

# Discussion on Intercommunication, Mutual Learning, and Common Development between Chinese Martial Arts and Japanese Bushido

Jiachen Li<sup>1,\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup> China University of Petroleum (East China) Qingdao, Shandong 266580

\*Li Jiachen, female, Han nationality, born in Baoding, Hebei Province in April 1997, master's candidate, mainly studying Chinese international education, E-mail: 942069112@qq.com

## ABSTRACT

China and Japan are neighboring countries, separated by only a strip of water, with a long history of in history, the two countries have exchanged and learned from each other in many aspects. Martial arts are an important part of Chinese culture and some boxing techniques such as Kendo, karate and Taijiquan (Tai Chi) in Japan originate from China. Although there is a "blood tie" between the cultures of the two countries, there is a gap between the development of Chinese martial arts and Japanese Bushido. There are two purposes of finding out the path of intercommunication, mutual learning and common development between Chinese martial arts and Japanese Bushido. One of the two is to help people further understand the exchanges between and development history of Chinese martial arts and Japanese Budo, help the Chinese people further understand the long-standing, broad and profound Chinese culture, and improve the Chinese people's cultural consciousness and cultural self-confidence. The other is to find out the advantages and disadvantages in the development process of Chinese martial arts and Japanese martial arts, especially the reasons why Japanese Bushido can be modernized earlier for the two countries with the same cultural origin, to let the two countries to learn from each other's strengths to make up for their weaknesses, so that they can go farther and farther on the road of internationalization.

**Keywords:** Chinese martial arts, Japanese Bushido, intercommunication and mutual learning, modernization transformation.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At present, most of the researches on Chinese traditional martial arts focus on their conventions, noumenon and traditional value. However, there are few researches that compare Chinese traditional martial arts with other countries' to find out the new development direction of Chinese ones. Starting from the historical origin of Chinese traditional martial arts and Japanese Bushido, this paper describes the path of mutual learning and development of the both, thus providing new ideas for the further development of Chinese traditional martial arts.

## 2. HISTORY OF INTERCOMMUNICATION AND MUTUAL LEARNING BETWEEN CHINESE AND JAPANESE MARTIAL ARTS

China and Japan are geographically close to each other, and multiple sea lanes between the two countries. According to Jianzhen Lun, the route of Jian Zhen sailing to Japan is the shortest route, one route from Ningbo, China to a place near Nagasaki, Japan. Another route is from Ningbo to Ryukyu, on which we can sail with the west wind to Ryukyu and then sail with southeast wind to Japan. In ancient times, Chinese and Japanese people carried out cultural exchanges through these sea routes.

### ***2.1 Since Qin Dynasty, China and Japan started martial arts exchanges***

In the Qin Dynasty, Qin Shihuang wanted to live forever, so he sent Xu Fu and several peoples to help him get the elixir from an island. Xu Fu's team came to Japan after enduring untold hardships and sufferings and introduced many advanced Chinese cultures to Japan, including swordsmanship, planting and cultivation technology. Until now, there is still a Xufu temple in Japan. Some scholars believe that Xufu is the founding emperor of Japan – Emperor Jimmu.<sup>[1]</sup> This is the earliest record that Chinese Traditional martial arts were first introduced into Japan.

### ***2.2. During Tang Dynasty, a prosperous period of Wushu exchanges between China and Japan***

Japanese “emissary to China during the Tang Dynasty” has sailed to China more than twelve times through sail routes. At that time, there were also people in China who went to Japan for cultural exchanges, such as eminent Buddhist monk Jianzhen, who created the Japanese law school. Some cultures of the Tang Dynasty, such as architecture, health care and pharmacy, were also introduced into Japan by him. The introduction of these Chinese cultures caused quite a stir in Japan and made more and more Japanese want to come and visit China for exchanges. For example, a Japanese Saicho came and study in Tiantai Sect, in Tiantai Mountain of Zhejiang Province and brought what he learned there back to Japan. During his study in China, he also learned some Chinese boxing taught by Zhizhuan, the founder of Tiantai Sect, and this boxing is the origin of Taizhou Nanquan (Southern Boxing). Saicho later brought the learned boxing back to Japan for dissemination. Many moves of Japanese karate come from Taizhou Nanquan (Southern Boxing) and Wenzhou Nanquan (Southern Boxing). Mr. Ling Yaohua, a famous martial arts coach in Zhejiang Province, once said, “Karate originated from China and localized some Zhejiang ancient martial arts by Japan” and “it is the product of combining Ryukyū ancient martial arts and Chinese boxing imported to Japan”.<sup>[2]</sup>

### ***2.3. Further exchanges between Chinese and Japanese martial arts during the period of the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms and the Song Dynasty***

The Japanese landed in Ningbo, close to the capital of the Southern Song Dynasty. Many Japanese people came to China for exchanges, such as envoys, businessmen and scholars, and even Japanese monks. These people often brought many Confucian works and scriptures back to

Japan and told the Japanese people what they had seen and heard in China. At that time, some sports activities such as riding, shooting, and Cuju (kickball) were very popular in Lin'an City, and the Japanese who came to China also introduced these traditional Chinese sports activities back to Japan. Meanwhile, Japanese were good at making swords, so they also brought the skills of making swords to China. For this reason, Ouyang Xiu, a famous Chinese scholar in the Song Dynasty, once wrote Japanese Sword Song, in which he spoke highly of Japan's excellent sword making technique many times. This kind of techniques was loved by the Chinese people at that time.

### ***2.4. In the Ming Dynasty, Chinese martial arts became prosperous, but the exchanges with Japan in Japanese Bushido had a bumpy road***

Due to financial problems, Japan decided to exchange tributes for copper cash with the government of the Ming Dynasty, so Japan transported some of its own tribute to China and the government of the Ming Dynasty paid for their tributes. It is also mentioned in the book on the art of war Battle Array that Japan took swords as tributes in exchange for copper cash, and the government of the Ming Dynasty bought more than 46,900 Japanese swords with good quality. In the Warring States period of Japan, due to the fight against Japanese pirates and the Korean War, the relationship between China and Japan broke. At that time, the Tokugawa Shogunate promulgated and implemented the close-door policy, and the Ming government also promulgated and implemented the ban on maritime trade or intercourse with foreign countries. The two governments stopped exchanges. However, the two countries still had non-governmental exchanges, and Japanese businessmen and scholars still came to China by ship for exchanges.

### ***2.5. In the Qing Dynasty, the martial arts exchange broke the deadlock between the two countries and further developed***

In the third year of the reign of Emperor Shunzhi of the Qing Dynasty, both China and Japan allowed their businessmen to conduct cultural exchanges between the two countries and encouraged trade exchanges between the two countries. At that time, many people with excellent martial arts in China voluntarily went to Japan and spread Chinese traditional martial arts. For example, Chen Yuanyun from Hangzhou learned martial arts in Songshan Shaolin Temple in Henan Province when he was a boy and became a master of martial arts. Later he went to Japan and became a hanger-on of an aristocrat, and then went to Guozheng temple to teach Chinese traditional martial arts during the Edo period of Japan. In Japan, Yichen Miura and Masayoshi Fukuno are known

as the ancestors of Medieval Japanese jujitsu and they were both disciples of Chen Yuanyun. Until now, there is still a monument set up for Chen Yuanyun in Tokyo, Japan. Zhu Shunshui from Zhejiang, China once known as a rare versatile man of literature and martial arts, also went to Japan to spread Chinese traditional culture, including some health preserving knowledge and Chinese traditional martial arts. Chen Cairuo also went to Nagasaki, Japan to teach the art of riding and shooting, and Yoshihiro Fukuda from Tokugawa Shogunate, was once his apprentice. Besides, Shen Dacheng and Zhang Canruo have also been to Japan to spread Chinese traditional martial arts, and both of them have had a great impact on the development of Japanese martial arts.

### **3. EXPLORATION OF A DEVELOPMENT ROAD OF MODERN JAPAN BUSHIDO BY LEARNING FROM CHINESE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS**

According to Chapter I, it can be found that Japanese fencing, karate and Tai Ji Quan (also known as Tai Chi) all originate from China. Understanding the impact of Chinese traditional martial arts on Japanese Bushido is not only conducive to improving the cultural consciousness and cultural self-confidence of the Chinese people, but also conducive to the further development of martial arts of the two countries.

#### ***3.1. Appreciate and learn from Chinese traditional culture, and absorb Chinese culture with an inclusive attitude***

In 1862, the Japanese government sent envoys to China for trade exchanges. Representatives of the Japanese reform and reform school, such as the famous Japanese samurai Nakata Cangzhizhu, Takasugi Shinsaku and Wudai Caizhu, also came and study in China and conducted economic and cultural exchanges with the Chinese people. Furthermore, they summarized some experiences and lessons they considered useful in China's development from what they saw and heard in China, so as to explore the road of reform and development suitable for Japan. Afterwards, they believed that Japan's comprehensive national strength can be further developed only by reforming Japan's political system, enhancing the development of Japanese weapons, improving the quality of the army to provide a good environment for domestic development.

#### ***3.2. Japan was not satisfied with only learning from China's development experience at that time, so it also turned its attention to the advanced western sports culture, integrated Chinese and Western cultures, and reasonably studied the excellent Eastern and Western cultures in combination with the actual situation of Japan at that time, to find a development path with Japanese characteristics***

Japan has enhanced its comprehensive national strength through reform. However, Japan never stops learning from the outside world and development. In the early stage of "civilization", Japan decided to understand and absorb some Western civilizations. However, at first, Japan fully accepted Western civilizations and spared no effort to emulate the West but the traditional culture with Japan characteristics has been hit so hard, and instead of making progress, Japanese society fell into endless darkness. Later, the Japanese elite realized the seriousness of this problem, so they started to explore how to better integrate Japanese traditional culture with western advanced culture and experience, which became the main problem faced by the samurai elite. Later, after continuous screening and transformation, they put forward the idea of "the foreign culture Japanized", and this idea has also become the main basis for guiding Japan's modernization transformation. Therefore, Japan start to reasonably learn the excellent Eastern and Western cultures by taking the traditional Confucian ethics of "being patriotic and loyal to the throne and adhering to the root of loyalty and filial piety" as the main guiding ideology, and "the foreign culture Japanized" as the guideline for learning Western civilization.

#### ***3.3. Learn about the condition of Japan learning from Chinese martial arts gradually through the investigation***

Chinese martial arts first appeared in the Japan news report in 1897, but an imperial martial arts examination in the Qing Dynasty were mainly written in in the report, instead of martial arts, and the Boxer Movement that shocked China and foreign countries, and some introductions of Shaolin Temple were also included in the report. Martial arts appeared as the main topic in Japanese news reports in 1938. The report mainly included the comparison of Chinese traditional martial arts with karate and judo described in Japanese popular novels at that time, so that the Japanese people have a better understanding of Chinese traditional martial arts.

## **4. EXPLORATION OF A NEW DEVELOPMENT DIRECTION OF MODERN CHINESE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS BY LEARNING FROM JAPANESE BUSHIDO**

### ***4.1. Development of modern Chinese Traditional martial arts and Japanese Bushido***

Although Japan learned more from Chinese traditional culture in the early stage, and the cultures of the two countries share the same origin, from the perspective of the development of martial arts in the two countries, the international impact of Chinese traditional martial arts is far behind that of Japanese Bushido. The Olympic Games enjoy a high reputation around the world. The highest goal of individual sports is to become an Olympic sport, because the individual sport entering the Olympic Games will be widely disseminated and meantime the country's image on the international stage will be improved. Therefore, one of the criteria for successful modernization transformation of an individual sport is that the individual sport becomes an Olympic event. There are many martial arts events in Japan, such as judo and karate, included in the Olympic Games. This reflects the advanced nature of Japanese budo in the modernization transformation. 2008 Beijing Olympic Games successfully held in China, the martial arts performance in the Olympic Games astounded the people all over the world, and Chinese traditional martial arts were connected with the Olympic Games for the first time. However, traditional martial arts did not develop as well as expected after the Beijing Olympic Games. The first time for martial arts to enter the Olympic Games is January 8, 2020, on which martial arts became an official event of the Fourth Youth Olympic Games. Therefore, China lags behind Japan in the modernization transformation of traditional martial arts, and we should learn from the development mode of Japanese martial arts to speed up the modernization transformation of our martial arts.

### ***4.2. The intercommunication between Japanese Bushido and Chinese traditional martial arts and the new enlightenment of martial arts development***

#### ***4.2.1. Both Japanese Bushido and Chinese traditional martial arts focus on innovation and keep pace with the times***

After "haitōrei edict" and "weapon ban", Japanese judo, Kendo and karate have made innovations to varying degrees, turning the previous means used for fight into today's sports events. For example, in the mid-19th

century, Mr. Kano Jigoro, an educator and former president of Tokyo Higher Normal University, absorbed their advantages after studying various jujitsu schools and founded a new jujitsu in 1882 - judo, which focuses on throwing technique, holding technique and atemi-waza, and aims at victory, sports and spiritual cultivation.<sup>[3]</sup> This kind of judo has absorbed the advantages of Tianshen Zhenyang school and Qidao school, and has been continuously reformed and innovated and removed the high-risk parts and finally become today's judo. In ancient times, swordsmanship was originally a technique used to kill people, but today's swordsmanship has become a way to keep fit. All Japan Kendo Federation once defined Kendo as "Kendo is the way to form personality (studying the excellent quality of personal talent and making efforts to practice wholeheartedly...) by virtue of the principles and methods of practicing sword (including the tangible and intangible correct principles).<sup>[4]</sup> All of these reflect Japan's spirit of focusing on reform and innovation.

New enlightenment: Both countries pay attention to innovation, but they have differences in some details. After innovation, Japanese Bushido has simplified the moves, which is more convenient and easy to learn than before and more suitable for the requirements of competitive competitions. However, China has not done as well as Japan in traditional martial arts. It is urgently needed for us to know how to gradually simplify Chinese martial arts and gradually realize its modernization transformation. This inspires us to push through the old and bring forth the new on the basis of retaining the essence of the culture in traditional martial arts, and integrate competitive performance and fighting skills, so as to make traditional martial arts more suitable for the requirements of sports competition to be better accepted and studied by the people in the world, and better walk towards the world and the future.

#### ***4.2.2. Japanese Bushido's emphasis on "entering Bushido with martial arts" and Chinese traditional martial arts' emphasis on "advocating martial morality" show that both countries pay attention to the construction of spiritual civilization***

The National Martial arts academic seminar was grandly held in 1987. It is considered as a moral norm for people who practice martial arts. Traditional martial arts pay attention to respecting coaches, eliminating evil and promoting good. The teaching between teachers and apprentices is strict. It has its own set of moral system. It pays attention to the cultivation of martial ethics before learning specific martial arts moves. Therefore, it has continuously formed a set of handling style and moral model of martial arts practitioners. It is an inheritance of

Chinese civilization and shows the connotation of Chinese traditional culture.

New enlightenment: Japan's concept of "entering the Tao with martial arts" urges it to improve its personality and ideological quality by constantly standardizing its body and mastering martial arts skills in the process of martial arts practice. This is a reference for the development of Chinese Martial arts. In recent years, as some items of Chinese Martial arts want to join the Olympic Games as soon as possible and are constantly impacted by the wave of economic and cultural globalization and cross-cultural communication, Chinese Martial arts has gradually focused on continuously improving the competitive level and strengthening Martial arts training, while gradually ignoring the previous emphasis on "martial ethics", and did not improve competitive technology and improve personality like Japan Carry forward traditional culture at the same time. Therefore, in the process of publicizing and developing traditional Martial arts, we should not forget the cultivation of "martial ethics". Only in this way can Chinese Samurai be more vivid and attractive.

#### *4.2.3. Both Japanese Bushido and Chinese Traditional Martial arts pay attention to absorbing the strengths of others and are open and inclusive*

Japanese culture was once summed up as a modernization model of "scientific and technological culture + democracy + traditional culture" by Mr. Kato, a domestic scholar.<sup>[5]</sup> This reflects the compatibility and economy pursued by Japanese culture. Take the process of judo entering the Olympic Games as an example. At the beginning, some rules and systems of judo did not meet the requirements of the Olympic Games, such as some competitive technology, and clothing color. However, to further develop, judo entered the Olympic Games early, changed the rules of Judo to adapt to the Olympic Games, and only retained the original throwing method. Similarly, karate has also made a series of changes to enter the Olympic Games, such as the weight level system of players. This reflects the strong openness, inclusiveness and the ability to judge the hour and size up the situation of Japanese culture. The development of Chinese martial arts is also open and inclusive. The Chinese government has launched a series of martial arts organizations, some international, some intercontinental, and has also held many world-oriented martial arts competitions.

New enlightenment: Although both Chinese and Japanese martial arts cultures are open and inclusive, Japan is ahead of China in the process of entering the Olympic Games. Therefore, to further enter the Olympic

Games, Chinese martial arts should learn to size up the situation, take a more inclusive attitude, maintain its own excellent culture and make some changes to comply with the rules of the Olympic Games.

#### *4.3. Taking the development of Bushido in Japan as a mirror, I summarize some new development directions of Chinese martial arts in the future*

##### *4.3.1. Chinese martial arts needs to further reduce the difficulty of competitive technology, make some changes in rules to adapt to the Olympic Games, promote the modernization transformation of martial arts, and lay the foundation for entering the Olympic Games*

At present, some problems faced by modernization transformation of Chinese martial arts are international influence to be improved, the scattered organizational structure and immature, single management and organizational system. To solve these problems, we can learn from Japan's modernization transformation and development process.

Japan has repeatedly ranked first in the list of national images, and this is closely related to the development of Bushido in Japan. Japanese Bushido relies on Japanese national culture, and its judo and karate events have entered the Olympic Games after continuous adjustment and standardization, helping shape Japan's national image. China should be aware of this point, promote some individual events in China to enter the Olympic Games as soon as possible, and enhance China's international image.

According to the study of Japanese Bushido, we can find that it has two obvious advantages for popularization. Firstly, some of its moves and actions are easier to learn and train. Secondly, it is divided into two parts to meet the needs of the times, namely, technical drill and actual combat. These two parts develop separately without conflict. Chinese martial arts have been gradually transformed into the form of gymnastics to become the international competition events, but this form has strict requirements for technology and includes more difficulty moves, as well as the requirements for aesthetic on the basis of completing the moves. So it is difficult to learn and it has high requirements for the quality of learners, making it difficult to be popularized. Therefore, traditional martial arts can adapt to the rules of the Olympic Games, reduce the difficulty of moves, and develop in two directions of traditional routine performance and competitive technology (such as Sanda). As mentioned above, traditional routine

performance can develop through the stage, film and television drama and multi-media channels to improve its influence.

*4.3.2. We should develop the cultural connotation and competitive technology of martial arts at the same time, and know how to filter foreign culture, absorb and integrate advanced sports culture*

In the development of traditional martial arts, there is a phenomenon of paying attention to the development of competitive technology but ignoring the publicity of traditional cultural connotation. Chinese traditional martial arts rely on thousands of years of Chinese traditional culture. The highest state of martial arts is the integration of "essence", "Qi" and "spirit", but this has not been popularized in the development of traditional martial arts. We can explore more works about the spiritual level of Chinese traditional martial arts in various forms. The cultural connotation of martial arts also includes some excellent qualities of Confucianism, such as "benevolence", "righteousness", "propriety", "wisdom" and "faith", which can also be displayed by means of multimedia. In short, more attention paid to the Chinese excellent traditional culture contained in traditional martial arts is also a new idea for the further development and influence of Chinese traditional martial arts.

## **5. OBSTACLES OF THE MODERNIZATION TRANSFORMATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS AND ITS OTHER NEW DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

*5.1. After comparing the development of Chinese traditional martial arts with that of Japanese Bushido in different periods, I summarize the following five main factors that hinder the internationalization of Chinese traditional martial arts*

1. Chinese traditional martial arts have an overcomplicated system, with various types of boxing and difficult moves and techniques, and this does not help improve learners' initiative and enthusiasm, nor does it meet the requirements of the Olympic Games.

2. The modern Olympic Games rely on Western civilization, and most of the sports included belong to western sports. However, Chinese traditional martial arts rely on the extensive and profound Chinese traditional culture. Therefore, Eastern and Western civilizations must be run in properly to make Chinese traditional martial arts enter the Olympic Games as soon as possible.

3. In the development process, Chinese traditional martial arts gradually focus on the development of

competitive technology but ignore Chinese traditional cultural transmission, and its scientific theoretical system is also incomplete and unscientific.

*5.2. Besides, I have the following suggestions for the development of Chinese Traditional martial arts*

*5.2.1. Increase the support and publicity by the government, and publicize Chinese traditional martial arts by diversified means*

As science and technology develops, communication means are becoming more and more diversified, and multimedia technology is developing rapidly. We can vigorously publicize Chinese traditional martial arts through TV, movies, websites, microblogs and other means. Since last year, a short video wave has emerged, with the characteristics of great influence, attraction and strong communication. Chinese traditional martial arts can be publicized in various interesting forms through the short video platform on the basis of maintaining the essence of Chinese traditional culture. In recent years, Confucius Institutes have been built in many countries. For this reason, we can add the traditional martial arts curriculum to Confucius Institutes to and promote the dissemination of traditional martial arts.

*5.2.2. Continuously improve the theoretical system of martial arts and simplify the system and moves of traditional martial arts*

China needs to increase investment in the scientific research of traditional martial arts theory, organize the existing traditional martial arts theory, find out the limitations and find methods to further improve the theory, further promote the development of traditional martial arts by relevant scientific research achievements, and strive to create a theoretical system of traditional martial arts with Chinese characteristics. Furthermore, we should constantly streamline the system and moves of traditional martial arts and constantly standardize the rules of traditional martial arts, so that the martial arts can be more easily accepted by other countries and meet the requirements of the Olympic Games.

*5.2.3. Pay attention to the quality of traditional martial arts coaches, cultivate coaches' language, and promote the international development of traditional martial arts*

In addition to adding traditional martial arts to the domestic school curriculum, we should also consider the teaching of martial arts learners from other countries and the martial arts teaching in the Confucius Institute. This requires the martial arts coaches to have the ability to speak multiple languages. Our country may promulgate

policies to strengthen the cultivation of such coaches. Meanwhile, we can encourage students majoring in Chinese international education to learn Chinese traditional martial arts and cultivate their ability to deal with various problems. Besides, we should provide more development opportunities for more excellent students or coaches, send them to study in foreign sports colleges or provide opportunities for internships abroad, and we should also pay attention to the cultivation of these talents.

## 6. CONCLUSION

For the existing system of traditional Chinese martial arts, which is too complex with various boxing forms and difficult actions and techniques, first of all, we can step up the government support and publicity, using diversified means to promote traditional Chinese martial arts. Secondly, it is necessary to constantly improve the theoretical system of Wushu and streamline its traditional forms and actions. At the same time, attention ought to be paid to the quality of traditional Wushu teachers, whose language ability should be prompted so as to facilitate the international development of Wushu. Finally, boost Wushu training to the world by building training centers in various places, and publicize sports culture with the people of different countries as the carrier. As the saying goes, "stones from other hills may serve to polish jade". Learning from the excellent experience of Japanese Bushido is conducive to the further development of Chinese traditional martial arts.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Niu Jianzhuang, Wan Xupeng, Liu Jie, et al. New Investigation of the Development Strategy of Chinese Wushu -- from the Japanese Judo' s Entry of the Olympic Games[J]. *Wushu Studies*, 2020,5(10):5-7.
- [2] Zhou Chunhui. A Comparative Study on Modernization Transformation of Chinese and Japanese Martial Arts (bushido) from the Perspective of "Entering the Olympic Games" [D]. Suzhou University, 2020.
- [3] Shi Xiaojun. The formation of the legend about Xu Fu's eastward sea-voyage to Japan come into being — the evolution from "the legend of crossing the sea to seek an elixir" to "the legend of sailing eastward to Japan"[J]. *Cross-linguistic & Cross-cultural Studies*, 2019(00):3-40
- [4] Dong Zihong, He Duan. *Kendo - the quintessence of martial arts in Japan*. Beijing:Beijing Sport University Press, 1998.
- [5] Ye Weiqu. Japan's Mixed Culture and Its Modernization [EB/OL], <http://www.people.com.cn/GB/paper68/2274/360693.html>.