

How post-1840s' governments oversaw martial arts in China

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- A Study Design
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Abstract

Background & Study Aim:

Chinese martial arts (CMA) originated in Chinese culture and was already characterized in ancient China. However, since 1840, CMA has been changing with the shift in governments in order to meet the needs of their respective periods. This study aimed at in depth knowledge about the Chinese martial arts during nearly 200 years of social change and from the perspective of the role that governments should play in promoting this centuries-old tradition.

Material & Methods:

The basis of the analysis of source materials is Michel's Foucault's theories on 'power-knowledge' and the 'political technology of the body'. In the article there are references to 67 publications related to the purpose of this theoretical research.

Results:

Primarily, post-1840s China saw three governments. These three governments used martial arts for their respective socio-political intentions and governed it in vastly different ways. The late Qing government deserted civilian martial arts but maintained their own official military martial arts training to continue the Manchu ruling position. The Republican government rejuvenated it to empower the collapsing country and its people. The government of the People's Republic of China has been transforming and growing martial arts to meet the varying needs of the times, e.g. maintaining social stability in 1950-60', establishing international image in 1970-90' and building cultural confidence after the millennium. Globally, the wushu policies of the Chinese governments, especially the wushu policies of the People's Republic of China, did not produce a satisfactory result on the way of traditional martial arts modernization as those of Japan and the Republic of Korea governments.

Conclusions:

The martial arts in post-1840s China evolved in a highly abnormal way, and its evolution should follow the martial arts nature per se rather than the governments' political intention alone.

Keywords:

CMA (Chinese martial arts) • kuoshu • Michel Foucault • political power • sanda • taolu • wushu

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The accepted spelling of martial arts names – most often, the names of eastern martial arts (regardless of the spelling of the names of sports disciplines) are written in capital letters, like most of the authors of the cited publications.

Wushu – Chinese martial arts, also called quan (fists) in Chinese.

Kuoshu – national arts, a special term which was coined during the period of the Republic of China, with the purpose to replace the name of wushu.

Taolu – Chinese-style Martial arts routine, a series of movement combinations containing attack and defence.

Sanda – Chinese-style free combat, also called sanshou (free hands) in Chinese, allowing of boxing, kicking, and wrestling.

Government – the group of people who are responsible for controlling a country or a state.

Michel Foucault – in full Paul Michel Foucault (1926-1984), French philosopher and historian, one of the most influential and controversial scholars of the post-World War II period.

Power-knowledge – a term Michel Foucault coined to indicate the involvement of knowledge in the maintenance of power relations.

Political technology of the body – is a craft, system, or method for organizing bodies to produce specific effects that have a political value or purpose [67].

INTRODUCTION

Research on Chinese Martial Arts (CMA) has already been well established. This field primarily consists of eight directions: CMA history, culture, communication, and pedagogy, as well as scientific training for competitive CMA, health promotion effects of CMA, traditional CMA, and the comparative study of CMA and foreign martial arts [1]. Research on CMA in the West has progressed over the decades, but it still lacks a clear strategy and direction, as it has been conducted by disparate researchers in different countries from different disciplines, sub disciplines, and fields, such as history [2-5], politics and identity [6, 7], institutions [8], masters [9], sociology [10], philosophy [11-14], religion [15], and so on. Generally, the researchers have given attention to sociological considerations, and many western sociological theories such as the theories and concepts of Bourdieu, Elias, Frank and Giddens have been and are being reflexively applied to the study of sports [16]. Facing the Western dominance of social theory, Jennings and Cynarski [17] turned to local theories to understand local social phenomena such as Polish Budo and Mexican Xilam, and they found an alternative approach to appreciate the history, culture and politics of the country where a martial art has been or is being developed. Among these Western sociological theories, Michel Foucault's theories still demonstrate convincing interpretability.

Foucault's ideas have become a lens through which many sports issues can be clarified. Some scholars explore how boxing trainers consciously or unconsciously use Foucault's concept of disciplinary techniques to normalize their construction of what is normal in boxing gyms [18]. Some scholars, through a feminist Foucauldian study, found that gymnasts' athletic proficiency is only possible through an extensive and elaborate process of corporeal discipline [19]. In addition to feminist study, some scholars use Foucauldian theories to examine the articulations between masculinity and men's rugby unions [20]. Inspired by Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, some scholars have explored how normalization works through an athlete's emotions [21]. In addition, some scholars have found that Foucault's bio-power can be directly used to establish physical knowledge and supervision over the body [22], behaviour [23], and even the establishment of the policy discourse and social practice [24]. Foucault's theory on the care of the self has

been utilised purposely to form a framework for studying the cultivation of health in the martial arts and combat sports [25]. The previously mentioned research has contributed towards theoretical, empirical, and methodological knowledge that can be combined for future systematic sports projects. However, most of them belong to synchronic studies, and few of them explore CMA specifically.

Logically, governance over martial arts is both 'a complex social function' and 'a political tactic' [26] which directly involves both body and soul. Barbarous and dictatorial rulers simply used physical torture to punish offenders. With the advancement of social civilisation, physical torture has become self-evidently inappropriate, or, at least, the physical torture should be made invisible with the means of Foucault's so-called 'political technology of the body'. In Foucault's opinion, political technology of the body consists of two elements: the knowledge of the body and the mastery of knowledge. Moreover, this technology should be 'diffuse, rarely formulated in continuous, systematic discourse' [26]. This means that governments should expect their think tanks to investigate the depths of society, then, do the political anatomy, and finally produce a theoretical foundation for their policy making and execution.

This article deals with diachronic study on CMA. CMA originated in Chinese culture and was already characterized in ancient China. However, since 1840, CMA has been changing with the shift in governments in order to meet the needs of their respective periods. These changes included CMA names, definitions, categories, classifications, functions, and norms. In this article, I draw on Foucault's theories of 'power-knowledge', 'political technology of the body', and others, to explore why and how governments transformed CMA with their power.

Foucauldian lens

Foucault was a famous French philosopher, sociologist, literary critic, and historian of ideas. His thoughts are displayed in his well-known books, including *Madness and Civilization* (1961), *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), *The Order of Things* (1966), *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), *Discipline and Punish* (1975), and *The History of Sexuality* (1976). His theories primarily address the relationship between power and knowledge,

and how they are used as a form of social control through societal institutions. His thoughts have had extensive academic influence, especially in sociology, feminism, cultural studies, communication studies, literary theory, and critical theory. Consequently, the 'Foucauldian lens' has become a compelling instrument for researchers to analyse various issues in various fields [27]. The key constituents of this instrument include the terms of power, discourse, knowledge, and body.

For Foucault, power is everywhere, diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and it constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them in discourse, knowledge, and 'regimes of truth'; power is what makes us what we are [28, 29]. Foucault used the term 'knowledge' to signify that power is constituted through accepted forms of knowledge, scientific understanding, and truth. The explanation of knowledge is discourse, and success in explaining is guaranteed through normalization. Norms can cause us to discipline ourselves without any wilful coercion from others. Undoubtedly, this is an art of governance, an ideal theory of social control. However, Foucault points out that 'discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it... We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy' [30]. Foucault is known for having discovered a microcosm of social control that he called 'bio-power' or 'biopolitics'. Through the innovative theoretical thinking of bio-power, some innovative concepts, such as cyborgs, are used to describe the impact of modern scientific and technological knowledge on individual bodies in society [31].

The terms above, which are the constituents of the Foucauldian lens, are frequently taken up by subsequent thinkers to explore governmentality. In this article, I will not focus on any individual term, but will take them as a complete instrument. With this instrument, we will focus on historical events of the governance of martial arts in post-1840s' China and evaluate their process. We restrict our definition of government to 'the organisation that directs the regular, public use of physical force in a territory and makes rules upheld with the threat of force' [32].

CMA has been changing since 1840. These changes did not occur naturally through practitioners but came artificially from governors. Power is the big boss, one who can spread discourse and claim it to be scientific knowledge, define it, normalize it, and legitimize it. During the periods of CMA's developmental history after 1840, governments served as project designers and supervisors. In this sense, Foucault's theories are compelling through which to investigate how governments have shaped CMA.

Late Qing Dynasty: the diaspora of martial arts practitioners during 1840-1911

The opium war in 1840 directly pushed China into becoming a semi-colonial and semi-feudal society [33]. The whole society was filled with explosive conflicts and grudges. The rulers lived in panic, and accordingly governance over martial arts was in disorder. In this situation, martial arts practitioners gave up their dreams of serving the country and tried aimlessly to make their fortunes. According to Chen Xulu [34], the total population of China at that time was over 400 million. Nobody knows the exact number of martial arts practitioners, but the actions of a large number of practitioners were not difficult to determine. It turned out that most practitioners attempted to make new lives for themselves either by joining secret societies or through migration [35].

In the social structure of that time, secret societies were the third biggest organisations, following clans and guilds [34]. The members of secret societies mainly came from the lowest class [36], and they stuck to the code of brotherhood, which helped them to expand their social connections [37]. Their daily activities include missionary work, practicing martial arts and other gang activities. To a certain degree, secret societies made three kinds of contribution to the development of CMA: one, they created many styles and branches; two, they enriched theories on CMA; third, they combined martial arts with witchcraft [38].

Apart from joining secret societies, some other practitioners chose to leave their homelands to make a living in other lands. Their jobs mainly involved gold washing, wine making, pepper growing, casino running, and opium selling [39]. Usually, the charter members of secret societies and migration groups were outstanding martial arts practitioners who used martial arts as

a means in their struggle to survive. Some other relatively high-level practitioners, such as martial arts performers, martial arts instructors, bodyguards and so on, used their martial arts prowess to make a living. Yang Luchan (1799-1872), the founder of the Yang-style Taijiquan, Sun Lutang (1861-1933), the founder of Sun-style Taijiquan, and Dong Haichuan (1797-1882), the founder of Baguazhang, all took part in such a migration.

According to the Foucauldian lens, the direct cause that led to the diaspora of martial arts practitioners was firearms replacing cold arms. It is a fact that firearms are more lethal than martial arts. The indirect reason for this diaspora is that the power of the Qing government compared to that of the West was so weak that martial arts practitioners no longer knew how to serve the country. In addition, the Qing government mistakenly abolished Wujuzhi (a kind of National Martial Examination that was first established in the Tang Dynasty [618-907] for the selection of martial art talents).

The abolition of Wujuzhi (1901)

Like the governors of other dynasties in ancient China, the late Qing governors also held an ambivalent attitude towards martial arts practice. On one hand, they hoped the worship of martial arts could maintain the solidarity of the nation as a whole; on the other, they feared martial arts practitioners might engage in subversive actions. In the late Qing dynasty, a series of martial arts events gave rise to this contradiction and eventually led to the abolition of Wujuzhi, which blocked martial arts talents from entering directly into the legitimate official regimes. These martial arts events included the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64) and the Boxer Uprising (1898-1901). One thing these two events had in common is that the majority of both events' boards of leaders were persons with outstanding prowess in martial arts. When late Qing governors saw the amplifying threat of firearms, they immediately abandoned their expectations of martial arts. Moreover, they found that the more practitioners fought against foreign invaders, the more pressure the foreigners would put on the Qing governors. As a result, the governors suppressed martial arts practitioners to please the foreigners and begged the foreigners to help maintain their ruling position. While doing this, the governors discovered that 'neither spirits nor internal cultivation were any protection against bullets and artillery' [2].

In 1901, the Qing imperial government announced the abolition of Wujuzhi. From then until the fall of the Qing Dynasty, no martial arts weapons were permitted for private use, and martial arts teaching had to be monitored by local gentries or tycoons. However, neither banning nor abolishing martial arts was able to cause it to die out [40], but the momentum of martial arts worship was weakened substantially. To make matters worse, the poison of opium battered not only the bodies of Chinese people but also their spirits. Though a turning point also presents an opportunity for a wise government; unfortunately, the Qing government was unable to grasp the opportunity to guide martial arts into healthy development.

Foucault [26] pointed out that examinations combined the ceremony of power and the form of the experiment, the deployment of force, and the establishment of truth. Wujuzhi belongs to such examinations. Because of the abolition of Wujuzhi, Wushu practitioners were deprived of ambition to serve their country. At this time, some social elites, learning from historical experience and western books, came to realise the truth of 'survival of the fittest' and that the weak are the prey of the strong, and concluded that the only way to change their fate is to develop. Therefore, the social elites proposed to empower the country and empower the people through martial arts rejuvenation.

Republican China: The upgrade from Wushu to Kuoshu (1912-1949)

One of the capitalist reformers, Yan Fu (1854-1921) argued that the criteria of national quality consisted of a 'powerful body, powerful intelligence and powerful morality'. However, in China of that time, the 'national body had been collapsed, national intelligence had been shabby, and national morality had been degraded' [41]. Taking these into consideration, Yan Fu proposed reform by encouraging bodybuilding, increasing intelligence, and renewing morality. Yan set bodybuilding as the first priority, regarding bodybuilding as the basis for a wealthy and powerful country. Seeing many Chinese men suffering the torture of opium and women suffering the torture of foot-binding, Yan Fu advocated bodybuilding. His purpose was to awaken people to rise and resist these wicked practices so that they could have normal or better physical capacity (in Yan's own words, 'physical strength of hands and feet') like the Westerners. The other capitalist reformers, such as Kang Youwei (1858-1927) and

Liang Qichao (1873-1929), also supported these proposals theoretically and pragmatically [42]. In the book *The Tao of Martial Artists in China*, Liang Qichao called on governors to build national bodies so that they could be ready to fight as soldiers at any time [43].

How to change 'fragile bodies, near sighted outlook and universal self-pessimism' also concerned the Kuomintang governors. For example, Xu Yibing asserted in 1914 that 'no physical culture, no strong human race; no strong race, no stable country' [44]. In 1915, Wang Zhengting stated that 'strong physical culture breezes high spirits, then morality and intelligence grow as well' [45]. In 1936, Zhang Zhijiang said, 'Though there have been various national salvation suggestions, physical culture is the forerunner. To save the nation through physical culture is to save people's lives' [46].

But in front of the governors there are two categories: traditional Chinese physical culture (mainly refer to traditional Chinese martial arts) or modern western sports (mainly refer to track and field and ball games introduced from Europe and America). Which should be promoted? The argument surrounding this question lasted for nearly two decades (1920s to 1930s) and was historically named the Tu-Yang Dispute in Chinese sport academia [47]. Tu represents traditional Chinese exercises, while Yang represents modern western sports. Even though this dispute ended with no clear decision, martial arts gained a favourable chance to grow in China, the mark of which was the establishment of the Kuoshu system.

Just as Judkins and Nielson [10] said, 'the Chinese language has a large number of names for the "martial arts", and each one has a certain connotation. The use of one term rather than another is often a politicized choice'. At the same time, the choice is often the consequence of academic argumentation, especially in modern times. The term 'Kuoshu' ('National Art' in English) debuted in the name of a public sports administration, The Department of Kuoshu of Shanghai Number One Public Stadium, which was established in 1918. After 1920, when Wu Zhiqing's book *Scientific Kuoshu* (1930) was published by the Great Orient Publishing House, the term Wushu began gradually to give way to Kuoshu in the academic circle. The official success of the term change resulted from the efforts of a number of

Kuomintang officials and social celebrities, one of whom was Zhang Zhijiang (1882-1969). Zhang himself was a martial arts expert, or to be accurate, a martial arts aficionado. With the help of other Kuomintang officials such as Li Liejun, Dai Chuanxian, Cai Yuanpei, Yu Youren, He Yingqin, Kong Xiangxi, Niu Yongjian, etc., Zhang Zhijiang established the Central Kuoshu Institute in 1928.

The institute motto was 'empowering our people and country, improving ourselves ceaselessly'. The tenet was 'promoting Chinese martial arts and enhancing countrymen's health'. Tasks included governing Chinese martial arts, studying Chinese martial arts, teaching Chinese martial arts, and compiling books of Chinese martial arts [48]. The Kuoshu Institute developed very quickly. By the end of 1933, approximately 24 provincial Kuoshu Institutes and over 300 county Kuoshu Institutes had been set up throughout the country. Each subordinate institute was led by both its governmental counterpart and its immediate superior institute. According to the *Organisation Compendium of Kuoshu Institutes*, the president of each Kuoshu institute was supposed to be the counterpart government head [49]. In this way, a complete hierarchical Kuoshu system was established, which stimulated the whole nation to re-evaluate Chinese martial arts, lifted the social status of martial arts, and raised patriotism, national pride, and responsibility among practitioners.

Kuoshu Institutes served as a panopticon that connected governors, elites, and folk practitioners. A panopticon is a type of institutional building designed by the English philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the late 18th century. The concept of the design is to allow all (pan-) inmates of an institution to be observed (-opticon) by a single guard without the inmates being able to tell whether they are being watched. Later, the idea of the panopticon was invoked by Foucault in his *Discipline and Punish*, as a metaphor for social governance. Just as Foucault put it: 'the panoptic mechanism is not simply a hinge, a point of exchange between a mechanism of power and a function; it is a way of making power relations function in a function, and of making a function through these power relations' [26]. The Kuomintang government saw the empowering function of martial arts and spread the knowledge by upgrading martial arts to Kuoshu. As one of the top governors, Zhang Zhijiang actively persuaded other

governors to participate in discourse creation and taking action. The success of the establishment of the Kuoshu governing system is a good example of the application of Foucault's ideas on power, discourse, and body politics.

The Integration of Kuoshu into the Education System (1918)

Integrating something into the national education system suggests that the concerned government wanted to launch the power of normalization in a given field. Foucault [26] said: 'the examination enabled the teacher, while transmitting his knowledge, to transform his pupils into a whole field of knowledge'. This is also the ideal effect of school teaching.

The first agreement on the integration of Kuoshu into the educational system was signed in April 1915, when the First Conference of the National Education Association was held in Tianjin. The document said: 'Traditional martial arts should be taught at schools, and normal universities or schools have the responsibility to train Kuoshu teachers'. Later, several similar proposals were put forward until October of 1918, when the first official resolution was passed at the National Middle-School Headmasters Conference sponsored by the Education Ministry of the government. The resolution decided that: '(...) all of the middle schools must open Kuoshu classes' [49], which indicated that the original countryside based martial arts had officially entered school disciplines.

As for what to teach and how to teach it, Ma Liang (1878-1947) tried to adapt martial arts to the education system. Ma Liang himself was a martial artist and a top official in the Kuomintang army as well. With the help of other martial artists of his time, he compiled what he taught in the army into a textbook entitled *New Chinese Martial Arts*. The contents of this book were based on traditional martial arts including wrestling, fist-and-leg techniques, and sword and staff playing. As for the pedagogy, Ma Liang introduced western modern military drills to Kuoshu teaching. He divided a routine (Taolu) into sections and subdivided each section further into fragments, each of which was accompanied by different oral commands. This method was easy to use in martial arts classes. Given Ma's political status and social connections, *New Chinese Martial Arts* was introduced as mandatory training for soldiers, police officers, teachers, and students in 1917. It is reasonable

to take *New Chinese Martial Arts* as a positive initiative trial of the modernization of traditional Chinese martial arts. Nevertheless, the implementation of *New Chinese Martial Arts* did not last for long, partly because *New Chinese Martial Arts* had a militaristic style, the movements of which was rigid comparing with those of traditional martial arts. Another reason is that Ma Liang stuck to me first cultural attitude, which produced cynical responses among other social elites, such as Lu Xun (1881-1936), who were engaged in introducing fresh thoughts from western countries. The most convincing reason may be that Ma Liang participated in The Shandong Massacre in 1919, and during the Anti-Japanese War he served the Japanese government as a puppet, which hurt the Chinese people's feelings deeply.

Considering Foucault's theories, *New Chinese Martial Arts* is the application of the political technology of body [26]. Its essential failure resulted from the loss of political power and discourse. Politically, the Kuomintang ruling power was weakening, and non-politically, the discourse that initially supported martial arts was destroyed by the revolutionists such as Lu Xun.

The People's Republic of China: The dilution of Kuoshu (1949-1965)

Another new phase of martial arts development was launched after the foundation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949. During the first 16 years (1949-1965) of the PRC, the whole nation operated mainly on two missions: economic reconstruction and socialist transformation. Every walk of life saw a fresh opportunity to advance but had to work cautiously, as did martial arts governors and practitioners. First, they needed to get clear of the related national top leaders' viewpoints on martial arts. In October of 1949, Zhu De, a vice chairperson of the Central People's Government (CPG), made a speech on behalf of the Communist Party of China (CPC) and CPG at the organizing committee of All-China Sports Federation. He said: 'Besides Track & Field events and ball games, we need to make full use of traditional folk sports'. At the same conference, Feng Wenbin, the committee chairperson, also accounted clearly for the necessity for martial arts exploration and utilization [50]. Later, other national leaders, for instance, Liu Shaoqi (former vice chairman of CPG), Chen Yi (former minister of Foreign Affairs of PRC) and He Long (former vice premier of the state council and the minister

of Sports of PRC) also gave supportive instruction on the development of martial arts [51]. With the support of CPC and CPG, martial arts affairs advanced smoothly. Retrospective study shows that martial arts affairs of 1949-1965 mainly lay in three fields: rectifying the name of 'martial arts', reorienting the value of martial arts, and retransforming the movements of martial arts.

Rectifying the name of 'martial arts'

After the foundation of PRC, the new administration, the State Physical Culture and Sport Commission (SPCSC), reinstated the term 'Wushu' rather than 'Kuoshu', partly because Kuoshu was coined by Kuomintang officials, or because the term 'Wushu' had a longer history. The Chinese Traditional Sport Research Association of SPCSC published a detailed explanation about reinstating this name: 'The term Kuoshu is not accurate. If Wushu is renamed as Kuoshu, then those other Chinese traditional arts such as sculpture, painting, music, embroidery, and acupuncture all deserve this name' [52]. The choice of name is a politicizing and theorizing process, but politics tend to take priority.

Reorienting the value of martial arts

As mentioned before, people who initially practiced martial arts often cherished a dream to be able to fight effectively, like a hero. Theoretically, through consistent practice, combat techniques are the natural product, and healthy physiques are the by product. In addition, Wushu (hereinafter, we use Wushu to specifically refer to Chinese martial arts) contained a lot of traditional Chinese culture. The new government of PRC had to make smart use of Wushu. First, governors defined Wushu as 'the national sport which consists of fist routines, weapon routines and the related training methods. It can function as the tool to strengthen marrows and bones, promote health and forge willpower. It is also a national cultural heritage with a long history' [53]. Wushu was categorized into the physical education system and adopted as one of the school subjects. Then, the new government started to remove combat techniques from Wushu movements for the social safety. According to official documents, the general guide from the top-level governors is 'Wushu is allowed to promote, but the first step is to reform it', and the main direction of reform is to restrict combat techniques and vigorously develop Wushu taolu. This guide directly changed Wushu from combat-centred arts into

a performance-centred exercise. Li Menghua, a former sports secretary at SPCSC, once gave a command in June 1958, saying:

From now on, whenever we talk about the value of Wushu, we shouldn't stress the things like combat and self-defence; instead we should stress its effect on people's health. Even though we are playing with spear, sword, rapier and stick, we should not take them as combat weapons; we should take them as sport equipment [54].

Following the national leaders' intentions, the majority of Wushu governors, scholars, and even masters, on various occasions, gushed over the fitness value of Wushu, minimizing its combat value. From the middle of the 1950s to the end of the Great Culture Revolution in 1976, the pragmatic combat value of Wushu even became a forbidden topic, not to mention teaching it. Wu Bin, a master of Jet Li, recalling the situation of 1963 when he was a Wushu teacher at a sport school, said:

We are not allowed to teach children how to apply each movement of Wushu into use. Teaching pragmatic technique is regarded as counter-revolutionary behaviour. I'm told that Wushu is nothing but health-promotion exercise [55].

Retransforming the movements of martial arts

As the value orientation of Wushu was repaired, transforming its movements was already in process. To avoid risking its use by counter-revolutionists, all the related transformation work was only allowed to be done by SPCSC. During the 1950s, many Wushu taolu, including 24-posture Taiji quan and Qingnian quan (Fists for Young Learners), were invented or compiled to meet the demands of various ranges of ages. Meanwhile, SPCSC organised Wushu competitions and summoned related experts to make Wushu competition rules that objectively guided practitioners in this fixed diluted course.

The winter of Wushu (1966-1976)

In May and August of 1966, The Proclamation by The Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (historically abbreviated as The May 16 Proclamation) and The Decision on the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of

China (historically abbreviated as 16 Items) were published under the leadership of Mao Zedong (1893-1976). This marked the full launch of the Great Cultural Revolution (from 1966 to 1976). Wushu, as one of the 'Four Olds' (old ideologies, old cultures, old customs, and old habits), was obliterated. In those ten years, a large number of Wushu governors were labelled as old fogies, counter-revolutionary revisionists, or traitors. This even included some top CPC figures who were in favour of Wushu: for example, Marshal He Long (1896-1969), who was persecuted to death in June 1969, as well as other martial artists; some normal activities were criticized as being trashes of feudalism; many Wushu books and relics were burned or smashed. Throughout the whole Cultural Revolution, sport was set as the target headquarter by the Red Guards and rebels and later as a battlefield of the power struggle within the PRC leadership [56]. Overall, the Cultural Revolution was a catastrophe for traditional Chinese cultures.

It is not accurate to say that Wushu did not move forward at all during the Cultural Revolution, but Wushu developed in a markedly humorous way. In order to keep Wushu alive and at the same time to protect practitioners from political persecution, some Wushu masters or teachers had to hybridize Wushu with so-called 'model revolutionary operas' such as *Hong Deng Ji* (The Red Lantern), *Hong Se Niang Zi Jun* (Red Detachment), and *Zhi Qu Wei Hu Shan* (Taking Tiger Mount by Strategy), or with Mao's poems such as *Die Lian Hua* (Butterflies in Love with Flowers), or even with Mao's quotes; as a result, *Opera Fist* (Yangban Quan), *Poem Fist* (Shici Quan) and *Quote Fist* (Yulu Quan) were produced. The purpose of these hybrid martial arts was to express odes to Red Sun (Chairman Mao) [51]. They were the teratisms of political oppression. As Foucault has stated [26], this disciplinary technique exercised upon the body in this particular historical period also had a double effect: a soul to be known and a subjection to be maintained. As a result of its history, Wushu is also 'one of many ironies of cultural politics in China' [57]. As Lorge said, 'The martial arts struggled, and still struggle, to find a place in the new society' [2].

The spring of Wushu (1976 to the present)

Until 1978, the Movement of Mind Emancipation, which was designed by former Chinese president Deng Xiaoping (1904-1997), was launched

throughout the PRC, and many governors found that they had been on the wrong path for a long time and admitted that Wushu had already been 'dismembered live' by the SPCSC [58]. The new governmental leadership was eager to promote Wushu. On one hand, China was in desperate need of economic growth and political rejuvenation; on the other, the new openness led to both massive foreign investment in China and an export boom in the Chinese industry. In this situation, it was Wushu that played a key role in linking China to the outside world, because Wushu was regarded as a symbol of Chinese nationalism and a representative of Chinese culture. In this sense, the wider China opens, the more Wushu is needed. First, Hong Kong martial arts films, through invigorated and exciting performative Chinese martial arts, ignited both Chinese and foreigners' passions for Chinese traditions. Further, foreign conceptions of Chinese traditions directly affected the Chinese understanding of their own ancients. When Chinese top leaders saw the success of Hong Kong films and realised the magical attraction of Wushu to foreigners, they planned to take advantage of Wushu films to activate the Chinese national soul home and abroad. The film *Shaolin Temple* was the biggest success, which was attributed to Chinese governmental conduct [51]. In the following Bring-Order-Out-Of-Chaos Movement, the related governors continued to promote Chinese Wushu's influence in other ways, but it was found difficult to get traditional Chinese Wushu back. In nearly 30 years, the diluted Wushu forms had already moved far from the traditional ones. However, another series of redemption measures were later taken, including the Sanda competition, traditional Wushu exploration, intangible cultural heritage protection, Olympic-oriented transformation, and humanistic turning.

Sanda (free combat) competition

To restore the fighting trait to Wushu, the SPCSC invented the Sanda competition, encouraging Wushu practitioners to use combat techniques in the designed platform. In 1978, the SPCSC set up the Sanda Investigation and Research Team to compile *A Report about Developing Wushu Sanda* and *Sanda Competition Rules*. To begin with, the SPCSC engaged in pilot experiments at the Beijing Sport University, the Wuhan Institute of Physical Education, and with the Zhejiang Provincial Sports Committee. Starting in 1979, yearly Sanda competitions have been held

regularly. The rules have been slightly changed several times, but the style remains the same. However, critics point out that the fighting techniques of Sanda are far from traditional Wushu, regarding it as a hybrid of western boxing and eastern kicking [59].

Wushu exploration

To portray a panorama of traditional Wushu, SPCSC, with its branches of different levels, set up Wushu Heritage Exploring Teams in 1983 and started to explore folk Wushu throughout the whole country. This engagement lasted for three years (1983-1986), employing over 8,000 professional Wushu administrators and aficionados, and cost over one million yuan RMB. As a result, 129 fist styles were found, 394.5 hours of videos were recorded, and 482 books were collected, with 392 ancient weapons and 29 other objects. So far, most of these materials have not been publicized, and even researchers have not yet had the chance to see this so-called genuine traditional Wushu [60]. Are these materials lost? Are they secret? Existing research has failed to produce an effective way to make use of these materials.

Intangible cultural heritage protection

Being aware that martial arts are precious living cultural heritage, but most of them 'have for a long time not been able to gain the same traction as modern sports, thus have not been transmitted and developed systematically' [61], the government of the Republic of Korea made great efforts and eventually inscribed Taekkyeon, a traditional Korean martial art on the Lists of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) in 2011. Similarly, as many aged Wushu masters in China pass away, more and more traditional arts disappear or at risk of extinction. In order to safeguard Chinese ICH, PRC government formulated a four-level protection system which consists of national ICH, provincial ICH, municipal ICH and county ICH. Since 2006, 32 Wushu fist genres have been accepted as national intangible cultural heritage protected objects by the State Council of PRC (the number is calculated according to the data publicized via the website of the State Council of PRC: <http://www.gov.cn/shuju/index.htm>). The State Council of PRC provided these protected objects with policy and financial support to maintain and develop these ancient martial arts. In 2020, Taijiquan was successfully promoted and inscribed on the Representative List of UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage,

which greatly encouraged Taijiquan aficionados with strong spirituality and they believed that Taijiquan wisdom could contribute more to the sustainable development of humankind. To a certain degree, ICH protection has been more effective in keeping traditional Wushu alive, but the number of protected objects is limited.

Olympic-oriented Wushu

Both governments of Japan and the Republic of Korea made their martial arts well-known in the world and successfully made some of them, for example, Judo and Karate in Japan and Taekwondo in the Republic of Korean, enter the Olympic Games, which was more or less a touch to Chinese government and people. Actually, early in 1936, Zheng Huaixian (former president of Chinese Wushu Association) and the other National Wushu Performance Team members, through the Berlin Olympic Games for the first time managed to demonstrate the unique charm of Wushu to the world. From then on, Wushu was intertwined with the patriotic expectation to reshape the new image of Chinese people via the Olympic Games. However, the substantial attempt to promote Wushu did not begin until December of 1992, when the 2nd National Wushu Work Conference came up with the idea of Olympic-oriented Wushu [62]. Later, many related leaders, scholars, and Wushu masters expressed their support and confidence for the idea. In 2002, all the sports representatives of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference signed a proposal, expecting CPC and the central government to strive for Wushu Olympic-bidding work. Wushu Olympic bidding became a national policy soon. At the same time, the research on the Wushu transformation needed to meet Olympic criteria was underway. Unfortunately, the policy is found to be characterised by a number of implementation and theory failures [63] and the pursuit of Olympic medals made the position of Wushu ambiguous [64], which spurred intense debate on whether Wushu should march for the Olympic Games [65]. Today, this debate has not ended, while Wushu has already drawn on its own prosperous humanity.

Humanistic Wushu

Experiencing one change after another, Wushu was far from its original self. If Wushu, the best representative of Chinese national culture, is gone, the identity of all Chinese people and cultural

self-assertion will be in danger [66]. Therefore, the present government realise that it is highly necessary and urgent to reconstruct the congenital philosophy of traditional Wushu in order to rejuvenate Chinese culture. Wushu governors are considering this reconstruction as a contribution to The Great Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation, which was launched by President Xi Jinping. Some scholars call this reconstructed Wushu 'Humanistic Wushu' [55]. Humanistic Wushu integrates the multiple functions of Wushu, adheres to the ultimate value of serving human advancement, and sets up the ideal goal for practitioners. How does one make full use of this representative of Chinese cultures? Humanistic Wushu is generally classified into Taolu (routines) and Sanda (free combat). Through Sanda, the government admits to the fighting trait of Wushu; through Taolu, it guides Wushu's aggressiveness into the civilization. By governing this way, Taolu practitioners are guided into nonviolence exercises and Sanda practitioners are guided to the limited-rules full-contact sport competitions.

Since 1949, the government of the PRC has consistently attempted to make use of the political technology of the body. The name 'martial arts' was rectified, the value of martial arts reoriented, and the movements of martial arts retransformed. The two former measures deal with discourse guidance, and the latter deals with the political technology of the body. As a ruling government, they overused the power to dilute martial arts between 1949 and 1976. Starting in 1978, with the globalization and opening policy, the Chinese government began to realise that 'knowledge is power'. In order to retain and highlight 'Chineseness' around the world, the government revitalized its traditional culture besides economic revival. They chose martial arts as the representative of Chinese traditional culture and made efforts to promote them. They attempted to clarify the 'scientific knowledge' of martial arts, define it, normalize it, and legitimize it.

CONCLUSIONS

Drawing on Foucauldian perspective enables us to think critically about how dominant discourse and power relationships operate upon the governance of Chinese martial arts. Since 1840, Wushu has experienced difficulties. The government of the late Qing Dynasty abolished

Wujuzhi and dismissed Wushu practitioners. The late Qing government was merely using power to deal with practitioners rather than Wushu itself. The Kuomintang government adopted the social elites' suggestion and renamed Wushu as Kuoshu and established the Kuoshu Institutes system. Kuomintang actually was using power to upgrade Kuoshu and adapt it. As Kuomintang lost its ruling position in the mainland and transferred to Taiwan, CPC came into power. Facing the two national missions of economic reconstruction and socialist transformation, the PRC government started to take Wushu into serious consideration. After some top-level leaders gave instructions to promote traditional sports, the related governors realised that Wushu must be promoted, but first must be transformed. The methods of transformation included renaming, dilution, and multi-functional exploration. Obviously, the PRC government has been using power to transform Wushu in such a way: first, to explore the relevant knowledge; then, to make relevant discourse; finally, to transform the movements. To date, this transformation is still in process.

Through the Foucauldian lens, I can see beyond the surface history of Wushu and have developed a sociohistorical-political understanding of the 'artificial evolution' of Wushu since 1840. I use the term of 'artificial evolution' instead of 'natural evolution' because governments as the subjects of the power always play a key role in overseeing the development of Wushu.

It is quite possible that the Foucauldian lens can also be used to explore the culture, media, and communication of Wushu. However, Foucault reminds us that discourse should not be understood as a static entity [30], which means no given discourse will always dominate. Governors should reflect on how to oversee their traditions in the global world from the Foucauldian lens, too.

HIGHLIGHTS

This paper draws upon Foucault's theories on 'power-knowledge' and the 'political technology of the body', focuses on the post-1840s Chinese governments and studies how they governed martial arts, aiming to discover how Chinese martial arts becomes what it looks like today and what role governments should play in the process of arts.

I believe this paper is of importance to provide a new angle to view the evolution of indigenous combat sport. Further, this paper will be of interest to the readership of this journal because it examines how global forces affected changes in martial arts practice and policy and the impact those changes had on Chinese historical culture on a regional and local basis.

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