

*Original Paper*

Integration of National Complex and Sports Techniques: A  
View on the Historical Media of the Chinese Martial Arts from  
Unification of Martial Arts (1934-1935)

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**Abstract**

*The Unification of Martial Arts was an important publication about martial arts during the period of the Republic of China. As a media for communication, it exerted a huge positive impact on spreading traditional Chinese martial arts in its ways and the contents. Therefore, this paper explores this journal through the method of literature and logic analysis. The study finds that, in terms of the content spreading, Unification of Martial Arts mainly has analyzed the martial arts from its unified concept, its ambitious thought of building China into a powerful nation, the basic knowledge of martial arts, its history and the legendary stories related to it. In terms of the ways, photographs have become an important carrier of martial arts techniques and a way of expressing national complex. The communication and investigation have presented the readers with a learning platform for interaction. Meanwhile, the dissemination of information about other sports has broken through the limitation in martial arts communication, demonstrating the inclusive spirit in the sporting world.*

**Keywords**

*sports history, the development of martial arts, sports techniques, sports journals, Unification of Martial Arts*

**1. Introduction**

The phrase “Martial Arts” derived from the word “Wushu”, which appeared for the first time in the period of the Republic of China. The development of wushu has evolved into different factions with various fists. While in the early years of the Republic of China the propaganda of martial arts made the society give a high degree of recognition to wushu, which broke the harmony within the various

factions, resulting in constant disputes. All these have hampered the healthy development of wushu. In order to mitigate this phenomenon, the Central Martial Arts Hall was established as the most important government agency to publicize martial arts, and to promote and propaganda the movement of the unification of martial arts in the period of the Republic of China. With this in mind, the Central Martial Arts Hall adopted a series of measures to promote the unification of martial arts: the establishment of a unified martial arts committee to lead the unified movement of martial arts, the use of unified martial arts curriculum standards and teaching materials, the unification of the definition of martial arts related terms, the active support in the establishment of publications related to martial arts aiming at the promotion of the movement of the unification of martial arts. The purpose of the unification of martial arts was to take the national martial arts as the starting point to first unify the national martial arts to eliminate the factions and work together to develop a scientific martial art. On this basis, efforts were made to popularize martial arts and achieve the unification of martial arts with sport (Note 1). Zhang Zhijiang once said in the *Unification of Martial Arts* that the unification of martial arts never meant turning the diversified moves of wushu into a singular and monotonous action. Instead, it stands for developing martial arts in a scientific way in the combination of fresh knowledge so as to systematize and organize them in a more acceptable way (Note 2 & Note 3). Under the circumstances, the Unification of Martial Arts was established and the journal named *Unification of Martial Arts* was published.

The Journal of *Unification of Martial Arts* was founded in July 1934 by the Shanghai Unified Monthly of Martial Arts, the editor of which was a martial arts enthusiast, Jiang Xiahun who later compiled the book named *Illustration of Shaolin Fists*. He made friends with those of congenial ambitions, such as Zhu Minyi, Xu Zhiyi, Tang Fansheng (Tan Hao), Lu Weichang, Chen Zhenming, Hu Puan, Zhang Qidong, etc. Driven by the interest in martial arts, they advocated and organized the publication office of unified monthly of martial arts. The office was originally located in Rui Kangli at Rue Kraetzar and then relocated in the 190th at Chapsal Rue. Four months prior to the publication of the journal, the publication office published special issues of the unified martial arts in the supplement of *the Citizen* once a week. However, due to a series of problems hovering the journal, such as long intervals in supplement publication, the limited layout, excessive amount of manuscripts waiting for publication and poor emendation, the supplement naturally failed to meet the demand of the unified monthly magazine and the readers. Confronted with these challenges, Jiang Xiahun and other colleagues jointly set up the *Unification of Martial Arts* to popularize and specify wushu in a scientific way so as to carry martial arts forway (Note 4).

## **2. The Main Contents of Chinese Traditional Martial Arts Communication—Unification of Martial Arts**

*Unification of Martial Arts* was originally planned to publish for 10 periods, and cease publishing in

February and August, but according to the record in *National Chinese periodicals Joint Catalogue from 1833 to 1949*, among the existed *Unification of Martial Arts* (only a volume was left with 6 periods and divided into 4 copies), the third and the fourth period were published in a combination, so did the fifth and the sixth period. In the first issue, the main political leaders of the Republic of China like Lin Sen, Chiang Kai-shek, Sun Ke and Yu Youren wrote inscriptions for it. Zhu Minyi, a famous politician, diplomat and Taijiquan boxer of the Republic of China, wrote title for the journal and he expressed in the introduction that martial arts would be disciplined, systematic and programmatic with careful planning and academic theory. Then it would make due share contribution to the world and dominate in the sporting world so as to rival the bitter fighting western sports (Note 5). The principle of Unification of Martial Arts was to promote the Chinese traditional martial arts and at the same time spread the spirit within it (Note 6).

The main column of the journal included manifesto, theory, monograph, research, investigation, message, said court, historical material and miscellany. The articles published demolished the social issues with penetrating criticism with vivid and interesting pictures. In addition to the above mentioned Initiative members of “Unification of Martial Arts”, sports celebrities such as Zhang Zhijiang, Zhu Lian, Zhu Wenwei, Huang Wenshu once wrote articles for this journal.

In the *Declaration of Start Publication*, Jiang Xiahun once said that the purpose of creating this journal was to spread traditional Chinese martial arts and martial ethics within it so that the Chinese people could revive the glory and wash away their national humiliation (Note 7). He also believed that martial arts and its spirit were significant components: the former referred to the moves presented to the outside, while the latter talked about the internal spirit. The spread of Chinese traditional martial arts shall take the two factors into consideration. Therefore, the establishment of the *Unification of Martial Arts* was to present and spread Chinese traditional martial arts through words and articles. The contents were divided into five parts, which included unified concept, ambitious thought of building China into a powerful nation, the basic knowledge of martial arts, its history and the legendary stories related.

Popularity of “Unification of Martial Arts”: *Unification of Martial Arts* was funded when the movement of unification of martial arts was carried out. A glance at name of the journal rendered you a clear notion that it bolstered up and promoted the movement. Since the inception of *Unification of Martial Arts*, major politicians discussed the domestic status quo and military situation related to the unification of martial arts from an international perspective. For example, in the opening declaration of the second issue, Jiang Xiahun elaborated on the relationship between martial arts and unity. He thought that from the political perspective, the unification of martial arts rallied people to resist foreign enemies. Besides, to popularize martial arts would improve our physical health and strengthen our minds. Therefore, the unification of martial arts was necessary and served as the base of our nation, but the first thing we should do is to make it recognized by every citizen (Note 8). In order to promote the movement, the martial arts scholars keenly pointed out that “Chinese traditional fists shall be first

adopted for physical training in army and soldiers shall learn and practice two or more types of fists (Note 9). The unification of martial arts movement, not only promoted the harmony and unity among factions, but benefited for building a strong national physique and forging an indomitable spirit. When people at that time tried every means to popularize martial arts, they advocated for being broad-minded by drawing strengths in sports from other countries. It also means that when we upgrade martial arts and learn from others in a critical way, we shall broaden our horizon and identify the characteristics of sports from other nations in an impartial way. Besides, we shall take the economic condition of our nation into consideration so as to make a rational decision (Note 10). The *Unification of Martial Arts* was regarded as a major platform for idea exchange in martial arts. It closely followed the latest development in that field and the famous articles published rendered it an authoritative position.

The concept of building a powerful nation: Before *Unification of Martial Arts* was established, the Chinese nation was confronted with domestic trouble and foreign invasion. The foreign powers acted in collusion to invade us and the Japanese army started to set foot on China's territory (Note 11). Unfortunately, in face of these challenging situations, the Chinese people weakened both in physical strength and mental spirit. To revitalize the country, we must strengthen our body, enhance our physique through physical exercise and enhance our national self-confidence. In this case, the martial art, as a national sport, was vigorously promoted by the Chinese people. At the same time, the movement of unification martial arts distinguished wushu from sports of other countries. As the name "wushu" was replaced by "national martial arts (guo shu)", it recognized by more and more domestic and foreign friends. Besides, almost every article in the *Unification of Martial Arts* emphasized the importance of practicing martial arts in enhancing our physical strength and resisting foreign invaders. The guiding ideology of the *Unification of Martial Arts* aimed at defending aggressors and wiping out humiliations on the one hand and boosting the very foundation of our nation (Note 12). It asserted that "to promote the 'martial skill' and 'martial ethics' rooted in the genes of Chinese people equaled to rally all the people to scour away the shame engraved in the Chinese history" (Note 13). At the same time the slogan was shouted out that if we want to save the nation we must first make our people strong (Note 14), as the physical strength of our people closely relates to the power of a nation (Note 15). At that time in martial arts sector, an increasing number of patriotic scholars in martial arts tended to write articles for the *Unification of Martial Arts*. They proposed ways to improve wushu, introduced a certain type of fists in detail and published monographs of years' dedications. In their words, it was prone to discover that they were concerned about the future of our nation and the martial arts.

Discussion on "academic theory": *Unification of Martial Arts* was of great significance for research on the concept of martial arts, where the columns for theory, research and monograph were offered at every period. Some of the academic theories elaborated on the benefit of martial arts to human body and on how to better carry on the exercise. For example, Ye Liang thought wushu was a popular sport to "kill three birds with one stone", which means that learning martial arts could enhance physical and

mental strength as well as foster the ability on self-defense (Note 16). Besides, this sport requests simple equipment and is easy to teach with little expense on your money, time and physical strength (Note 17). In general, articles in *Unification of Martial Arts* conducted a comprehensive and detailed theoretical study on techniques of a specific martial art. The scope of research was also relatively broad, which involved archery, Kyudou, wrestling and other martial arts techniques. It was worth mentioning that the publication posted some articles with profound research on the theory of Taijiquan. Special articles on discussing Taijiquan were posted at each period. For example, in the two speech recording articles: *Mr. Zhu Minyi's Speech on Taiji Exercise Principle* and *Mr. Zhu Minyi's Speech on Taijiquan and the Movement*, the writer separately introduced the child martial arts basis—the advantage of learning Taiji Exercise, the relationship between “force” and “Qi” and the principle of “soft, slow and even pace” from his own experience of practicing Taiji Exercise and Taijiquan. The article was easy to understand with interesting story. Two articles named *Attentions on Learning Taijiquan* and *Taijiquan's advantages* from Xu Zhiyi scientifically elaborated on the advantages, techniques and attentions. *Scientific Internal strength Fists*, a long monograph from Zhang Naiqi, a patriotic democrat, was insightful and of great value for research. There were many articles and monographs introducing specific study methods and techniques of Taijiquan, such as *Taiji Exercise Handout*, *Illustration on Taijiquan*, *Research and practice of Taiji Exercise* and *General Taijiquan*, etc. These “textbooks” related to Taijiquan published in the Republic of China denied the obscured way of introduction but adopted a down-to-earth and humorous way. As such, these books reached more and more citizens and expanded the influence of Taijiquan.

A research on “the history of martial arts”: Relevant articles related to the history of martial arts represented a spotlight in *Unification of Martial Arts*. In addition to the first period, the remaining five periods provided with historical data columns, tracing the development of wushu and providing valuable historical research materials for later generations. In the second period, the successive inheritors of “Liu he ba fa fist” in every dynasties were carefully recorded. From the third to the sixth period, parts of the literature—*Archery History*—written by Cheng Chongdou in the Ming Dynasty were posted. Unfortunately, as *Unification of Martial Arts* was ended in the sixth period, only the preface and the *General catalogue of Archery History* were published without specific contents. Similarly, due to the limited periods, *Essentials of Yang Style taichi* from Huang Shuwen was concluded at the preface. An avalanche of scholars published their articles related to the history of martial arts in this journal, among whom Tang Hao (Tang Fansheng), a famous historian in martial arts and sports who published works like *Report on Japanese Martial Arts*, *Tang Han Martial Arts Document series*, *Ng Ga Kuen* and *Tang Hao Joint Document on Archery History*, was the most noteworthy and valuable writer. While studying in Japan, he witnessed the practice of Japanese martial arts, and realized the spirit of Japanese martial arts through his long time practice. Tanghao believed that the Japanese bayonet he studied in Japan had a strong practical value in martial arts (Note 18).

While in China, martial arts represented the final resort in battlefield with iron equipment and bloody scenes. As we knew that martial arts would be used to resist invaders, it shall be properly used because the villain's design of imperialists advocating martial arts learning is obvious (Note 19). With this in mind, He inspected the history and present situation of the development of Wushu in Japan when he visited Japan with his colleagues for Far East Sports Conference in the Boxing Day in 1930. After returning home, he published *Report on Japanese Martial Arts on the Unification of Martial Arts* to give an account of what he had seen in Japan. The report was divided into seven aspects: fist fight, Sumo, judo, fencing, spear, Kyudo, Tang Shou Shu (karate) and goshin-jitsu. Tang Hao carried on the detailed historical investigation on these seven types of martial arts, particularly on judo and Tang Shou Shu (karate). These articles played an important role in promoting the learning of practical martial arts and facilitating the exchanges between the China and Japan in this field (Note 20).

Apart from theories and researches related to martial arts, the *Unification of Martial Arts* also set columns to post miscellanies and Said Court. In miscellany, biographies and legends of martial arts were posted, such as *Mr. Zhang Lutang's Biography and Chinese Bushido Tales*. The stories depicting martial arts could be real or imaginary stories, but they all promoted martial spirit and chivalrous morality in thrilling scenes (Note 21). An article in *Chinese Bushido Tales* profoundly analyzed the martial spirit in of Confucius's speech, where Confucius said that a man that failed to bravely fight on the battlefield could not be regarded as a virtuous and gentleman. From his words it was not difficult to find that this sage spared no efforts to promote martial ethics (Note 22). In the column for Court Said, *Two Generals in Ping Wo*, a Chinese martial arts novel, was serialized, which mainly recorded the story of two heroic generals—Qi Jiguang garrisoned in Dingyuan and Yu Dayou garrisoned in Jinjiang, valiantly resisting Japanese invaders in Ming Dynasty. These legendary stories were of special meaning at that impoverished period when a weak nation was confronted with foreign invasion. It expressed the hope of the writers that they wished the Chinese people would carry forward the glorious stories of the two generals and realize their ambitious dream of totally dispelling Japanese army (Note 23). The legendary novels of martial arts never just meant a literature work for entertainment in that particular period, and it inspired readers who yearned for the prosperity of the country. These complied legendary novels of martial arts published were prone to spread the national value in martial arts. Meanwhile, they became more interesting and readable.

### **3. Unification of Martial Arts—A Media for the Spreading of Martial Arts**

Since its inception, *Unification of Martial Arts*, as a media for the spreading of martial arts, set the goal of being a guide and mentor in martial world (Note 24). Therefore, this journal distinguished itself from others in the form of media communication. For example, it was good at using pictures to convey the expression of martial arts skills and national complex and paid attention to the building of an academic platform among the interaction with readers. At the same time, it boldly broke through the boundaries

in spreading martial arts, demonstrating the inclusive spirit in the sporting world.

Photograph promulgating is an important carrier of martial arts techniques and national complex. As photograph was one of the most basic information dissemination methods in newspapers and magazines, photographs of martial arts featured prominently in the *Unification of Martial Arts* for its intuition and convenience in reading and learning. Beginners often failed to get the obscured point when moves of martial arts illustrated with words, while it was easy for them to learn when the moves and techniques presented in intuitive photographs. The accurate demonstrations in photographs made it possible for beginners to learn well every move and technique. For example, moves of how Zhu Mingyi pushed Taiji handball and how Tong Zhongyi, a member of the Chinese wrestling club, finished a difficult wrestling move were presented in photographs. Meanwhile, these photographs preserved were significant research materials for latecomers to learn and practice a certain technique. Photographs in the *Unification of Martial Arts* vividly presented a certain move on the one hand and uniquely portrayed the martial arts of different factions as well as the martial arts performance on the other. In addition, under that background, photographs presenting martial arts also acted as a carrier expressing the national complex. The national complex and the media often interacted with each other, especially when photographs specified the national complex and played an important role in public dissemination (Note 25) The *Unification of Martial Arts* set aside a whole page to post the photographs of martial arts performances in large-scale sports meetings and the big pictures of famous scholars in martial artists, which set a brilliant example in spreading the national features of martial arts. For example, the cover of this journal was the scene of opening ceremony where thousands of athlete practiced Taiji Exercise. A glance at the photograph rendered you a feeling of majestic momentum and nurtured a sense of national pride. In the second period, Shaolin Fists from a famous martial arts master, Zheng Zixiang covered the whole page, where muscular practitioners in shirtless gave a vivid expression of the ambition of enhancing physical health and defending our nation by practicing martial arts.

Communication and investigation in martial arts is the building of a learning platform for readers in interaction. Different from other sports journals with a main focus on promotion, *Unification of Martial Arts* gave emphasis on the exchange and exploration of martial arts with readers. From the second to sixth period, the special column of communication of martial arts Association was set for exchanging ideas among readers. The purpose of it was to reply and provide consultation for those who have any questions about martial arts and published articles in this journal (Note 26). The communication between readers and editors was classified into two types: question and suggestion. The questions from readers varied from person to person. Some took a bigger picture in mind by asking the unification the development history of martial arts, while others consulted a certain type of fist and did a research on a certain article. As the *Unification of Martial Arts* exerted enormous influence in martial arts spreading, some readers suggested recommending several martial arts gyms and qualified martial arts teachers.

Editors like Jiang Hunxia and Xu Zhiyi and other colleagues carefully replied all these questions and took their suggestions. In this interacting process, the learning and research of martial arts was upgraded to a higher level. In addition, *Unification of Martial Arts* remained committed to serving the public from their stances. At the request of readers, some details of the martial arts masters and groups concerned by the readers were introduced in the part of letters from readers and an investigation bulletin board was also set up, where information about domestic large-scale martial arts pavilions, stadiums and martial arts schools collected through field investigation was presented to benefit readers. Among these, information about *Outline of Shanghai Martial Arts Museum*, *General Information about Taiyuan Martial Arts* and *General Regulations for the Enrollment of Students by Sports College* was included. Surveys closely related to national education recording martial arts venues and groups formed a unique social memory of martial arts.

Other sports information break through the limitations in martial arts communication with an inclusive spirit in the sporting world. Special column was given to *Messages* in each period of the *Unification of Martial Arts* to report the events of martial arts like martial arts training, competitions and book publication. However, the content of “Unification of Martial Arts” was not confined to martial arts. Instead, most popular sports events at that time were presented in the journal. Sports education information like *Advocate for Sports For All by Chiao Tung University*, *Implementation of Sports For All by Da Xia University* and *Summer Sports Seminar Graduation Ceremony* as well as news about sports meetings like *the Opening Ceremony of the 18th North China Game* and *Zhang Yuan Women’s Sports Assembly* were included. All the messages above were from the reports and records the current sports events. In the report, two articles were noteworthy. The first one was a panoramic report named *Chinese Mermaid—Yang Xiuqiong’s visit to Jiang Xi Province*. Yang Xiuqiong was a famous swimming actress during the Republic of China, known as the “Mermaid”. Editors believed that swimming was originally very important in martial arts (Note 27), so when the famous swimmer, Yang Xiuqiong paid visit to Jiang Xi Province to attend the sports meeting, her detailed schedule was covered coupled with news related to sports. The second one was *Memories of the Participation in the National Games in 1933*, which was an experiential memory reports from the participators. This article was published in three installments, where the editors recorded detailed information as participators and recorders when athlete attended the opening ceremony to joined in the sports events. These articles published in *Unification of Martial Arts*, broken through the boundaries in professional magazines. They reported some key events related to sports, showing an inclusive spirit in the sporting world.

#### 4. Conclusion

*Unification of Martial Arts* comprehensively and fully recorded the development of martial arts in the movement of Unification of Martial Arts. It spread martial arts culture in the professional perspective and promotes national unity. The historical records of martial arts, the research of martial arts theory



and the explanation of martial arts techniques were important documents for studying the martial arts in the period of the Republic of China, but there were some limitations in this journal. First, some articles published were taken from folk rumors without meticulous investigation. For example, the description of Wang Zongyue in *Mr. Zhang Sanfeng's Biography* compiled by Xu Shusheng published in the combined third and fourth period was from folk rumors without any historical basis. In the combined fifth and sixth period, an article named *Magic Spear of Yang Family in Song Dynasty* posted at the column for historical material was from unconvincing rumors. From the overall perspective of the dissemination of martial arts culture, the *Unification of Martial Arts* could be regarded as a high quality and popular Wushu journal as it was of important reference value for the study of the propagation of martial arts for later generations.

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