lobbied for the support to found a martial arts academy which became the *Guoshuguan*. Feng Yuxiang was an active supporter of the practice

²⁵³ The martial arts skills and training that had been passed on for centuries in China had previously been referred to with terms such as *quanyong* (拳勇 fist of valor), *wuyi* (武艺 martial arts), *jiji* (击技 skills of assault), *shoubo* (手搏 hand combat) or *yi Yong* (义勇 skills of valor). Terms like *wushu*, *Guoshu*, *quanshu* (拳术 skill of the fists) or *Guoji* (国技 national skills) were only introduced at the beginning of the twentieth century. See Morris, 2004, p. 188.

²⁵⁴ Feng Yuxiang was known as the Christian general. He was a powerful warlord with Soviet military connections who helped Chiang Kai-shek in his Northern Expedition to unify China and bring the Northern warlords under control.

²⁵⁵ Morris, 2004, p. 204.

²⁵⁶ With an inclination to a continual exchange of gifts and favors, *guanxi* serves as an essential part of society in China. It reflects a style of obtaining influence or favors through the cultivation of personal relationships and expanding one’s network of contacts, both direct and indirect. As described in Lin, 2010, p. 33, “Although both Zhang Zhijiang and Li Jinglin had very impressive civil, military, and administrative credentials, their knowing the right people at the right time facilitated the founding of this institute.”

of martial arts, giving a speech that touched on the criticisms of the New Cultural movement against martial arts practice on May 4th, 1927:

“I don’t oppose playing ball in the least, but I do oppose this feverish consumption of foreigner’s goods. This is exercise, but it is the exercise of the gents and ladies of the leisured class. If you want to exercise your body, is a blade not enough? Is a sword routine not enough? Are wrestling and boxing not enough? Of China’s eighteen types of martial arts, not one is incapable of drenching our entire bodies in sweat, stimulating all the body’s blood, tendons and bones. You say those activities are old-fashioned, but you don’t even know that the Western sport of track and field is all left over from the Greek and Roman eras... Now it is all just about blindly following the West, and when you think about it this is really our greatest national shame.”²⁵⁷

Built on an institutional framework, the objectives of the academy entailed the establishment a universal, nationwide, standardized system of indigenous calisthenics and self-defense by providing a form of centralized regulation over the training of martial arts teachers. To achieve these goals during the era of modernization movements, the *Guoshuguan* needed to construct and disseminate an official and coherent ideology situating martial arts as a scientifically and rationally-based indigenous Chinese sport.²⁵⁸ To this end, the academy funded research and publications on the martial arts, established a new method of training teachers, and provided open instruction for interested students. Chu Minyi (褚民誼 1884-1946)²⁵⁹ wrote in the inaugural essay for the journal *Guoshu Unification Monthly* that only a “unified” Guoshu that was “scientized, particularized, and common-ized [i.e., made more common throughout society]

²⁵⁷ Morris, 2004, p. 196.

²⁵⁸ Morris, 2004, p. 216.

²⁵⁹ Chu Minyi was a prominent figure in the Chinese Republican movement and the early GMD government. Another *Tongmeng Hui* member, he was a member of the GMD educational commission and the head of the medical school at the Guangdong University in 1925. As a member of the Central Executive Committee of the GMD in 1926, he organized the Chinese Arts Association. Due to various political differences with Chiang Kai-shek, he resigned from these positions.

would be able to achieve a Chinese martial arts influence that was internationalized, globalized, and humanized throughout the universe.”²⁶⁰

While founders of the academy understood the ability of martial arts to instill self-respect and patriotism in the hearts of the people, and we can also see this as well in quotes such as one from 1933: “Standing on this twentieth century stage where one cannot survive without competing, how can we prevent insults and gain respect? ... The only path we can take to self-defense is to practice the martial arts... Comrades let us loudly affirm: ... the spear and staff of the martial arts will strike down the Imperialism that has invaded us... The knife and sword of the martial arts will cut up all the unequal treaties! ... Long live the martial arts of the Republic of China!”²⁶¹

The founders of the *Guoshuguan* strongly believed in the dictum that a strong mind in a strong body would lead to a strong nation,²⁶² and they also believed the ethos of the *Guoshu* element of this movement, whereby the use of “national arts” in the title touched on how the people of China not only needed to strengthen themselves to face global competition and modernize their country, but they also needed to maintain a connection to their cultural history. The *Guoshu* aspect was an important part of defending these traditional practices as something still worth preservation by virtue of the fact that they reflected the cultural identity of China.

The first two directors of the academy were former generals in warlord armies with an admiration for martial arts. Their military experience would have given them a familiarity with the competitive nature of the world and the need for modern technology and weaponry in combat.

²⁶⁰ Morris, 2004, p. 221.

²⁶¹ Henning, 2006, p. 19.

²⁶² Lin, 2010, p. 32.

Particularly with the victory of their armies in the Northern Expedition,²⁶³ they would have recognized that not only did a modern nation require advanced weaponry and soldiers with the technical skills to use them, but it also needed men instilled with strength, discipline and confidence to win a battle.

The support of the *Guoshuguan* aligned with a movement led by Cheng Dengke (程登科 1901-1991)²⁶⁴ where educationalists and nationalists called for the implementation of the idea of “National Physical Education” in the mid-1930s. Their objective was to promote militarized physical education and let all the Chinese people participate in sport.²⁶⁵ The teachers at the *Guoshuguan* encouraged everyone to study Chinese martial arts regardless of social class, gender or position. The idea was to help the people unite and to teach them how to defend themselves from any threats, either foreign or domestic.

In his research on the foundations of *Taiji Quan*, Douglas Wile saw that there was a sense of the national self that could be produced through the practice, which was helpful against the challenges faced with understanding oneself within an increasingly international environment. Wile trod carefully around defining legends in the origins of martial arts such as *Taiji Quan* that claimed to go further into Chinese history beyond the Ming dynasty due to the lack of textual evidence, and he felt that the growing popularity of the practices in the Republican era “may be seen as a psychological defense against Western cultural imperialism.”²⁶⁶ Not only was it the

²⁶³ An important military campaign during the efforts to unify China during the Republican Era, which is elaborated upon in Chapter 4.

²⁶⁴ Cheng Dengke served as the head of the College of Physical Education at Nanjing Zhongyang University. He studied at the University of Berlin from 1929-1933 and was inspired by the militarized physical education in Germany. He published his theory on physical education in 1936 in an essay entitled “The Theory on National Physical Education and the Way of Implementation,” Lu, 2011, p. 1033.

²⁶⁵ Lu, 2011, p. 1033.

²⁶⁶ Wile, 1996, p. 26.

issue of training people in a practice that could make them strong, but it was a distinctly Chinese practice. With this, the people behind the *Guoshuguan* worked towards the promotion of martial arts as a basis to strengthen the minds, bodies and cultural identities of the people.

Of course, the challenge with promoting martial arts as a tool to help unify the people meant that the promoters had to reconcile the disunity of the practices themselves. Advocacy for *gejia quanfa jian er xizhi* (各家拳法见而习之 practice every style of boxing as one)²⁶⁷ related to their goal of establishing a unified field of martial arts in China. Despite their efforts, situations occurred where one system or school of martial arts gained favour over another, and vicious infighting could break out amongst different teachers. The *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* originally emphasized the division between the *Wudang* (武当)²⁶⁸ and *Shaolin* (少林),²⁶⁹ but conflicts between teachers to settle administrative disagreements led to this form of organization being abolished. Some of this infighting reached the point where Liu Yinhu (刘印虎 a *Wudang Taiji*

²⁶⁷ Original translation of quote taken from Ma Mingda. The Chinese line can also be translated as “To see every style of martial arts and practice them.” The emphasis seems to be on the active pursuit of different styles and an openness to different concepts in training.

²⁶⁸ A term from a mountain range known as Wudang Shan (武当山) or simply Wudang, in the northwestern part of Hubei province, near the city of Shiyan. This term *Wudang* is used to refer to the martial arts of *Taiji Quan*, *Xingyi Quan* and *Bagua Zhang*. The legend to the Wudang mountains was that a Daoist master, Zhang Sanfeng (张三丰) lived there in the twelfth century and invented *Taiji Quan* after witnessing a battle between a white crane and a snake. This is a highly contested story, falling into the criticized areas of martial arts based on mythology. Tang Hao (唐豪 1887–1959), the historian working at the *Guoshuguan* could find no truth to figures such as Zhang Sanfeng, and felt that the proliferation of unfounded myths discredited the reputation of martial arts. However, there is indeed a Daoist temple at the Wudang mountains that incorporated some physical training and the practice of *Taiji Quan*, but when and how they integrated those practices into their training is uncertain, and beyond the focus of this thesis.

²⁶⁹ The Shaolin temple is famous for its martial arts practice, although the exact history of it is uncertain. An excellent source on the martial history of the temple is Meir Shahr’s monograph *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion and the Chinese Martial Arts*. Though it perhaps puts too great a focus on the role of Shaolin in the greater field of Chinese martial arts, particularly with an inadequate reading of martial arts before the Ming dynasty, Shahr’s work is widely treated as one of the most significant academic works on the role of martial arts in the Shaolin temple.

Quan expert) and Ma Yufu (马裕甫 a *Shaolin* wrestler) are said to have attacked each other with bamboo spears in a disagreement over how to structure the curriculum.²⁷⁰

The new structure of the *Guoshuguan* was designed from a western institutional framework. At the top, the head director and his administrative committee oversaw all aspects of the institution. Below him, the organization branched out into all the various departments that oversaw each function. There were five *weiyuan hui* (委员会 committees) and a *lishi hui* (理事会 board of management) that gave direction to the institute, including the publishing committee, recruitment committee, examination committee, miscellaneous committee, and a *canshi hui* (参事会, counselors, with a political connotation).

For the actual classes, they came to be divided into age groups rather than the previous stylistic divisions, with an additional class for people who wanted to come and study, but not immerse themselves in the full program. They were grouped together under the *xunlian dui* (训练队 training department) and listed four different sections, *minzhong ban* (民众班 common people), children, women, and adults, which separated the full time students of the institution from local people that wanted to come in and take less formal classes.

There was a *jiaowu chu* (教务处 academic services department) that was divided into the library, a teacher's class and a *wangce zu* (注册组 literary acquisition department), and each section had its own director. Following this, the *pianshen chu* (编审处 editorial department) was divided into a publications department, a *shenhe zu* (审核组 verification department) and a *bianji zu* (编辑组 compilation department). The *zongwu chu* (总务处 general affairs department)

²⁷⁰ Morris, 2004, p. 205.

included the clerks for general affairs, a finance and accounting department, and a *wenshu zu* (文书组 secretarial department). Finally, the institute also included a research department, divided into four *yanjiu hui* (研究会 research teams). These included the *wushu wuxue yanjiu hui* (武术学术研究会 martial arts academics research team), the *yundong caipan yanjiu hui* (运动裁判研究会 athletic judging research team), the *jiaocai jiaoxue yanjiu hui* (教材教学研究 teaching materials and teaching methods research team) and the *shehui jiaoyun yanjiu hui* (社会教育研究会 social education research team).²⁷¹

This structure allowed for more progress towards the development of a list of recognized styles and sets that should be learned for practice. The curriculum itself was divided between two main aspects of martial arts training, which included *quantao* (拳套 boxing sets, also known as *taolu* 套路, forms training or simply “forms”) and *liangong* (练功 training drills). *Quantao* are choreographed series of movements that can range anywhere from two or three moves to over a hundred moves that are practiced together as a single form. These forms are intended to be practiced daily, and in a fluid manner where each move feeds into the next. *Liangong* are fairly straightforward exercises and calisthenics that are simple to learn but challenging to practice. When training *liangong*, a student would be told to do hundreds of repetitions daily to attain any true level of skill. The emphasis on method of training versus the other would differ between teachers, but in general the mentality was that the *quantao* contained the essence of the style of movement, and the actual techniques that could be applied in the fight, but the *liangong* was the method to cultivate ability to use those techniques with power.

²⁷¹ This information was taken from the organization chart from the *Zhongyang Guoshuguanshi* (中央国术管史 *History of the Central Martial Arts Academy*), 1996, p. 27.

Zhang Zhijiang's approach to the content of training revolved around a central precept, that *lianda bingzhong, shuxue jianbei* (練打並重, 術學兼備 practice and agonistic competitions should exist side by side, and technical knowledge should be acquired at the same time as rational understanding). One of his most significant contributions was the creation of a preliminary system of indigenous sports with the *guoshu kaoshi* (国术考试 National Examinations, also known as simply *guokao* 国考) at its center.

Instructors in the different academy branches were allowed to teach their local martial arts specialties, but they tried to maintain consistency across the different branches. All academy students would study an official curriculum that included *Taiji Quan, Xingyi Quan* (形意拳 mind/form boxing), *Bagua Zhang* (八卦掌 eight-trigram palm), and wrestling styles.²⁷²

A feature incorporated to work on creating a more "scientific" practice of modern physical culture, was that academy students also had to master a scientific and nationalist educational curriculum consisting of the *Sanmin Zhuyi* (三民主义 Three People's Principles),²⁷³

²⁷² While *Xingyi Quan* and *Bagua Zhang* are not as commonly known today as *Taiji*, All the aspects of Chinese culture synthesized in *Taiji* can also be found in other two styles. Foreign popularity has enhanced *Taiji's* status within China, making the study of its history more common. Lorge, 2012, p. 207.

²⁷³ The Three People's Principles is a political philosophy developed by Sun Yat-sen as part of his effort to make China a free, prosperous, and powerful nation. The Principle of *Minzu Zhuyi* (民族主义) is commonly rendered as "nationalism", literally "populism" or "the People's rule/government," *Minzu* clearly describing a nation rather than a group of persons united by a purpose, hence the commonly used translation "nationalism." By this, Sun meant freedom from imperialist (Manchu) domination. The Principle of *Minquan Zhuyi* (民权主义) is usually translated as "democracy"; literally "the People's power" or "government by the People." To Sun Yat-sen, it represented a Western constitutional government. He divided political life of his ideal for China into two sets of 'powers': the power of politics and the power of governance. The Principle of *Minsheng Zhuyi* (民生主义) is sometimes translated as "the People's welfare/livelihood," "Government for the People." The concept may be understood as social welfare and as a direct criticism of the inadequacies of both socialism and capitalism.

Guomindang party principles, written language skills, *Guoshu* history, mathematics, geography, physiology, hygiene, history, and geography.²⁷⁴

While some differences remained in how students were trained throughout the various branches, at the central academy in Nanjing students lived in dormitories where they had forty-four hours of courses each week over a span of three years.²⁷⁵ In a standard term, sixty students participated, and many were sent by provincial governments, likely with the expectation that they would return to their province to open another branch of the academy and spread the teachings.

Within the *Guoshuguan*, the effort to become *tongbei wuxue* (通备武学 “thoroughly versed in civil and intellectual matters and martially prepared”) served as a guiding mandate. This demonstrated an interest in cultivating both *wen* and *wu* aspects by combining the academic and martial pursuits, reviving the Ming ideal of having established a balance between the two concepts. Through this, the people involved with the *Guoshuguan* tried to engage the entire field of martial arts from both a physical and a scholarly perspective, and did not just limit themselves to the training of a specific style or single school of practice. Ma Mingda discussed this idea in his own studies, where he supported the effort to preserve traditional martial arts regardless of their style under the phrase “blend, understand, and combine their qualities.”²⁷⁶

The examination that the different branches of the academy was expected to take combined elements of the examinations taken in Ming and Qing dynasties to qualify for imperial military service, the *leitai* competition fighting at traditional local martial arts contests and festivals, and modern sporting competitions. Like the imperial military examination, the *Guoshu*

²⁷⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 211.

²⁷⁵ Morris, 2004, p. 208.

²⁷⁶ Henning, 2006, p. 11.

examination consisted of physical and academic testing, although the trope of the martial expert equally trained in the letters was much more crucial in the Republican era. Where imperial-era military examinees had only to memorize passages from three military classics, the successful modern candidate now had to demonstrate proficiency across a wider range of subjects, with elements of Western learning.

While the philosophy of modern competition was important to the *Tiyu* movement and the New Culture Movement, martial arts competitions were notoriously difficult to judge fairly because of the diversity between styles. Zhang Zhijiang tried to address this by restructuring the chaotic forms of popular competitions into a framework with one performance and three matches, which included one set-performance (and point-scoring) and a series of three competitive matches in *sanshou* (散手 barehanded combat), *duanbing* (短兵 short weapon), and *changbing* (長兵 long weapon). Many flaws were still present in this system of martial arts competition as experienced judges were lacking, and considerable problems existed in respect of regulation, safety facilities, and the standard of training. Despite these difficulties, it represented an important step forward. Their challenge was to resolve problems that had existed within that field of practice for centuries, so it certainly would not have been an easy process to work through them within the few years that the *Guoshuguan* had.

There was a large competition in Beijing in April of 1928 which was presided over by Zhang Zhijiang.²⁷⁷ This was followed by a national martial arts tournament in October which was sponsored once again by the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan*, this time in Nanjing. The Nanjing National Tournament was held so that the people involved in the organization of the *Guoshuguan* could choose the best instructors for its national and provincial schools.

²⁷⁷ Lin, 2010, p. 38.

Approximately 600 men entered this competition, which was essentially no-holds-barred combat. The rules allowed everything but strikes to the eyes, throat or groin. Many people were severely injured during the tournament, and it had to be stopped before the end. A total of fifteen finalists emerged.²⁷⁸

The difficulty to conduct a clear system of competition highlighted one of the faults of the field of martial arts practice that the *Guoshuguan* hoped to address; no single style was dominant enough to be made a curricular model. There were too many variations of the older styles, and new ones lacked sufficient reputation to be accepted. As it brought in masters of various backgrounds to teach, it encouraged these masters to be open minded and share their knowledge. From the diversity of training within the curriculum that the *Guoshuguan* assembled, we can see evidence of collaboration amongst these different teachers, where knowledge was exchanged, and the teachers learned forms from each other and compared how the emphasis within the movements differed between one style and another.

Many of the divisions between martial arts styles were fostered by a tradition where secrets and fundamental texts of each lineage were not supposed to be published, but kept by the elders. Only the best disciples were allowed to see them, and maybe copy them down by hand.²⁷⁹ This collaboration encouraged amongst the teachers at the *Guoshuguan* was an important part of the entire project. This was an opportunity not only for new students, but even for skilled practitioners to expand their knowledge, and compare notes on fundamental principles for training through their exchanges with other teachers. While the histories of famous teachers indicate various exchanges and encounters they had with other teachers, several of them refer specifically to teachers they met through the *Guoshuguan*, and it seems that people became more

²⁷⁸ Lin, 2010, p. 40.

²⁷⁹ Vercammen, 2009, p. 121.

open to the idea of sharing their knowledge as this drive to unification took root in some of the people associated with the academy.

Higher quality research and publication of texts on the history and development of each style became possible through these collaborations. Intended to better understand the practice as it existed in their day, this work served as part of the effort to develop a training curriculum for instructors that could be unified and regulated. Through this, it hoped to overcome criticisms such as one put forward by a famous teacher who taught at the *Guoshuguan*, Sun Lutang, who said “the martial arts have developed into many branches in which the true is often mingled with the false. Some do not look so attractive though they have been put into use. Some are rather good looking but come to failure for lack of actual effect.”²⁸⁰

This aim for standardisation was a determining factor in what how they decided on the curriculum for the academy. It needed to formulate teaching materials that could be used on a national scale. Books started to feature photographs of different postures and moves, and more teachers such as Yang Chengfu began to prepare sets of movements specifically for books that would be distributed to beginner level students. The vice president of the *Guoshuguan*, Li Jinglin (李景林 1885-1931), a former General of the Fengtian clique who had studied *Taiji Quan* and who was known for his mastery of *Wudang* swordsmanship, was actively supportive of this project of documenting and standardizing styles of practice.²⁸¹

The field of martial arts was multiply-conceived, chaotic and divided, and the Republic of China reflected this chaos in many ways. This made the *Guoshuguan* a site of both control and creativity; the academy stood as a place where individual citizens could find not only a chance to

²⁸⁰ Sun Lutang, 1915, p. 54.

²⁸¹ Vercammen, 1998, p. 125.

redefine the role of martial arts in a modern China, but also the opportunity to reposition how this field of practice existed in Chinese society. Political figures such as GMD officials and famous teachers became involved with academies or schools such as the *Guoshuguan*, because of “the crucial role that the school system plays in the reproduction of the social order, not only through the allocation of academic credentials commensurable with inherited cultural capital, but also through the inculcation of mental structures and of dispositions (especially linguistic and cultural) universally recognized to social structures.”²⁸²

In its efforts to take the formerly diverse schools of Chinese martial arts and consolidate them into a new form of national arts, the *Guoshuguan* stood as an ideal location for the GMD to continue its revolution of science, discipline and unification. In this era of national crisis, the *Guoshuguan* was well-positioned to represent the nationalist objectives of the GMD party, at a time when it wanted to have itself perceived not only as the key to modernization for the nation, but also as the guardians of China’s cultural legacy. Official *Guoshuguan* rhetoric presented a picture of a levelled China united by participation in this new national realm, without the least regard to social, economic, or geographical hierarchies that operated in the Nanjing Decade.

Linked with the imagination of *Guoshu* as a “national realm,”²⁸³ a centralized *Guoshuguan* stood in a position where it intended to take a body of arts and knowledge and dedicate it towards the goal of building and unifying the practice along the lines of the *Guoqing* (国情 National Conditions). As academy officials spoke in ways that promoted popularization, and working from a realm where all citizens of a nation could be linked with common factors such as their ability to be strengthened by a practice native to their country:

²⁸² Lash, 1993, p. 268.

²⁸³ Morris, 2004, p. 206.

“Standing in the twentieth-century arena, where if one does not compete one cannot survive, we beseech the Chinese people, how can we avoid the disrespect of others? ... *Guoshu* is not something in which one is constrained by financial status – it can be popularized (*pingminhua*). It doesn't matter if one is old or young, poor or rich, male or female, and it doesn't depend on how many people are present, or how much space or time one has available – it can be practiced anywhere.”²⁸⁴

This popularization could only be achieved through a unification of practice and the establishment of a coherent curriculum. The objective of this process was to transform the field of martial arts from being a symbol of the “fractured and backwards” legacy of traditional Chinese culture to a modern sport particularly suitable for the development of Chinese bodies and minds as well as a legitimate form of self-defence. Political figures would benefit from their involvement in this process in multiple ways. Aside from the whole dynamic of bio-politics that was discussed earlier, the relationship between the social hierarchy and what people perceive as legitimate culture is straightforward: those atop the social hierarchy seek to impose their view of legitimate culture, while holders of legitimate culture use it to reinforce their perch atop the social hierarchy.²⁸⁵ By contributing to the process of legitimatizing martial arts in the context of the modern world, the political leaders who became involved in this work could reinforce their position within the social hierarchy.

The organizers of *Guoshuguan* attracted some very famous teachers towards their project. Shortly after the founding of the academy, one of the martial artists whom Zhang Zhijiang and Li Jinglin invited to teach at the academy was Sun Lutang. Sun Lutang traveled to Nanjing and was appointed the senior advisor of the internal arts program.²⁸⁶ A well-known teacher and publisher of martial arts texts, Sun Lutang's perspectives on training were in line with the principal objectives of the *Guoshuguan* in using this practice to unify and strengthen the people of China.

²⁸⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 206.

²⁸⁵ Lipuma, 1993, p. 27.

²⁸⁶ Sun, 1915, p. 31.

In his book *Xingyi quanxue* (形意拳学 *The Study of Xingyi Boxing*), Sun writes: “A strong country cannot be composed of weak people. We cannot make people strong without physical training. To brace up the people through physical training is the way to strengthen the country... Martial arts have been put into the curriculum in schools so that the students can be trained in both literary and military arts.”²⁸⁷

In many ways, Sun Lutang himself stood as a prime example of the Chinese citizen empowered in both body and mind. A renowned teacher of martial arts, and a very capable fighter, he was also skilled at philosophical debates, and published several books on martial arts between 1915-1930 that have been translated and are still read today by practitioners of Chinese martial arts. Because of the combination of his literary and martial skills, Sun Lutang symbolised the type of educated martial arts master that the *Guoshuguan* hoped to create. While teaching in Nanjing, in 1928 he received an invitation to become the provincial president of a martial arts academy established in Zhongjiang county, Sichuan province. During this period of time Sun traveled frequently between Nanjing, Shanghai, Suzhou and Hangzhou to instruct students.

One of the most famous *Taiji Quan* instructors associated with the *Guoshuguan*, Yang Chengfu, expressed his perspectives as the following;

“*Taijiquan* was not created just to engage in quarrels or tests of strength. Perhaps the sage Sanfeng created soft boxing to use in increasing our store of good health. People who wish to protect their bodies (委身 *weishen*), and cultivate their nature (养性 *yangxing*), to prevent illness and promote longevity, no matter whether they are literati, whether emaciated and weak, old or young, women or men, all can study this art.”²⁸⁸

Fu Zhensong (傅振嵩 1872-1953) also joined the ranks of the martial artists who were asked to teach in Nanjing at the *Guoshuguan* in 1928 as a means of spreading their

²⁸⁷ Kennedy and Guo, 2005, p. 106.

²⁸⁸ Yang, 1934, p. 12.

knowledge.²⁸⁹ Fu Zhensong had also taught at a branch of the *Jingwu* Association in Guangzhou, where he had promoted martial activity as a scientific art that would build the health of the urban populace and help the people of China become stronger.²⁹⁰ He went on to become a teacher of *Bagua Zhang* in Dongbei, appointed by Zhang Zuolin to teach in 1921.²⁹¹ In 1925 Fu Zhensong was named leader of a battalion of six hundred men in Li Jinglin's army, when Li served as the civil and military governor of the province of Hebei from December 1924 to December 1925. In 1928 Fu Zhensong asked to be discharged from his position in the army, and was invited by Li Jinglin to teach at the *Guoshuguan*.²⁹²

Bu Xuekuan (布學寬 1876-1971), a well-known master of Xingyi Quan, established an academy in the Taigu County of Shanxi province. He began his own training in the 1890s, and had disciples from the regions in Shanxi where he taught over twenty years. A short chronicle of Bu Xuekuan's background found in an article by Jarek Symanski²⁹³ has an interesting note, where it mentioned that Bu Xuekuan had taught in Taigu but he had learned *Taiji Quan* and *Bagua Zhang* from Sun Lutang. This exchange may very likely have taken place through the collaboration of the two instructors at the *Guoshuguan*. This serves as an example of the type of connections made through these academies. When considering all these renowned teachers coming to participate in this national project, Andrew Morris mentions an important point. "The willingness of masters like Bu to work with the state's rationalized martial arts apparatus gave instant local legitimacy to the academy system and its hundreds of branches. At the same time,

²⁸⁹ Lin, 2010, p. 32.

²⁹⁰ Lin, 2010, p. 41.

²⁹¹ Lin, 2010, p. 30.

²⁹² Lin, 2010, p. 31.

²⁹³ Jarek Symanski is a martial arts enthusiast who started training in the 1980s, and went to China in 1990 to learn Mandarin and continue training. He remains there today, meeting with different teachers and learning about their histories, and chronicles this information on a website www.chinafrominside.com.

their presence allowed state *Guoshuguan* functionaries to present each academy enterprise as a truly local manifestation of and contribution to the national cause.²⁹⁴ While some martial arts masters did not want to reveal their training in such an open manner, others recognized the opportunity to contribute to the preservation of the field of martial arts, as well as the opportunity to receive the symbolic capital of the titles and recognition that could be attained through association with the *Guoshuguan*.

The Republican era was a time for the complete reform of how education was structured and understood, with a complete reformation in what type of citizen it sought to create. This inculcation may to some extent be shaped or influenced through the efforts of individuals, but it tends ultimately to emphasize the work of a system or a state that exists before the individual.²⁹⁵ Because physical education provides a set of teaching methods, principles, and conditions through which a desired set of bodily practices is developed, it falls into Foucault's description of discipline as a modality of power. Relations of power can coalesce strategically around certain discourses, activities, and institutions without an apparent author of their tactic, and those which permeate academies and educational institutions are pervaded by calculations and objectives.²⁹⁶

Martial arts teachers did not necessarily understand the notions and practices of the body within institutions where martial arts might be manipulated as a means to discipline, limit and control citizens. From the previous chapter and the examination of the historical aspects of martial arts, we see that many teachers may have perceived the field of martial arts as an opportunity for the opposite, where they believed the practices had the potential to imbue the student with the potential to resist the subordination to political control, where they were

²⁹⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 211.

²⁹⁵ Gainty, 2007, p. 152.

²⁹⁶ Harvey and Sparks, 1991, p. 168.

potentially engaged in the creation a site where citizens could imagine and wield their own power over their structure and their state.²⁹⁷ Of course, the prior examples of this dated back to a time where skills at swordplay and archery had a much more significant role in one's ability to resist state authorities. In modern warfare, advanced weaponry and ammunition required access to industrial facilities which complicated grassroots resistance movements. It is unclear whether the instructors or the administrators had a greater impact in within the context of the *Guoshuguan*, as both operated at different levels. While the institution itself laid down certain mandates and created a framework in which teachers had to operate, ultimately they would be the ones to directly interact with students, so they still had a certain degree of agency. In the following chapter, we look towards the content presented by these teachers, and how they understood the benefits that students could gain from this form of training.

²⁹⁷ Gainty, 2007, p. 165.

Chapter 5: The Transformative Potential of Chinese Martial Arts

Given the pre-existing perceptions of martial arts, the change and turmoil occurring at all levels of society, and the instability of authorities in Republican China, it is clear that the people engaged with the preservation of the field of martial arts and its reinvention as a modern practice were faced with complex challenges. The education of modern citizens was a critical issue to the establishment a Chinese nation, so the role of martial arts as a method to train those citizens was subject to scrutiny. Having discussed at length the social and historical context of this period, in this final chapter I address what I feel are some of the most important questions; why did these practices seem so valuable that these martial artists put so much effort into preserving them, and what exactly was the form of self-cultivation they argued that one could attain through Chinese martial arts?

There is precedence for the belief of a martial art being used as a means to refine the mind of a practitioner in early examples with archery. But when considering the more elaborate systems of medical beliefs associated with martial arts training found the available materials from around the Republican era, it appears that the practitioners of traditional Chinese martial arts had developed the potential for a fundamental evolution of an individual from martial arts training by drawing from concepts of the *yangsheng* (养生 nourishing life)²⁹⁸ practices and Daoist beliefs on the transformations of the essences of the body. These teachers believed that through dedicated practice and focused intent they could develop a mind-body connection, refine their character and maintain good health for longevity through a process of self-cultivation that combined medical and spiritual beliefs. This was a conception of self-cultivation that had only

²⁹⁸ A Daoist term, it is often described as “nourishing the vital principle,” though it also has the straightforward translation of “nourishing life.” This concept is explained later in this chapter.

been linked with martial arts training by some point around the early Qing dynasty, as Peter Lorge was adamant that such a connection lacks substantial evidence prior to the Ming. By the Republican era, we see very clear references to these concepts in texts based on martial arts training that were published by renowned teachers of this time.

While martial artists during Republican China did not work with the concepts of social theory that were developed much later by Western academic scholars, these concepts can help us to understand how this potential for transformation might have occurred through a person's engagement with martial arts, even if it was described in different ways at the time. One element that can be found in this process is that even today, the vast majority of people who engage in prolonged, intensive periods of training with knowledgeable teachers in martial arts describe that they feel different afterwards. When trying to understand the body, Loic Wacquant maintains that there are "invariant ingredients and stages of the metamorphosis to which all bodies, no matter their origin and characteristics, are susceptible and subjected, to the degree that they are immersed in the specific universe."²⁹⁹

The immersion within the conditions of existence for a field of practice has the potential to create a form of habitus, so a *shifu* (师傅 master)³⁰⁰ of martial arts is supposed to embody the potential of how someone could benefit from training. It became the mission of the teachers

²⁹⁹ Buchholz, 2006, p. 489.

³⁰⁰ The title of *shifu* is commonly used for martial arts masters, though it can also be used for other people who have mastered their trade, or even as a polite manner of addressing someone. Within the field of martial arts, *shifu* has very important connotations. Not only does it relate to the person's level of skill, but also his relationship within the lineage formations of different schools. Traditionally, students would address their teacher as *shifu* when they were accepted as formal *tudi* (徒弟 disciples) through a Confucian style ceremony called the *baishi* (拜师 honoring the teacher, or obeisance to the teacher) where the student is officially entered into the family lineage of the martial arts school (this role of lineage systems will be explained further into this chapter). Before being accepted into that role, it is more proper for students to address their instructor as *laoshi* (老师 teacher).

involved in projects like the *Jingwu* Association or the *Guoshuguan* to ensure that a martial arts were perceived as something of value to the shifting needs of a modern China, so they had to focus on improving the quality of teachers and the public perception of a *shifu*. We can see indications of this in efforts such as the claims made by people affiliated with the *Jingwu* Association and the *Guoshuguan* when they used the rhetoric of modernists and journals such as the *New Youth* to make arguments such as how the true practitioners of Chinese martial arts were good soldiers and strong citizens.³⁰¹

There was a new emphasis in martial arts literature around this time on how there was much more to the practices than simply learning to fight. Yang Chengfu explained that “If one is able to cultivate one’s body (person) but not beat adversaries, this is civil skill; if one is able to beat other persons but cannot cultivate one’s body, this is martial skill. If one is able to make people cultivate the body and also resist adversaries and develop practical use at the same time, this is totally civil and martial complete *Taiji*.”³⁰²

An important element of how martial arts were perceived was their relation with other public arts.³⁰³ Across Chinese history, there is the presence of an aesthetic and literary tradition that values military accomplishments and raises the status of those who accomplish martial exploits to the level of heroes in visual art and literature.³⁰⁴ Within this tradition martial arts have inspired mythologies, poetry, texts, novels, films, and television that act together to construct the public image of the martial arts both nationally and internationally. Renowned poet and *jinshi* (進士 imperial degree holder) Wang Shizhen (王士真) composed a preface to the *Jian xia zhuan*

³⁰¹ Kennedy and Guo, 2010, p. 90.

³⁰² Quote by Yang Chengfu from 1931, found in Vercaemmen, 2009, p. 127.

³⁰³ Frank, 2006, p. 195.

³⁰⁴ Ryor, 2009, p. 220.

(劍俠傳 *Biographies of Swordsmen*), written by Duan Chengshi (段成式, 803-863) of the Tang dynasty. The painter, poet and collector Chen Jiru (陈继儒 1558-1639) wrote a preface to a similar type of work, *Xia lin* (俠林 *A Forest of Knights-errant*). Novels and plays written in the sixteenth century, such as *Shuihu zhuan*, *Da Ming yinglie zhuan* (大明英烈傳 *Biographies of Heroes of the Great Ming*) by Guo Xun (郭勳, 1475-1542), *Bao jian ji* (*The Precious Sword*), and *Ci Mulan ti fu cong jun* (此木兰替父从军 *The Woman Mulan Joins the Army*), reflect a number of the classic stories focused on martial heroes.³⁰⁵

We see many of the stereotyped attributes of heroes being consistent through these works of fiction, and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang's study of Ming historical figures included an extensive list of these expected traits of heroes. As described in the first point below, all these heroes were positioned as capable martial artists, so there was a direct connection to people who identified themselves as having mastered a style of martial arts. This link to the martial attributes of heroes and myths had a strong influence on the expected habitus of a *shifu*. Chang listed these traits as the following:³⁰⁶

1. Unusual physical strength and incomparable martial arts. With an awe-inspiring appearance and majestic features, excellence in fighting, outstanding commandership and mighty physical strength.
2. Fearlessness. A dauntless, fearless spirit, which is heedlessness of consequences. An unyielding individual, never skulking when going into battle, and never willing to surrender to the enemy.
3. Power of endurance. Enduring a great physical pain and corporal punishment without flinching or uttering one cry. The ability to take humiliation in order to achieve a far-reaching goal, facing death with dignity and serenity, and smiling in the face of adversity.

³⁰⁵ Ryor, 2009, p. 231.

³⁰⁶ Chang, 2004, p. 65.

4. Selflessness. Always being ready to lay down their own lives for friends. An impulsive generosity, and loyalty to their lords (or leaders) and their country, with a dedication to reciprocating favors to friends and taking revenge on enemies.
5. Asceticism and other behavioral attributes. Showing little interest in women or men, and never hesitating to fight against the rich or the powerful in order to correct injustice. Showing filial piety to parents, especially widowed mothers.
6. As well as some eccentric traits, such as outspoken bluntness, volcanic temper, and eating and drinking to excess.

Certainly it was rare for any single hero or heroine to be positioned as having all of these traits, but they would have some combination of them. The transmission of stories, myths and legends through different media influenced what people would expect in regards to the habitus of a martial hero, and the transfer of these traits onto real world martial artists was not only a product of the passive association to these stories. As the stereotypes from classic Chinese tales were carried over into newer forms of media, martial artists, both in the Republican era and today, described their teachers in similar terms.

An example of this is one of the stories told about Sun Lutang. It is said that while he was living in the town of Xingtang, there was a famous bandit nicknamed “flying thief” because of this *qinggong* (轻功 lightness skills).³⁰⁷ Sun was asked to catch the bandit, so he went out to find him. When Sun came across the thief, he fled and Sun had to chase him. The chase went to the edge of town there was a field of tall plants which are known for their very thick stalks. When the plant tops were removed during harvest, only the thick stalk remained. The “flying thief” ran to the field and leapt up on top of the densely planted crop and ran across the plant stalk tops.

³⁰⁷ *Qinggong* are martial arts training methods, or cultivated skills that relate to being light on one’s feet. It was associated to skills like running and jumping, or things that were acrobatic in nature. The exercises themselves would differ between teachers, but the basic principle of *qinggong* was to train to be light and agile.

The thief was sure no one could follow him; however, when he turned around Sun was still in pursuit, also running across the plant stalks. Sun ultimately caught the thief and turned him in.³⁰⁸

In this story, Sun Lutang is described as being courageous enough to chase down this notorious bandit, and also as the only person in the village skilled enough to run across the stalks of the plants and catch him. In many other stories told by students about their masters, the teacher is spoken of in a heroic context, and seen as in possession of rare skills they attained through their dedication to training and self-cultivation. One aspect of this veneration students demonstrate for their teachers was the influence of the Chinese culture of ancestor worship. Lineage systems were important in martial arts, so the general practice was that teachers not aggrandize themselves; they would promote the skills and integrity of the masters with whom they studied, and that they only humbly tried to follow their teacher's example.

For the student to begin the process of working towards the attainment of some of these heroic traits, self-discipline was necessary. In numerous stories about famous teachers, it was not their natural abilities, but rather their determination that carried them through the years of training to master a style of martial arts. In the practice of martial arts, there was an emphasis that a student could never be complacent. They could not stop after a little training, or simply practice on and off, as this level of dedication would prevent them from ever reaching a high level of skill.³⁰⁹ A concept that was repeated by many teachers was that "If you practice one day you gain one day. If you miss one day, then you lose ten days."³¹⁰ The ethos of martial arts training was that an individual is capable of transformation, but a student could only realize the full potential of the training through determination, struggle, diligent training, and "eating

³⁰⁸ Sun, 1924, p. 25.

³⁰⁹ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 103.

³¹⁰ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 8.

bitterness.”³¹¹ This aspect of self-discipline reflected Foucault’s perception of the practices of monastic asceticism “whose function was to obtain renunciations rather than the increase of utility and which, although they involved obedience to others, had as their principal aim an increase in the mastery of each individual over his own body.”³¹²

As pointed out in Chapter 1, the potential of self-discipline and mastery of the body was not a prominent aspect of how of martial arts practice was perceived by the general public across most of its history. Throughout imperial China, martial arts were often viewed as little more than a survival skill. Many of the martial artists and fighting men of the Qing era had little in common with literary or philosophical figures.³¹³ Like being good with a gun, the practice was considered to be a physical trade or a form of manual labour. They were not commonly linked to esoteric practices, nor were they viewed as a means for philosophical or spiritual growth.³¹⁴

Unlike some other cultures, throughout most of Chinese history the practice of martial arts was not a privilege restricted to special groups.³¹⁵ The restrictions on the possession of arms and the ability for common people to practice martial arts during the Qing dynasty had an impact on the number of people that were able to train, but many still did in the context of town militias, or by learning some basic methods of practice from family members. Farmers, craftsmen, merchants and monks, as well as soldiers, members of nobility, and scholars practiced martial arts. Very few of these people would have believed that this form informal training could imbue someone with any forms of special skills.

³¹¹ *Chiku* 吃苦, literally “eating bitterness” was a Chinese maxim based on the concept that one had to endure hardships to receive any benefit.

³¹² Foucault, 1979, p. 137.

³¹³ Kennedy and Guo, 2005, p. 184.

³¹⁴ Kennedy and Guo, 2005, p. 16.

³¹⁵ Filipiak, 2010, p. 33.

A true *shifu* came to be understood as someone who trained not to fight, but to cultivate himself, preserve good health and pursue moral refinement. Masters of the martial artists were supposed to stand out from the ruffians, bandits, warlords and superstitious boxers who were also associated with the fighting arts. These new publications presented the idea of a *shifu* that was someone knowledgeable in both martial arts and traditional Chinese medicine. This understanding of medical and philosophical concepts would have necessitated a certain level of literary skill, whereas previously most martial arts teachers would have most likely been illiterate.³¹⁶ The *Guoshuguan* even made an explicit effort to address this issue of literacy, where they offered classes on skills related to scholarly studies, research and publications.

The contemporary ideal of a *shifu* is a concept that brings to mind characters such as the wise Shaolin Buddhist monk talking in scriptural verse or the mysterious Daoist sage performing “Daoist martial arts” while quoting Laozi, but they were not part of daily life in Chinese history. The attainment of this ideal went beyond the mere practice of martial arts, and was more closely related to the heroic figure seen across different ages within mythologies and works of fiction. It was only in the late Qing and Republican era that publications started to appear that not only described heroic figures, but some were even presented as training manuals that could permit someone to develop mystical skills.

With the popularity of the myths and stories that came to surround martial arts, there is an air of the exotic which emanated from the practice, making it both difficult to understand and also attractive to individuals searching for a sense of meaning and purpose. These spiritual overtones would put teachers in a position in which they represented a conduit for wisdom and knowledge about how one should live, and the desire many people have to find those types of

³¹⁶ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. xiii.

answers can form powerful social bonds and relations. There was great significance in the teacher-student relationship, as it took on the concepts of the father-son relation from the Confucian beliefs surrounding the *wulun* (五伦 five relations).³¹⁷ In this, the student had a responsibility to care for his teacher, be respectful, and abide by his wishes regardless of any disagreement. The teacher, in turn, had a responsibility for the upbringing of the student, understanding his needs and preparing him for life.

With the significance of this relationship, there was resentment towards charlatans who manipulated this exchange for their own ends. Some people claimed to teach practices that could give the student great skills, but had they no real connection to known teachers and were secretive about what they actually taught. They promised students heroic abilities, but demanded loyalty and dedication over many years, or heavy payments for their teachings. Many of the schools connected to the *Yihequan* groups and secret societies that sparked the Boxer Rebellion were accused of using this process of manipulation. As mentioned earlier, a number of the criticisms modernists made of the martial arts were in relation to these charlatans who would trick people and make false promises. For people who did not know anything about martial arts before beginning their practice, it was difficult to distinguish the true teachers from the false.

Even amongst actual teachers of traditional Chinese martial arts, there was also a disdain for those who misrepresented the true potential of the practice, even if they were not intentionally manipulating anyone.

³¹⁷ The five relations were that of ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, older brother and younger brother, and between friends. These relations were a governing aspect of social relations in China. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to go into the full scale of how the *wulun* was enacted in Chinese culture, but it is something that is interwoven into people's belief systems on how an individual should conduct himself in his relations with others, and how he should behave in the public domain.

“There are those who talk about the principles for a great length of time, they say martial arts are full of secrets. When you ask them they don’t answer, or they answer incompletely. How can this be! There are those who are easily satisfied, or invite disaster by underestimating the art, or like to bully others. There are those who have no perseverance, who study a little and think they know it all, they are quite satisfied with themselves and rarely practice, they think they are a great success, until they have to use the art and find themselves useless.”³¹⁸

The diversity of the people who engaged martial arts, the difficulty in determining the true from the false, and the secrecy with which some teachers treated their knowledge were some of the main reasons that it was so difficult to have a unified system of traditional Chinese martial arts. One of the social dynamics that gave rise to these complications is the concept referred to as symbolic capital, wherein the knowledge that martial arts represented had the capacity to empower people.

Symbolic capital is valuable because it contains a power for creating things with words. A description of something can create the formation of the concept within the mind of the listener. After this initial formation, it becomes much more difficult to change that perception. This is important because it means that it is harder to convince someone that a certain idea is wrong than it is to introduce them to a completely new idea. In this sense, symbolic power is a similar to a power of consecration or revelation. Martial art teachers had an important influence on their students; they had the power to conceal or reveal ideas and, supposedly, unlock the secret potential of the body.

Symbolic capital is not limited to the possession of information, as a teacher is empowered through the recognition and “legitimization” of his knowledge or skills, where they become acknowledged by authority figures as a legitimate source for the revelation of true information. Through titles and accreditations like becoming an official instructor at a national

³¹⁸ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 37.

institute like the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan*, a teacher can legitimize his abilities. The *Guoshuguan*, as an institution, represented a place where symbolic capital could be acknowledged in accordance with the categories of perception that it could impose. This is linked with the complicated way that symbolic power relations tend to reproduce the relations of power and hierarchies which constitute the structure of society.³¹⁹ In this case, there is a power relation not only between a teacher and the students, but also between the teacher and the administrators of the institution, who have the authority over the granting or revoking of the symbolic capital of the teacher. Regardless of whatever knowledge they may possess, few people will study with a teacher who had been publicly accused by an institution as being a fraud.

The *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* was built on a western framework that brought in these dynamics surrounding institutions, which was new to the field of martial arts. Previously, when identifying oneself as a master of the martial arts the most important source of legitimacy was the direct connection to a recognized master of the art. Linking to cultural practices in China where relations of power were maintained through lineage formations,³²⁰ the respect towards one's lineage of teachers was a critical element of how one could develop symbolic capital within the field of martial arts. Not only had one to be familiar with one's teacher and his master, but one had to be able to track the genealogical connections from the founder of the art down to one's own teacher.

This validation through genealogical pedigree was typically reflected in aspects as varied as dress, language, movement and belief. Through varied levels of influence, students were ultimately required to adhere to group principles. Membership in a specific school or system of martial arts may begin as casual, but ultimately the relationships of authority must become

³¹⁹ Bourdieu, 1990, p. 135.

³²⁰ Takacs, 2003, p. 885.

distinct and the individual practitioners develop a complex and profound sense of group identity. An opposition between disciplined forms of practice and individual agency can take place. The more involved the practitioner becomes within the field, the more limits are placed upon how the practitioner uses his body. The dedicated student is faced with ever growing limitations as to what he must and must not do, when he can or cannot rest, what he is allowed to eat and what is forbidden. These limitations are defined through certain perceptions on how the body develops and what goals or objectives are set for this development. As the practice continues and the practitioner gains more knowledge, there is a continual examination of the relation of the individual with others around them through different theories of the body, correlative cosmology, embodied linguistics and hierarchical relations.

Approaching the issues around notions of group identity and hierarchical relations, Waysun Liao discusses the perception that “the true, dedicated masters of T’ ai Chi remained in the mountains, and, along with their followers, they led a monastic life in order to carry on the pure art. They meditated and practiced daily in order to attune the spirit, condition the mind, discipline the body, and elevate the essence.”³²¹

This reflected a belief that only complete dedication and the removal of oneself from society can allow for the full mastery of the practice. What this process entails is the removal from a person’s regular world of experience in order to focus on the full incorporation of all mannerisms, schedules and beliefs of the master. While there have been figures whose “individualization” of their practice has been accepted and encouraged,³²² this individualization

³²¹ Liao, 1990, p. 12.

³²² In this sense, individualization refers to the alteration or invention of the forms or *quantao* that are practiced within a system of martial arts. This process also occurs on a more significant level when considering examples of how famous teachers would have their styles named after

can only occur after there is a recognition of the practitioner having attained a certain level in the emulation and mimicry of how the teacher trained. It is believed that the original system of training can be preserved more or less intact with the fundamental principles, and the desired forms of discipline in mind and body remaining at the core of this individualized style of practice.

This drive towards monasticism touches on an interesting dynamic that people associated with projects like the *Jingwu* Association and the *Guoshuguan* had to contend with; many serious martial artists often seemed to have difficulty with fitting into the larger areas of society. When the patterns of behaviour a student is asked to follow by his teacher do not mesh with the patterns common to the society in which he lives, the student may reject or criticize the patterns common to society as being inferior or as being detrimental to a preferred style of living. In this moment there is the possibility of a subversion of the bio-politics placed upon the student, but then the rejection of these patterns can have consequences in how the student fits into social hierarchies, and he can often be pushed towards becoming a marginalized figure by the rejection of more and more of the practices which serve as forms of social cohesion, and the traditions that hold a community together. Through this, there can be a tension between those who seek to train in martial arts and still remain as recognized members of their society, and those who pursue a more intensive dedication to the practice and cast aside any social expectations, seeing them only as a distraction to their pursuit of mastery. These martial arts associations designed within a Western framework were sought to establish a format suitable to a modern, urban environment which could allow these practices to stay relevant to the changing needs of urban societies and

them. A student would not just learn *Taiji Quan*, they would learn *Sun shi Taiji Quan* (孙氏太极拳 Sun style *taiji*) as taught by Sun Lutang, or *Yang shi Taiji Quan* (杨氏太极拳 Yang style *taiji*) as taught by Yang Chengfu. Although the fundamental principles of practice between the two were the same, they emphasized different points in the physical practice, or applied certain techniques differently.

the bourgeois classes that had the time and resources to incorporate training into their busy schedules.

John Donohue found in his studies on the Japanese forms of martial arts that within the dojo,³²³ a struggle for identity and selfhood can take place. Through membership in a dojo or a school of martial arts, the students seek to overcome feelings of anonymity and marginality to create a link between the individual and the group. In the heterogeneous, complex societies of the modern era, personal and social identity are often fragmented because of institutional differentiations, and the dojo and the rituals it contains are often perceived as a place to reintegrate the fragments of individual identity and create a selfhood through symbolic action.³²⁴

The manner through which a person develops a stronger sense of integrated identity could be the conscious or unconscious adaptation of the habitus linked with a particular community, training space, or dojo. Through the ways in which the dynamics of habitus can encompass the mind and body, there are schemes of dispositions that are largely implicit and developed through engagement in social practices, serving to constitute an individual's orientation to the social world he or she inhabits as well as toward him or herself. People are not totally ignorant of these dispositions; classificatory judgment presupposes that we are capable of seeing the relation between practices or representations and positions in the social space - as when we judge a person's social category from his accent, choice of vocabulary and apparel.³²⁵ Through practice and the transmission of knowledge in martial arts, there can be a process of a sensual-social

³²³ 道場, the Japanese term for a training space of martial arts. It translates literally as "the place of the way." In Mandarin, the same characters would be read as *daochang*.

³²⁴ Donohue, 1987, p. 193.

³²⁵ Bourdieu, 1987, p. 131.

construction of identity. The students are presented with a certain framework of understanding, and they internalize it through constant repetition of the practice.

An Examination of Training Methods

Moving past these theoretical aspects to consider the actual practices and teachings of traditional Chinese martial arts, we find many different interpretations about training practices, but they often can be reduced to two main approaches towards how someone can develop skill in martial arts. One follows the idea that forms are designed to train the larger movements of the skeletal muscular system (focusing on punching, kicking, jumping and so forth). Forms in these styles are often done in very low and extended stances, with the goal of improving leg strength, endurance and flexibility. Fighting techniques are trained separately from the primary form, in supplemental drills and exercises. The other school of thought views martial arts ability as a result of integrated movement with conscious control. In this, exceptional physical abilities are not a prerequisite for skill in fighting. The emphasis is on practicing only those movements you will use in a real martial encounter, where the form follows the dictates of strategy and technique.³²⁶

Many of the teachers discussed here, such as Sun Lutang, Yang Chengfu, Fu Zhensong, Wang Jiwu and Li Ziming (李子鳴 1903-1993)³²⁷ focus on the latter approach and emphasized

³²⁶ This was an explanation provided by the translator as an introduction to the teachings. Sun, 1924, p. 2.

³²⁷ As with Wang Jiwu, Li Ziming was not a teacher who worked at the *Guoshuguan*, but he was a very famous martial artist who was trained during the Republican period, and we can map out a link to Fu Zhensong, who taught *Bagua Zhang* there. Li Ziming studied under Liang Zhenpu, (梁振蒲 1863–1932), who was a student of Dong Haichuan (董海川 1797-1882), who is described by most people as the inventor of the style. Fu Zhensong studied with Ma Gui (马贵 1851–1941)

the importance of skill, sensitivity and technique over the development of exceptional strength or speed. In this following section, I examine the theories interpreted by the teachers of the three systems of *Xingyi Quan*, *Bagua Zhang*, and *Taiji Quan*, to determine how they understood the self-cultivation aspects of their training, and why they were combined together under the *Wudang* division of training at the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan*. While these three styles alone are not definitive of the entire field of martial arts training, they do provide a starting point for more extensive work comparing other systems of training, which could be explored in further research.

To understand this form of training, it is worth considering a concept put forward by Wang Jiwu (王繼武 1891-1991),³²⁸ a renowned *Xingyi Quan* master likened to Sun Lutang, which is *yong yi bu yong li* (用意不用力 Use the mind [or intent] and not brute strength).³²⁹ Brute force was meant as strength inappropriate to the situation, a clumsy application of force that lacked the mind/body unity. This form of strength was seen as *houtian* (后天, post-natal, or the power one develops after birth), as opposed to the *xiantian* (先天 pre-natal, or the power that

and Cheng Tinghua (程廷华 1848-1900). Ma Gui studied under Yin Fu (尹福 1840-1909), and both Cheng Tinghua and Yin Fu studied under Dong Haichuan, and thus were “gong fu brothers” of Liang Zhenpu. While there are obvious differences in the *quantao* and the *liangong* from each teacher, they all teach the same fundamental principles of training which define *Bagua Zhang*.

³²⁸ Wang Jiwu taught and practiced the *Dai shi Xingyi quan* (戴式形意拳 Dai style *Xingyi Quan*, originally called *Liuhe xinyiquan* 六合心意拳). In addition to fighting skills and *neigong*, he also studied Chinese medicine, bone setting, and traumatology. Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 23. His concepts are relevant to the discussion here as he was trained during the Republican era, and throughout a lifetime of practice and learning, he was celebrated for his consistency to the traditional methods of training. His longevity, living 100 years, was credited to his training. The connection of his training methods to the *Guoshuguan* was through Bu Xuekuan, who taught the same system of *Xingyi Quan*. Wang Jiwu studied under Wang Fuyuan 王副元, student of Liu Qilan 劉奇蘭, who trained with Bu Xuekuan’s teacher, Che Yizhai 車毅齋 under the master Li Nengran (李能然 1807-1888, also known as Li Luoneng 李洛能). Another student of Li Nengran was Guo Yunshen (郭云深 1829-1898), who taught Sun Lutang. Through this, Wang Jiwu, Bu Xuekuan and Sun Lutang could be considered cousins of the same lineage of martial arts practice.

³²⁹ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 65.

is inherent in living beings), where the concept of great skill required an understanding of the principles of nature and the pre-existing forces of the body.³³⁰ The goal that these teachers tried to achieve was a state of relaxed awareness in which the whole body is supple, elastic, and alive. The way to achieve this state is to use the mental to direct the physical, where external skills employ an integrated movement that is derived from an internal cultivation, and not just the development of strength or speed.

A common theme in the distinction between these two main approaches is their separation into “External” and “Internal” retrospectively, often going a step further to associate *Shaolin* styles with External, and *Wudang* with Internal, as demonstrated in the original format of the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan*. The earliest instance of this distinction connects with themes of Ming loyalty, Buddhist foreignness, and Daoist “Chineseness,” in the 1669 epitaph for Wang Zhengnan (1617-1669) written by Huang Zongxi (黄宗羲 1610-1695)³³¹ and the account of Wang’s martial arts by his son Huang Baijia (黄百家 1643-1709). Pointed out in Peter Lorge’s research, this epitaph currently appears to serve as the first articulation of an internal school of martial arts in contradistinction to an external school of martial arts.

“Wang Zhengnan was a master of two skills: one was pugilism and the other archery. From ancient times great archers have been many, but when it comes to pugilism, truly Master Wang was the foremost.

The external school of pugilism reached its highest development with Shaolin. Zhang Sanfeng, having mastered Shaolin, reversed its principles, and this is called the Internal School of martial arts. Acquiring even a smattering of this art is sufficient to overcome Shaolin.”³³²

³³⁰ Sun, 1924, p. 47 and Li, 1993, p. 7.

³³¹ Huang Zongxi was the name of a Chinese naturalist, political theorist, philosopher, and soldier during the latter part of the Ming dynasty into the early part the Qing.

³³² Lorge, 2012, p. 193.

No author before this time presented or created this kind of dichotomy between respective martial arts practices. Taken in isolation, it would be difficult to determine if Huang was finally putting brush to paper either to describe a centuries-old distinction in styles or was creating a fictitious historical background for a new paradigm. When considering this quote within the context it was written, an important aspect of this claim would have been that Shaolin and Buddhism offered a shorthand for foreigners and Manchus to an anti- or non-Buddhist Ming loyalist. Chinese power was internal and concealed, but superior. Therefore, a fundamental aspect of the origins to the term “internal martial arts” was part of a Chinese discourse about identity and political loyalties.³³³ The Qing dynasty literature on the martial arts was inflected from its very beginning by the politics of the change from Chinese (Ming) to Manchu (Qing) rule.

Regardless of political elements underlying the original use of the terms, *Bagua Zhang*, *Taiji Quan* and *Xingyi Quan* would eventually come to be referred to together as the *neijia* (内家 the internal family), due in some ways to their combination together under the “internal” training curriculum at the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* as well as in its associated publications by authors such as Tang Hao (唐豪 1887–1959). In its later use, the term took on the meaning where it referred to the internal concepts surrounding the transformations of *qi* (气).³³⁴

Breaking down the distinctions of each of the three styles of the *neijia*, we see many shared principles and beliefs, just with a different emphasis for the style of movement associated

³³³ Lorge, 2012, p. 195.

³³⁴ *Qi* is believed to exist within the body as different manifestations such as *xue* (血 blood), *jing* (精 essence), *jinye* (津液 bodily fluids), *zangfuqi* (脏腑气 visceral *qi*), *yuanqi* (元气 original *qi*), *zongqi* (gathered *qi*), and *daqi* (大气 great *qi*). *Weiqi* (卫气 protective *qi*) warms the body and secures its external boundaries while *yingqi* (营气 nutritious *qi*) nourishes skin, muscles, bones, sinews and the *zangfu* (脏腑 visceral systems of function). A complete analysis of the role of *qi* in Chinese Medicine is beyond the scope of our study here, but it is to be understood as the foundation of traditional Chinese medical practices. Scheid, 2002, p. 48.

with each style. The forms in *Bagua Zhang* are predominantly circular, and one form is divided into eight sections, where each section is attributed to a specific *gua* (卦 trigram, of the eight trigrams 八卦 used in the *Yijing* 易经 *Classic of Changes*). The movement is characterized as flowing changes, taking inspiration from the *yijing* where they train in a way where the practitioner has to understand how to read situations in how they are positioned in relation to their opponent, and change fluidly in response. The training of *Bagua* blends movement and stillness, firmness and softness, internal energy and external energy.³³⁵ There are five key features to the training; understanding the footwork, how to integrate the movements of the body, differences between soft force and hard force, the different planes you can strike in, whether it be vertical or horizontal, and how the practice is beneficial for health.³³⁶

In *Taiji Quan*, there was an emphasis on how one's internal essence, *qi*, and *shen* (神 spirit)³³⁷ should fill the entire body as one trained the solo forms.³³⁸ The most common link across different styles of *Taiji* is what is known as the *shisan shi* (十三式 the Thirteen Techniques). This is a combination of the eight basic martial principles, also described as the eight methods of manifesting energy, and the five stepping methods.

1. *Peng* (棚 ward off or upward, expansive internal power)
2. *Lu* (捋 roll back backward or absorbing, yielding power)
3. *Ji* (挤 press forward or straight ahead, forward power)
4. *An* (按 push downward, or downward-moving power)
5. *Cai* (采 pull down or combining the energies of *lu* and *an*, moving in the same direction)
6. *Lie* (列 split or combining the *yang* energies of *peng* and *ji* moving in opposite directions from an originating point)

³³⁵ Li, 1993, p. 2.

³³⁶ Lin, 2010, p. 75.

³³⁷ *Shen* also translates as god, the divine, or spiritual, but essentially it is a term that focuses on the realm of the divine.

³³⁸ Sun, 1924, p. 71.

7. *Zhou* (肘 elbow or focusing energy in the elbow)
8. *Kao* (靠 shoulder or focusing energy in the shoulder)

These eight methods of using force are then combined with the five stepping methods, *qianjin* (前进 advance in), *houtui* (后退 retreat back), *zuogu* (左顾 look left), *youpan* (右盼 look right) and *zhongding* (中定 central stability). The fundamental the movements of *Taiji Quan* are combinations and variations of these thirteen techniques.³³⁹ While these concepts discuss more about the application of force and footwork, many styles of *Taiji* can be quite martial in application, containing evasive footwork, over-the-back throws, *qinna* (擒拿 joint-locking techniques), head-butting techniques, and techniques designed to counter wrestling take-downs.³⁴⁰

Xingyi Quan focuses on form and intent, and the training in this style is structured around the fundamental concept of *wuxing* (五行 Five Phase theory).³⁴¹ The *yi* (意 intent) of *Xingyi Quan* (形意拳) draws on the idea of *yi ling qi* (意令气 meaning that intent guides the *qi*). The *wuxing* theory is used as an interpretive framework for reacting and responding to attacks. Learning movements attributed to each of the phases, students are taught that actions flow in a sequence, and that you open yourself to injury when to do not act in accordance with this sequence. Although this concept is introduced through a series of attacks and defences that

³³⁹ Sun, 1924, p. 50.

³⁴⁰ Sun, 1924, p. 4.

³⁴¹ *Wuxing* is often translated as five elements, but this can lead to a misinterpretation of their meaning. They are not used to refer to the actual substance of wood, water, earth, fire and metal, rather they are symbolic of the natural processes these elements represent, and are used in Chinese medicine to describe various physiological occurrences within the body. The *wuxing* were linked to both physiological processes in the natural world and to functions of specific internal organs within the human body. The relationships between various internal organs were explained through the dynamics of creation and destruction between these different phases of *yin* and *yang*.

correlate in a pattern designed according to the creative and destructive cycles of the *wuxing*,³⁴² there is an immediate correlation between the movements and the use of the concept of *wuxing* in traditional Chinese medicine and how it exists within the transformations that occur within the body as well as in nature.

The fighting aspects of *Xingyi Quan* are characterized by aggressive, seemingly linear movements and explosive power. Coordinated movements are used to generate bursts of power intended to overwhelm the opponent, simultaneously attacking and defending. Within *Xingyi* training, there are three essential stages of development.

1. *Mingjing* (明精 obvious energy) – Changes *jing* (精 essences) to *qi*
2. *Anjing* (暗精 hidden energy) – Changes *qi* to *shen*
3. *Huajing* (化精 changing energy) – Returns *shen* to *xu* (虛 in this instance refers to the void, or the original state)

The process of these three stages is that the first stage of *mingjing* is understood as the obvious elements of training. This is learning the basics of attacking and defending, strengthening the body, improving coordination, and learning the basic choreography of the forms. It is sometimes described as a process that strengthens the bones, as it builds the framework to a martial artist's practice. Following the rules of training and being consistent, it is believed that a student can pass this stage of basic training in about three years, although length of time varies with each practitioner depending on his abilities, consistency, and any previous training.

³⁴² In the *wuxing*, there is a destructive cycle through the phases where metal chops wood, wood holds the earth, earth contains the water, water extinguishes fire and fire melts metal. There is also the creative cycle of how wood feeds the fire, fire enriches the earth, earth collects the metals, metals enrich the water, and water gives life to wood. In *Xingyi Quan*, the attack associated with earth (*hengquan* 橫拳 crossing fist) is the defence for the attack associated with water (*zuanquan* 鑽拳 drilling fist), while the defence that overcomes earth is the one associated with wood (*bengquan* 崩拳 crushing fist).

In the second stage, *anjing*, the student is taught more about body alignments and the timing of different movements. All the movements are softened, made smoother and more refined. Often a teacher will make the student relearn forms with a different emphasis in each move, changing the dynamic of the form. The general sense is that if the student practices the forms repeatedly to learn how to express their true intent, he will learn how to change spontaneously with the circumstances. As with the first level, it depends on the student, but this level of training is assumed to take about six years to fully master. The attainment of skill in *Xingyi Quan* requires repetition of the same exercises thousands of times. While it is important to understand the theoretical aspects, there is a strong emphasis on how the constant repetitions of the training are the only way a student can cultivate true skill.³⁴³ *Anjing* is described as a level of training that affects the tendons, focusing on the connections between all the moving pieces, and something deeper than just the muscular movements.

Huajing is understood as the level of complete mastery for the system of training. The transition to this stage from *anjing* is supposed to be natural, where all the movements become highly refined after so many years of applied practice. All the rough edges are polished, and the student has learned all the different ways in which they can apply this explosive power. It is described as changing the marrow, where the internal essence has evolved, and there is a cultivation at the deepest level of the body.³⁴⁴

Within the performance of the forms themselves in *Bagua Zhang*, *Xingyi Quan* and *Taiji Quan*, there is often the same starting point, where the practitioner begins at a very simply standing posture called *wuji* (无极 nothingness). *Wuji* is seen as the natural state occurring

³⁴³ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. x.

³⁴⁴ The notes on the three levels as described here have been combined from various sources, namely Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 38, and Sun, 1915, p. 47.

before the beginning of martial arts practice. “The mind is without thought; the intent is without motion; the eyes are without focus; the hands and feet are still; the body makes no movement; *yin* and *yang* (隱 and 陽)³⁴⁵ are not yet divided, the clear and the turbid have not yet separated; the *qi* is united and undifferentiated. Man is born between heaven and earth, and possesses the natures of both *yin* and *yang*. His original *qi* is united and undifferentiated.”³⁴⁶ The one *qi* generated from the emptiness is the pre-natal *qi*. This *qi* is seen as the vital aspect as it is believed to contain the root of life, the source of creation, and the basis of life and death. In this way, it is treated as the foundation of the internal martial arts.

After taking this moment at *wuji* to bring oneself to stillness, the next step before the beginning of motion is *taiji* (太極 supreme ultimate) which entails a slight opening of the feet, and shifting of the body. At the time just before the beginning of motion, the whole body is empty, but full with *qi*. “Being the spirit of everything, a human being can influence and reflect everything. Being inside, the mind acts on everything around it, and objects, being outside, have their principle in the mind. The mind acts inside and every object forms outside. Both of these sides are connected by *qi*.”³⁴⁷ There exists the foundation but it is hidden. *Taiji* is contained within the *wuji*, and follows it as the unity of *wuji* is divided into *yin* and *yang*. “First, seek to find an ultimate state in which you are centered and empty of conscious intention. When *qi* is concealed within, there is “virtue” (inherent power). When *qi* manifests externally, there is

³⁴⁵ The first known mention of *yin-yang* in a philosophical context is made in the *Xici* where it states, “One yin, one yang, that is the dao” (一陰一陽之喂道). Song, 2004, p. 47. They were dual forces that have remained central to the concept of Chinese cosmology since classical times. Acting as a polarity in the transformations of *qi*, their continual interaction is believed to exist within all things, including the constitution and functioning of the human body. Croizier, 1968, p. 17.

³⁴⁶ Sun, 1915, p. 69.

³⁴⁷ Sun, 1915, p. 70.

“method” (manifest power). When the internal and external *qi* combine in a unified flow, one may take his proper place between heaven and earth, embracing the yin and the yang. Therefore, the internal power of the martial arts forms the basis for life.”³⁴⁸

The moment dividing these two states, is the division of *wuji* into the polarities of *yin* and *yang* which act together to form the polarizations found within the transformations of *qi*. In this, *yin* and *yang* are referred to as the *liangyi* (兩儀). The changes of *yin* and *yang* produce the theory of the boxing skill, namely, extending and contracting, going up and down, advancing and retreating, side-to-side and to and fro represent the infinite changes of *yin* and *yang*. Extending, rising and advancing are *yang* in nature, while contracting, descending and retreating are *yin*. Within this, the body is to be kept vertically straight to help keep the *qi* in balance, and the student is asked pay attention to *yin* while looking at *yang*, and pay attention to *yang* while looking at *yin*.³⁴⁹

Teachers of *Xingyi Quan* begin their forms with standing postures that begin at *wuji*, with the feet together and the mind clear, moving to *taiji* where the feet are opened, the body shifted and the mind prepared for the movement of the form, and then the opening move is always *piquan* (劈拳 splitting fist) to arrive at *santishi* (三体式 Trinity posture), which is the most commonly depicted posture in all the classic photos of *Xingyi* instructors. *Wuji* produces one *qi*, and *taiji* is the division of one *qi* to produce *yin* and *yang*. Through their continual transformations, *yin* and *yang* give shape to the trinity of heaven, earth, and the human being. From this trinity, the ten thousand things are created. In the physical posture itself, it is said to

³⁴⁸ Sun, 1915, p. 73.

³⁴⁹ Sun, 1915, p. 74.

corresponded to the head, hands and feet.³⁵⁰ All movements characteristic of *Xingyi* begin from the *santi* position.

Across these systems, breathing and meditative practices intended for focusing the mind and improving health were an important component of training. These practices, called *qigong* (气功, which can be translated as breathing exercises) or *neigong* (内功 internal training) are a fairly typical component of most systems of Chinese martial arts,³⁵¹ but these practices are not derived from the fighting techniques of these arts. Wang Guangxi (王广西)³⁵² asserts that the term *qigong* came into use only by the end of the Qing dynasty, and that the practices associated with this term were based not on combative movements, but on medical practices known as *yangsheng* which can be traced as far back as texts written in the Warring States period of Chinese history. *Yangsheng* outdated the systems of martial arts that were practiced in the Republican era of China, and while martial arts may have drawn upon the concepts and practices of these medical techniques, *yangsheng* does not show any indications that they drew upon fighting techniques.

Yangsheng was a systematic form of body cultivation that used a combination of mental awareness, controlled breathing, and slow movements to engage the person, develop health, and open ways to mental and spiritual development. Texts on *yangsheng* included information on

³⁵⁰ Sun, 1915, p. 76.

³⁵¹ Within a contemporary North American context, many schools of martial arts lack these components of *qigong* training and focus purely on self-defence training. In China, there is a much more casual acceptance of the principles behind them. For people learning about them for the first time, the terms about to be discussed here like *qi*, *yin* and *yang*, and the five phases can seem very exotic in nature, but in many ways they are simply part of the traditional Chinese worldview. They are not limited to Daoism, as they are discussed at length by Confucian and Buddhist thinkers as well. Kennedy and Guo, 2005, p. 86.

³⁵² Wang Guangxi was the author of a book published in Taiwan in 2002 on the history of Chinese martial arts.

massage techniques, gymnastic exercises, dietary information, medicinal drugs, various prohibitions and simple advice for everyday life, such as the regulation of sleep, hygiene, activities and so forth.³⁵³

Although they are largely influenced by the Daoist pursuit of longevity, *yangsheng* has had many contributors to its development who came from Confucian or Buddhist traditions, and those who simply saw it as something within the domain of medical study and not something exclusive to Daoism. These practices were intended to absorb or guide *qi* to maintain the health of the body. *Qi*, which was understood as the vital essence at work in the animation of nature and the life of the body, is difficult to explain clearly. It should not be imagined as only an element or something as straightforward as energy or breath. It is better understood as a configuration of things, or a process for the transformation for energy.³⁵⁴ The goal of the *yangsheng* practices was to keep the body healthy and vigorous for as long as possible by maintaining balance between the organs and the transformations of the energies, fluids and nutrients within body, harmonizing their proper functions to prevent illness.

Qi has been described by Manfred Porkert through different manifestations, wherein it is understood as both an “energetic configuration” and a “configuration of energy.”³⁵⁵ It is the process of transformation in things, while simultaneously being the substance of the thing in which transformations occur. There are various descriptions and patterns to this, but it is not within the scope of this thesis to do justice to the complexity of the term and the various ways it

³⁵³ Despeux, 1989, p. 229.

³⁵⁴ Paul Unschuld translated the term as the “(finest matter) influences,” “emanations,” or “vapours,” so *qi* is not seen as something totally without form, but the debate over the exact use of the term will distract us from the discussion at hand. Unschuld, 1985, p. 208.

³⁵⁵ In Porkert’s 1974 monograph, *The Theoretical Foundations of Chinese Medicine: Systems of Correspondence*, he discusses at length the different understandings of *qi* and its application in Chinese medicine.

is used. Just to have a concept of *qi* to carry us through this discussion, at its most basic level the use of *qi* within *yangsheng* is a focus on the role of energy and breath within the transformation of the body, where the goal is to harmonize the different manifestations of *qi* within the body to nourish growth and longevity. When harmony is maintained, the transformations of the body can be beneficial, expansive and strong; or if harmony is lost, the transformations can become negative, turbid and ailing.

Yangsheng techniques were used to replenish the vital forces of the body. They were seen as a therapeutic practice, one that could be applied to many ailments, but predominately those based on locomotive and digestive afflictions. The goal of therapy was to prevent the stagnations in the body that could lead to illness.³⁵⁶ Within this system of belief, the gymnastic exercises were able to harmonize *qi* because movement was seen as a method to “eliminate internal obstructions and improve blood circulation.”³⁵⁷ This occurred through a network of energy channels, or *jingluo* (经络 meridians), where the proper flow of *qi* through these meridians was important to the nourishment and health of the organs, and harmonizing the fluids that were exchanged between them. We see a link to this concept of health being made when the training in traditional martial arts were described in a way that the “movement can help open and stimulate the meridians, exercise the joints, increase the circulation, aid digestion, open the stomach, increase the peristalsis of the intestines, increase the absorption of nutrients, increase the resistance to disease, breakdown and elimination of wastes and increase the overall health of the body.”³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ Despeux, 1989, p. 242.

³⁵⁷ Engelhardt, 1989, p. 274.

³⁵⁸ This was the original description given by Wang Jiwu on some of the health benefits of training a *qigong* set he taught within his *Xingyi Quan* system. Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 123.

The branch of *yangsheng* that created the strongest link to the martial practices was the gymnastic exercises that fit into the category of *daoyin* (導引 roughly translated as “guiding and pulling”). *Daoyin* consists of a series of movements and stretches designed to harmonize the essences of the body, and first appears in medical illustrations found at Mawangdui.³⁵⁹ Although *daoyin* could be considered on its own, it is a category of the practices of *yangsheng*.³⁶⁰ It is this premise of movement being relevant to health and the harmonization of *qi* within the body that was taken up in different schools of martial arts.

As for these concepts within the physical training of martial arts, many teachers described styles like *Bagua Zhang* as a form of moving *qigong*. While there are *qigong* practices that are performed while standing still or even sitting down, *Bagua Zhang* practices these concepts in walking exercises. During the training, teachings are given such as “When moving, you must bring your *qi* to your *dantian* (丹田).³⁶¹ Relax your chest so that your *qi* may sink to your *dantian*.”

³⁵⁹ The Mawangdui tomb was an archaeological site in Changsha, China that dates back to the Western Han dynasty, 206 BCE – 9 CE. It contained the Marquis of Dai, his wife, and a male believed to be their son. Current estimations believe the burial of the tomb was around 166-168 BCE

³⁶⁰ We find this evidence of *daoyin* gymnastics being listed as a subset of *yangsheng* exercises in ancient Daoist texts such as the *Yangsheng yaoji* (養生要集 Compendium of Essentials on Nourishing life) and the *Yangxing yanming lu* (養行延命錄 Record on Nourishing Inner Nature and Extending life), Despeux, 1989, p. 242.

³⁶¹ The *dantian* represents one of the more complex topics in Chinese medicine. The most basic assumption is that *dantian* is an area inside the lower abdomen where the *qi* is believed to accumulate. The point coincides with the physical center of gravity, and it is the focal point for many Asian schools of martial arts and internal energy cultivation. Sun, 1924, p. 53. It is a very important area in regards to Daoist conceptions of the body, relating to the transformations seen in the earlier description of the three stages to *Xingyi Quan* training relating to *jing*, *qi*, and *shen* to return to *xu*, which is known in Daoism as *neidan* (內丹 inner alchemy). The *dantian* are three loci in the human body that play a major role in breathing and meditation. Located in the regions of the abdomen, heart, and brain, but devoid of material counterparts, they establish a tripartite division of inner space that corresponds to other threefold motives in the Daoist pantheon and cosmology. The lower Cinnabar Field is the *dantian* proper and is the seat of essence *jing*. Different sources place somewhere between 1.3 and 3.6 *cun* (寸 a unit of

Your breathing must be natural. ... Use your mind to lead your movements, and coordinate your upper-body movements with your lower-body movements. Coordinate this with your breath. The mind and *qi* should be coordinated with your power.³⁶² A proverb of these martial artists was to “exercise flesh, tendons, and bones externally, and cultivate *qi* internally.” These experts emphasized their belief, that by integrating *qigong* principles, the martial arts could be improved to become even more profound.³⁶³ The benefits as they understood them, was that “this marvelous boxing method, when practised properly according to the essentials, can develop the practitioner’s physical health to restore the essence, tonify the brain, dispel illness, prolong life and maintain optimum vitality.”³⁶⁴

The original practitioners of *yangsheng* and *daoyin* did not perform them with the goal of strengthening their bodies for any combative purposes. In her studies on Daoism, Livia Kohn discussed how the Daoist adepts used the strengthening of muscles and loosening of joints as a means to build an awareness of internal energies, and this awareness allowed them to learn how to enter states of absorption and deeper meditation, which related to higher levels of self-realization. Daoists saw *qi* as the vital power of the cosmos at work in nature, in society, and in

measurement, approximately an inch) below or behind the navel. It is the location of the first stage of the *neidan* process *lianjing huaqi* (练精化气 refining essence into energy [sometimes translated as pneuma in this context]). This area is the meeting point of two meridians that run along the spine and ventral axis, *dumai* (督脉 control channel) and *renmai* (任脉 function channel). Circulating the essence along these two channels generates the inner elixir. The middle Cinnabar Field is at the center of the chest according to some authors, or between the heart and the navel according to others. In the second stage of the *neidan* process *lianqi huashen* (练气化神 “refining energy into spirit”), the elixir is moved from the lower to the middle *dantian* and is nourished there. The upper Field is located in the region of the brain and is the seat of *shen*. Moving the inner elixir to the upper Field marks the third and last stage of the *neidan* process *lianshen huanxu* (练身换虚 “refining spirit and reverting to Emptiness). See Pregadio, 2008, p. 302.

³⁶² Lin, 2010, p. 79.

³⁶³ Li, 1993, p. 1.

³⁶⁴ Quotation of Li Ziming, in Li, 1993, p. xii.

the human body, and that by learning to harmonize the *qi* of the body and to be in harmony with the *qi* of the environment in which this body existed, they could be able to understand the underlying workings of society, nature, and ultimately all things within the macrocosm, or the universe in which we live.³⁶⁵

Within Daoism, there was the idea of how the practice of ritualized physical movements was only a preliminary stage that was intended to be surpassed. The *daoyin* gymnastics were intended to facilitate and cultivate the flow of *qi*, and as such they were secondary to the actual manipulation of *qi* itself.³⁶⁶ There was a progressive goal of learning the metaphysical patterns of the body so that one could refine the *jing* (精 seminal essence, or life bringing essence) of the body into *qi* with the combination of *daoyin* and meditative practice. This transformation continued with the refinement of *qi* into the spiritual aspect of *shen*.

Demonstrating the influence of these concepts from *yangsheng* and *daoyin*, Yang Chengfu's text from 1934 on *Taijiquan* had an interesting perspective of how the physical practice of martial arts might be able to influence the body on such a level. In the introduction to his book *Taijiquan Tiyong Quanshu* (太极拳体用全书 Essence and Applications of *Taijiquan*), Yang Chengfu stated that “*Taijiquan* is based on the *taiji* and *bagua* of the *Book of Changes*; and the ideas of *li* [里 principle], *qi* [气 energy], and *xiang* [象 image] help to give shape to these concepts.”³⁶⁷ From the commentary of the *Xici* (系辞 attached verbalizations) to the *Zhouyi* (周易 *Book of Changes*, also known as *Yijing*) *xiang* could also be understood as “a sensory (that is, visual, auditory, tactile, olfactory) presentation of a perceptual, imaginative or recollected

³⁶⁵ Kohn, 2007, p. 108.

³⁶⁶ Holcombe, 1993, p. 15.

³⁶⁷ Yang, 1934, p. 11.

experience.”³⁶⁸ This experiential element of *xiang* linked with a notion of *li* that refers to inherent principles of things, or their structural patterns.³⁶⁹ As Roger Ames writes, “One investigates *li* in order to uncover patterns which relate to things, and to discover resonances between things that make correlations and categorization possible.”³⁷⁰ Within the context of Yang Chengfu’s discussions on training *Taiji Quan*, it may be helpful to think of *xiang* as learning through emulations of a teacher’s form, and through this experience of the *xiang* of *taiji*, you can learn of the *li* that exists within that form, and work to ensure that *qi* is in harmony with this *li*. In other words, you work to ensure the energies of the body are in harmony with the patterns which adhere to their proper functioning. This process was expected to occur through diligent training and the practice of awareness, as the student gradually learns more of the internal principles of Chinese martial arts.³⁷¹

In *Xingyi Quan*, many of these *yangsheng* concepts were mentioned by Wang Fuyuan, Wang Jiwu’s teacher and a contemporary of Bu Xuekuan. Summarizing the emphasis in training for his system, he described it as “the five phases, *yin* and *yang*, inside and outside, intent, *qi*, power, hard and soft, form and spirit, technique, internal power, false and real, the original *yang*

³⁶⁸ Hall and Ames, 1995, p. 216.

³⁶⁹ An interpretation of *li* worth consideration here was described by Zhu Xi (朱熹 1130-1200), the famous Song dynasty neo-Confucian; “*Li* (pattern) is a natural and inescapable law of affairs and things... the meaning of ‘natural and inescapable’ is that [human] affairs, and [natural] things, are made just exactly to fit into place. The meaning of ‘law’ is that the fitting into place occurs without the slightest excess or deficiency.” Practitioners of traditional Chinese medicine strove to understand these patterns and principles because it was believed that excess or deficiency within the different natures of *qi* in the body, whether caused by external pathogens or internal imbalance, would create illness. These imbalances were believed to occur along the rubric of the eight principles, which were the oppositions between *yin* and *yang*, cold and heat, internal and external, excess and depletion. The goal of the practitioners was to maintain balance, or harmony, within the state of *qi* in the body. Croizier, 1968, p. 17, and Scheid, 2002, p. 51.

³⁷⁰ Hall and Ames, 1995, p. 216.

³⁷¹ Yang, 1934, p. 13.

qi, all united into one.”³⁷² In the way of these styles of martial arts, the forms are seen in the structure of their movements, but its “formless” elements are seen as the real source of power. The structure of the physical movements must use the power from within, or the structure and the form is useless. *Qili* (气力 the power of *qi*) is the root of the training. “If you want sufficient power, the *qi* must be full, therefore *qi* is the root of strength.”³⁷³

The influence of these concepts of *yangsheng* and the microcosmic aspects of the body were the primary basis of the transformative potential of martial arts practice. As teachers began to publish martial arts texts in the Republican era, they promoted and emphasised the value of concepts relating to Daoist and *yangsheng* principles as something integral to martial arts. Yet there remains a separation between the elements of the training that were designed for fighting and those that were designed for cultivation and transformation of the self. Although the practices of martial arts and those of *yangsheng* did connect in some interesting ways, the lines between the two were blurred and rearranged during the Republican era in a way that led ordinary people to see a much closer relationship between the two fields than what had actually existed previously.

Considering the fighting aspect of martial arts training, the available texts in the Daoist canon and manuals of gymnastics and breathing do not mention the ability of the practices to enhance military skills. They focus on health and spiritual liberation. The most important element of study for the gymnastic practices was the areas where *qi* enters and leaves the body, and where it tends to stagnate.³⁷⁴ The original texts on these teachings do not refer to the development of fantastic striking ability or defensive skills that were intended for combat. The

³⁷² Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 88.

³⁷³ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p. 53.

³⁷⁴ Despeux, 1989, p. 255.

primary intent of the *daoyin* movements within the *yangsheng* practices focus on this idea of eliminating blockages and coagulations of the energies of the body to permit a smooth circulation of the fluids and essences of the body.

These concepts were used by teachers such as those involved with the *Jingwu* Association and *Guoshuguan*, yet the intellectual movements of the Republican era made it challenging to balance the degree to which these types of concepts could be integrated into training. Anything too esoteric risked being accused of being a part of the “feudal superstitions” which modernists wanted see removed from society. Many of these concepts remained guarded in manuals that were originally only shown to inner door students, while the promotion of the practice in public speeches and the articles such as those written for the *New Youth* journal employed the rhetoric of modernity movements discussed earlier in this thesis.

Considering the necessity to avoid “feudal superstitions,” aspects of *yangsheng* such as *daoyin* were not necessarily trapped in purely esoteric spheres. There was some evidence in ancient history that indicated it might not have always been treated as a practice reserved only for spiritual pursuit. In an article on the *daoyin* gymnastics, Livia Kohn points out that Mawangdui, where archaeologists found documents on *daoyin* and other medical texts, was the tomb of an aristocrat and not that of a monk or spiritual leader. This meant that it was an activity that could have also been undertaken by the upper classes who remained actively involved in society, who most likely used it with the intent of alleviating diseases and physical discomforts. It is possible then that it was not only intended for some form of spiritual cultivation, but also as a technical approach to the maintenance of the body, simply to provide a greater enjoyment of

daily luxuries and faster recovery from large banquets and communal events that involved wine as an important part of ritualized social interactions.³⁷⁵

When determining if there is scientific truth to the benefits of martial arts practice, it is worth considering a scientific experiment conducted on the effects of *Taiji Quan* on physical and mental health of college students, even if it might have been a bit late for the “scientization” movements of the 1920s and 30s. In 2004, the American Journal of Chinese Medicine featured the results of a three-month experiment where students were assigned to do one hour sessions of *Taiji*, three times a week, and the multidimensional physical and mental health scores were assessed using the SF-36v2 health survey questionnaire before and after the experiment.³⁷⁶ Each practice session included 10 minutes of breathing and stretching following by 50 minutes of *Taiji Quan* form practice.

The results of this study indicated that the practice of *Taiji Quan* was beneficial in improving the physical and mental health of college students. In particular, the mental health dimension was particularly sensitive to change in this group. Vitality (defined as a sense of energy and freedom from fatigue), mental/emotional role function (defined as limitations in usual home or work activities because of emotional problems), and general emotional health all improved.³⁷⁷ The researchers found that *Taiji Quan* was a unique form of exercise, combining mind and body through a series of low impact movements. It was helpful in mediating emotional and psychological stresses that accompany the life experiences of graduate and undergraduate students, and the study showed that the practice *Taiji* had the potential to help maintain a healthy

³⁷⁵ Kohn, 2007, p. 111.

³⁷⁶ The questionnaire covered physical function, bodily pain, general health, social function, emotional function, vitality, and perceptions of mental health. Wang et. al, 2004, p. 453.

³⁷⁷ Wang et. al, 2004, p. 457.

body as well as an alert mind, and demonstrated that it could increase people's ability to concentrate better on routine tasks and make decisions more effectively.³⁷⁸

The development of skill in traditional Chinese martial arts, particularly when they made references to an internal form of power related to *qi*, was understood as a slow and gradual process, requiring long periods of training. When training with traditional teachers, students had to practice diligently, morning and night, and engage in practice with others frequently so that they could understand themselves and others.³⁷⁹ Students were encouraged not to learn too much at one time, they were only shown what they were able to understand, and this understanding only came from practice. They would be taught only a few movements at a time, and were only gradually introduced to the theoretical aspects. Often, the case is that only when a student is able to properly perform the moves they have learned that they are taught more.³⁸⁰

The physical component would be the most obvious, but the mental, spiritual and energetic evolutions came to be seen as the essential elements of cultivation that could allow a student to attain a true mastery of the practice. Teachers believed that these principles could only be understood over a long period of dedicated practice. Firsthand experience was prioritized and transmitted knowledge only seen as secondary. To truly understand the terms used by the teachers, a student was supposed to apply a great deal of effort in the actual training, building on what they understood of the teachings with their own experience. Wang Jiwu felt that “true knowledge is only trained through practical experience. If one leaves practical experience, all that is left is empty talk.”³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Wang et. al, 2004, p. 454.

³⁷⁹ Sun, 1924, p. 71.

³⁸⁰ Sun, 1915, p. 99.

³⁸¹ Cartmell and Miller, 1994, p.45.

An important element to the conception of *qi* within training was that there was the effort to connect with the subtle layer of things, and as such, all “actions” can only occur in the most subtle of forms. The true essence of *qigong* cannot be manifested in parlor tricks or actions driven by financial goals or simply building a reputation for oneself. As *qi* is so often described as an essence of transformations, we could think of the *qi* of the world as a fluid entity. In this concept, we cannot take something like water and manipulate it directly, we would be left soaking wet. According to the teachers of these traditional arts, what can be done is to fix your intent and focus, and place it like rock that can guide the flow of *qi*. The *qi* will accommodate to the concentration of will and intent. In this capacity where *shifu* are presenting students with a process through which they can learn to guide *qi*, what they perceived as the fundamental principle of all life, we find the basis of how they saw a potential for transformation within the study of martial arts.

Conclusion

The transition from the imperial age into the Republican era marked a dramatic change at all levels of society in China. As new concepts entered the public domain through the various publications and associations that were formed during this time, people began to see themselves and their country in a way that was radically different from the generations before them. With the collapse of the imperial order, past hierarchies and social structures were subject to reorganization, and fields of practice had to negotiate their relation with society during these political and social reforms in order for them to retain a degree of cultural legitimacy. These negotiations were both conscious and unconscious, as they took place within the essays and call for changes from movements such as the *Tiyu* Movement, the New Culture Movement, and even the New Life Movement.

Perceptions of the body are an important element of how power exists within social formations. In modernity the processes of the politicization of the body in the context of society can reinforce the sovereignty of ruling powers.³⁸² Physical education plays a role in determining how people perceive their body, and how they think of themselves in relation to their body. How a person thinks the human body should be trained, exercised, disciplined, developed and educated in effect becomes how he as an individual should be trained, exercised, disciplined, developed and educated.³⁸³ Within this, body becomes a tool of inquiry and a vector of knowledge. This education on the body impacts not only the understanding of the body within a medical context, but also within a social and political handling of the representations of the body.

³⁸² Harvey and Sparks, 1991, p. 165.

³⁸³ Cassidy, 1965, p. 11.

The supply side of sports and physical education were subject to new social conditions and relations of power in Republican China, and those with sovereignty over the efforts of nation building stood at the highest point. Through the promotion of specific institutions, its regulation of nationally oriented curricula, and its authorization of who was and was not recognized as a formal instructor at the national levels, the state subsumed different fields of practice to specific forms of power relations. As an institute promoted by the state, or at least a political party that wanted to become the state, the *Guoshuguan* was subject to these dynamics.

The deliberate effort to reposition the traditional martial arts of China is found first and foremost in how the associations such as the *Jingwu* Association and the *Zhongyang Guoshuguan* created new opportunities to learn martial arts, as they allowed students to train with multiple teachers within a more structured, analytical format. This allowed not only the students, but also the teachers to compare their training regimens and incorporate new ideas. These efforts used the rhetoric of modernity movements, developed the aspects drawn from *yangsheng* cultivation, and incorporated scientific terms and aspects of westernization needed to make it attractive to modernists and the younger generations of students who would carry the practices forward.

The diversity within Chinese martial arts today demonstrates that these teachers were never able to standardize teaching materials, or create a lasting, centralized examination system. What they did accomplish, however, in their efforts to preserve this field of practice, was to make the practice more freely available, improve research and collaborations between teachers, and repositioning Chinese martial arts as not just a fighting practice, but a recreational activity that could be enjoyed by people around the world to this day.

Distancing martial arts from being merely a fighting art had positive results throughout the Republican era as the practices were moved towards the level of popular acceptance that we see in the world today. An early sign of their success can be found in a publication related to the *Jingwu* Association known as the *Jingwu Zazhi* (精武杂志 Pure Martial Magazine), featured a preface by Sun Yat-sen in 1920, where he identified martial arts as an important contribution of the Chinese people to world peace.³⁸⁴

The objective of this thesis was to bring awareness to the broad range of issues that confronted the field of Chinese martial arts during the transition from the imperial age into Republican China. Certainly there were many topics raised within this thesis that were not fully explored, and those areas could create opportunities for future research. The hope was to provide a better perspective on how martial arts have evolved by putting them into the context of the social changes that occurred at the time, and point out that the aspects of self-cultivation commonly associated with the martial arts were only became common knowledge after the efforts to reposition the field of martial arts during the Republican era.

With the popularity of martial arts today, it is important to develop a clearer understanding of the history of its development. As with any field of practice, martial arts evolves and changes with time in a continual process of repositioning. Should anyone want to seriously engage the practice of martial arts, it is important to have a sense of not only how complicated the history of these practices can be, but also how complicated history itself can be. It is not just a process of understanding fixed points regarding important events, but also the lived experience of the people who endure these social transitions, who struggle to find a place for themselves within a rapidly changing world.

³⁸⁴ Morris, 2004, p. 198.

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