

# 太极文化与中国形象的建构——以 1947 年《太极拳》英译为例

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**摘要：目的：**太极拳作为一种集格斗技术、中国哲学、中国传统医学、导引养生、军事战略于一体的武术门类，在其漫长的发展演变中从传统擂台舞台上的动作身法转写成语言文字，并被翻译成多国语言，覆盖并丰富了全球各国人民的生活，尤其也对西方身体文化和哲学产生相关影响。然而，国内外学界对于太极拳译本中有关中国文化身份和中国形象的建构却鲜有研究。对此，本文对 1947 年版《太极拳》英文本进行描述性的个案研究，以期了解早期英语世界读者对太极拳的认知和接受，探讨太极拳译介主体在太极拳文化译介早期的文化身份及其建构的中国形象，并为太极拳文化英译提供启迪和借鉴。**方法：**采用描述性的研究方法，对 1947 年版《太极拳》英文本进行文本分析和副文本分析，考察该英文本及其所处的 20 世纪 40 年代译入语文化视域和读者接受的历史语境下的中国文化外译和形象。本研究以译学研究中的文化认同理论为基础，结合 20 世纪太极拳作为社会改革和民族国家建设的工具理念，尝试梳理太极拳现代化演进的历史过程。**结果：**1947 年版《太极拳》至今由海外不同出版社接连再版 17 次，流传已达 70 余年，是目前发现的首个系统英译太极拳拳理拳技的出版物，是一部不容忽视的经典文本。1) 20 世纪上半叶，中国社会在政治、军事、教育、体育等各方面经历了多重改革和组建，中国武术相应也经历了一轮又一轮的起落兴衰。自 20 世纪早期一批武术学校先后成立，同时现代学校也不断引进西式的教学方法和体育活动，而以宗族师徒为传承方式的传统武术训练则逐渐没落，面向社会市场的培训也开始兴起并影响武术教学。除此之外，口传心授的传统方式也逐步由武术书籍公开发售和普及阅读所取代式微，其中尤以太极拳的图书著述最众，见证了当时太极文化建构的一个高峰。2) 1947 年版《太极拳》英文本最初是根据陈炎林（1906 年-?）所编著的《太极拳、刀、剑、干、散手集》写成。陈炎林是田兆麟(1891 年-1959 年)的太极拳学生，而田兆麟则系太极拳家杨澄甫(1883-1936)的弟子。该英文本不仅保留了传统太极拳的主要内容和风格，同时也吸收了西方现代出版的理念和科学创新的思想。该书大致可分为四个部分，即作者前言、目录、正文和索引。全书正文共 183 页，五个部分，共 16 章，包括“太极图”、人体力学解析图、相关步法演示图和注释。该书可被视为在当时西方文化和

现代科学的影响下而产生的一本结构清楚、体例规范的身体活动图解指南。3) 1947 年版《太极拳》英文本在第一部分首次用英语清晰简明地回答了三个重要问题：a) 什么是太极拳？b) 什么是拳术？c) 什么是太极拳？书中指出，太极是“中国哲学的一个微妙体系”；拳术是“用来调节血液循环，伸展韧带，发展骨骼，加深呼吸的体育运动”；而太极拳是“拳术的一个分支”，是“基于太极学说演化而成的打斗技能，其形式遵从太极图所含原理，包含阴阳、死生、刚柔、动静等理念”。该英文本从现代科学的角度介绍了太极拳作为一项体育运动的属性功效和哲学内涵，还从生理学、动力学、心理学、生命伦理学等现代科学的角度探讨了太极拳的科学价值和实用价值。该书第三、四、五部分介绍了太极拳基本动作、108 式和推手大捋技法的名称及要领，并附有步法演示图片和索引。此外，第一部分第四章（“太极拳习练的一些效果”）对太极拳的医疗保健功效也进行了全面的总结。总的来说，该书将太极拳作为一个全面、系统、包罗万象的有机整体介绍给西方读者，在一定程度上是 20 世纪传统太极拳健康观的英语起源。4) 尽管 1947 年版《太极拳》英文本的初译者仍然有待考证，但参与该书语言审校的两教授陈述（Kwei Chen, 1902-1990）和葛传棗（Hertz C. K. Ke, 1906-1992）也为太极拳的英译做出了贡献。这两位英语名家以各自深厚的语言功底和国际视野保证了该书的语言美；而出版发行机构 Kelly & Walsh Limited，又名别发印书馆、别发洋行，作为当时世界知名的出版机为该书的海外传播和推广提供便利，为太极拳的海外传播和接受做出了贡献。他们的参与可以被认为是促成该书经典意义的外在因素，并可以从四个维度来解释其经典性：a) 内容的丰富性；b) 实质的创造性；c) 时空的超越性；d) 无限的可读性。5) 本研究提出该英文本主要采用了增补、删减和比较兼评价等方法，在文本中建构了现代太极文化和太极中国人形象，指出该英文本反映了译介主体了解并把握西方读者有关健康与福祉的理解和阅读期待，以建构主义的方式和科学翻译观把太极拳及其开放体系译介给世界，进而促成了太极拳在西方世界的友好接受。该英文本在一定程度上通过改写传统拳书的内容，用科学现代的语言简洁明了地表述太极拳的实效，并用副文本和赞助人等多元方式来推广太极拳和中国文化，甚至顺利地将中国武术编写成了一门英语科学。**结论：**1947 年版《太极拳》是目前最早系统译介太极拳知识及拳理拳技的英文图书。它生动地反映了自 1840 年鸦片战争后中华民族被动挨打的历史形势下中国知识精英坚定民族优秀传统文化自信，以刚健自强的精神和行动积极地重建了中国人形象的努力。它是中华文化翻译史上中国人主动挖掘、整理、传承武术文化成果并主动外译的成功案例，也是考虑到异域受众对中华传统文化的无知及中西文化的巨大差异时

研究太极拳、中华武术、中华体育、传统中医、中华文化史的宝贵文献。这英文本不仅满足了当时目标读者/读者对中国和中国传统文化的好奇，也展现了 20 世纪 40 年代社会风云变幻之际中国知识精英的文化自信和翻译思想。

**关键词：**太极拳；翻译；文化认同；文化建设；跨文化交际

## Constructing taiji culture and Chinese image: A case study on taijiquan translation from T'ai-Chi Ch'üan in 1947

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**Abstract: Objective:** As a martial arts with the combination of combat techniques, Chinese philosophy, traditional Chinese medicine, longevity practices, military tactics in China, Taijiquan has been translated from stage into page and into multiple languages with increasing popularity and global reach, thus facilitating its impact on Western body culture and philosophy. However, there has been little research on the reconstruction of cultural identity and image in these translations. To address this issue, the present paper provides a descriptive case study of the English Translation of *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan: Its Effects and Practical Applications* (《太极拳》) published in 1947. **Methods:** The paper takes a descriptive approach, carries out both textual and paratextual analysis of *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan: Its Effects and Practical Applications*, and examine it and the Chinese image constructed in the historical context within which it was read and received in the target culture in the 1940s. The study proposes a framework based on the theoretical discussions of cultural identity in translation along with a historical review of the modernization of taijiquan in line with ideals of physical fitness as a tool for social reform and nation building in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. **Results:** As it is the first English taijiquan book with the earliest version of *Taijiquan Classic* and over 17 versions reprints by different presses in the past over 70 years, *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan* is a canonical text that cannot be ignored. 1) During the first half of the 20th century the Chinese martial arts experienced successive waves of decline and revival, due to rounds of reforms in political, military, educational, and sports systems for nation-building in China. A number of Chinese martial arts schools were set up, western style pedagogy and teaching were introduced, while the clan-based or village based teaching system declined. Eventually,

commercially-based schools came to dominate martial arts teaching. At the same time, the oral tradition of transmitting skills was abandoned and replaced by books on the martial arts, among which those books dealing with taiji were the most numerous and marked a peak of taiji cultural construction at the time. 2) *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan* in 1947 was originally based on the gist of *Collection of Taijiquan, Dao, Jian, Gan and Sanshou*, a Chinese book authored by Yearning Chen (陈炎林, 1906-?), a doctor of Chinese traditional medicine and taijiquan student of Tian Zhaolin (田兆麟, 1891-1959), who was a disciple of Master Yang Chengfu (杨澄甫, 1883-1936). It retains the main content and style of traditional taijiquan scriptures while incorporating some innovative ideas of modern publishing and science from the West. The book can generally be divided into four sections, i. e. preface by the author, table of contents, main body and index. The 183-page main body consists of 16 chapters in five parts, and contains the "Grand Terminus Diagram" (Taiji Tu), an analytical diagram of body mechanics, some figures for footwork demonstration, and a few annotations. It is arguably an illustrated guide to physical activity designed under the influence of Western culture and modern science. 3) In the Introduction of *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan*, the following three questions are answered with clarity for the first time in English: a) What is taiji (T'ai-Chi)? b) What is pugilism? c) What is taijiquan (T'ai-Chi Ch'üan)? According to the passage, taiji (T'ai-chi, or the Grand Terminus) is "a subtle system of Chinese philosophy"; pugilism is "employed as a physical exercise to regulate the circulation of blood, stretch the ligaments, develop the bones, and deepen the breathing"; taijiquan (T'ai-Chi Ch'üan) is "a branch of pugilism with an outer form of sparring but based upon the theories of the Grand Terminus" and "its formations follow the principles of the 'Grand Terminus Diagram' to which they adhere as regards yin and yang, insubstantiality and substantiality, firmness and softness, activity and inactivity". Clear and concise, the well-organized passages in *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan* specifies the subordinate sports attribute of taijiquan from the perspective of modern science, and introduces the efficacy and philosophical connotations of taijiquan as a sport. In addition, the scientific and utilitarian values of taijiquan are also discussed from the perspectives of physiology, kinetics, psychology, life ethics, and other modern sciences. Part Three, Four and Five of the book cover the names and essentials of basic movements, 108 forms and joint hand operations of taijiquan, and also contain pictures for footwork demonstration, and indexes. Overall, the three parts form an

organic whole that is comprehensive, systematic and all-inclusive. What's more, Chapter Four of Part One ( "Some Effects of the Practice of T'ai-chi Ch'üan" ) is a comprehensive summary of taijiquan's medical and healthcare benefits, which can be regarded as the English origin of health perspective for traditional taijiquan in the mid of 20th Century. 4) *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan* in 1947, epitomizing the cultural essence of all works on taijiquan, was completed with the help of taijiquan master Yearning K. Chen and such a few scholars as Kwei Chen (陈逵, Chen Kui, 1902-1990) and Hertz C. K. Kê (葛传棗, Ge Chuangui, 1906-1992) known for their excellent command of English both in China and abroad, and was published and distributed by Kelly & Walsh Limited, a leading foreign translation and publishing institution at the time. Their participation can be deemed the external factor that contributed to the canonical significance of the book, which can be explained in 4 dimensions: a) rich content; b) substantial creativity; c) time-and-space transcendency; and d) infinite readability. 5) This study finds three methods—supplementation, omission, comparison and evaluation—used in the texts to reconstruct a modern taiji culture and taiji people and reveals that scientific and analytic approach in *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan* to translation reflects the translators' understanding of the western readership in favor of health and well-being and their constructivist and scientific outlook of taijiquan and the open system in the world contributed to the warm reception of taijiquan in Western culture. It is discussed that the book adapts the Chinese martial arts to English sciences by rewriting the content of the original, recreating the simple and practical effects of taijiquan in scientific terms and using paratexts and patronage for the promotion of taijiquan and Chinese culture. **Conclusion:** *T'ai-Chi Ch'üan: Its Effects and Practical Applications* published in 1947 is the earliest existing English book about the translation of systematic taijiquan knowledge and theories, which vividly reflects the excellent traditional Chinese culture and positively reconstructs the Chinese image with strength and health over negative influences after the Opium War in 1840. It is a successful case of Chinese people taking initiative in sorting out, inheriting and promoting the cultural achievements of Chinese martial artists in the translation history of Chinese culture, and also a precious reference for the study of the history of taijiquan, Chinese martial arts, Chinese sports, traditional Chinese medicine and Chinese culture, if we take into consideration the target readers/audiences' ignorance of the Chinese culture, and the great differences between Western and Chinese culture. The book did not

only cater to the curiosity of the target readers/audiences in that period, but also demonstrated the cultural confidence and translation strategies held by Chinese elites in spite of social turmoils in the 1940s.

**Key words:** Taijiquan, Translation, Cultural identity, Cultural construction, Cross-cultural communication