

ANTHROPOLOGY

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Chinese *guó shù* (國術 “national art”) in Shaolin Temple

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Abstract

Background. The Shaolin monastery offers a meeting with Chinese culture by implementing a *guo shu*, program that the Chinese government supports and helps develop. *Guo shu*, implemented during the republican era in China supported the development of national arts, including Chinese martial arts. It was developed to rebuild a sense of patriotism and national pride in the Chinese nation after the Opium Wars and the Boxer Rebellion.

Problem and Aim. The purpose of this paper is to present the new challenges that the Shaolin monastery has faced in modern times and how is it currently implemented based on the *guo shu* concept. Because the Shaolin monastery is also seen as a great emissary of the culture of the Middle Kingdom, students also have the opportunity to get acquainted with Chinese culture.

Methods. The theoretical perspective is based on the sociology and anthropology of martial arts. For the theoretic background, an analysis of specialist text and documents was applied. The author also applied participant observation and interviews with foreign Shaolin kung fu students, visiting Shaolin temple in 2007, 2012.

Results. For students from Europe and the United States some changes and regulations had to be made (eg. learning the Chinese language, calligraphy classes). Chinese teachers are not only martial artists, but also act as emissaries of Chinese culture.

Conclusions. Shaolin returned to the teaching concept previously implemented by Jingwu and the National Academy of Skills. Currently, the Shaolin Monastery is a brand, that promotes the new Chinese *guo shu* and sends a strong message about the potential of China to the world: it is no longer the “sick man of Asia”.

Nationalism, *wushu* and *guo shu*

Lu Zhouxiang and Fan Hong in their book *Sport and Nationalism in China* paid attention to the fact, that sport has always been one of these national aspirations, and nationalism and sport are closely linked because of their political natures. It is also a unifying factor: by creating a national squad, playing traditional or national sport, it can bring together people who belong to different ethnic groups, or who come from different social classes and regions, become bound together and endowed with a collective identity. This results in the promotion of national consciousness and patriotism. This connection is also called ‘sporting/ sportive nationalism’ to emphasize the relationship between nationalism and sport [2014]. Because sport and traditional physical activities for ethnos are an important element of national culture, nationalism can also manifest itself in sport as often as other forms of promotion and affirmation of belonging to a given nation. Researchers are also familiar with the phe-

nomenon of motivating sports nationalism, which also allows us to use the so-called soft politics, soft power. In a peaceful way a signal is sent about competitive, sporting or cultural readiness. This signal is enriched by national pride, sometimes a challenge to rivalry, but also an invitation to the present. The notion of nationalism, also in the sports context, is related to the concept of cultural identity. This is the most important kind of collective identity, which is based on a historically conditioned, cultural way of preserving the existence and continuity of the species and biopsychic balance by a given human group. It consists of: 1) elements of inheritance, 2) type, proportions and structure of the constituent elements of a given culture, due to the distinctiveness of cultural differences, and the achieved level of socio-economic and civilizational elements within a given culture, 3) external context of equal or unequal contacts with other cultures, occurring in varying intensity in the past and present [Staszczak 1987: 351-352]. Cultural identity is, therefore, a powerful cultural load that can be used to

transmit its value by combining generations of a given nation, but also in international contacts, which aim to gain common experiences, but also fascinate the other side with its legacy. Chinese martial arts have similar potential, which may influence the construction of new identities based on participation in martial arts culture. For example, the group identification of martial artists, based on cultural identity, has two necessary components: the sense of awareness of membership and the sense this awareness is related to some value [Guodong, Green, Gutiérrez-García 2016:19]. Thanks to this we can assume that the transmission of certain cultural values can take place in a specific group of people who share common values, not necessarily from one ethnos or cultural circle. In other words, values relevant to the Chinese people can be transmitted through the Chinese martial arts culture to non-Chinese people through the Chinese martial arts culture.

Guo shu, literally 'national skills', have always been an important part of the Chinese identity and a load with a large cultural and patriotic potential. This term was used in China between the 1920s and 1940s¹. It was a time, when a national-wide campaign was launched by the Nationalist government. To promote Chinese martial arts in the education and society was one of their main goals. The author of this initiative was a group of educators and politicians, whom presided general Zhang Zhijiang (1882-1966), Commander-in-chief of the Northwest Division of the National Revolutionary Army. He appealed to the government, requesting that they change the name of Chinese martial arts to *guo shu*. He believed that it would increase their prestige. As Zhang Zhijiang explained: "our country's combat skills have a long history and have been passed down from generation to generation... their significance is similar to that *guo xue* (national culture studies), and therefore should be named *guo shu* (national skills). As justification for his appeal to the authorities, the general gave the following benefits that the state could derive from this change: 1) *guo shu* was part of China's unique cultural legacy and represented the history and spirit of the Chinese nation, 2) *guo shu* would improve people's poor physical condi-

tion and therefore help increase the power of nation, 3) as a self-defense skill, *guo shu* could cultivate the spirit of struggle and serve the interests of national defense, 4) *guo shu* could serve to argument the military power of the country and therefore erase the humiliation brought about by foreign invasions and aggression [Zhouxiang 2018: 3, 107].

The Republican period was generally a time of return to care for physical prowess. This trend, supported by the government, has contributed to the thriving development of Chinese martial arts. In 1911, a campaign to promote Chinese martial arts was launched by Ma Liang (1875-1947), military governor of Shandong Province. He believed that Chinese martial arts were a national treasure which should be used to improve people's health and build up their physical strength, and thus serve the goal of national revival. Thanks to Ma Liang initiative, some martial artists from Shandong province decided to start preparing a textbook series entitled *Chinese New Wushu*. The series was focused on boxing and kicking skills, wrestling, staff and sword skills. The Chinese New Wushu was revised in 1914 and was implemented in a martial arts training center, established by Ma Liang in Jinan City. Ma Liang also used his army connections to lobby leading politicians, which successfully led to the army and the police adopting CNW as a training program in 1917 [Zhouxiang 2018: 99-100]. In 1915, the Ministry of Education decided to formally include Chinese martial arts in the curriculum. One of the reason was that "the world is dominated by social Darwinism, people shall have a martial spirit to struggle for their country amidst the world's high competition at the present time. Following this world trend, China has also promoted her martial spirit and has added gymnastic exercise in the tri-balance of education on wisdom, morality and the body over last two decades. But today Chinese people are still weak after learning the Western form of education. Historically, the traditional Chinese martial arts are over thousands of years old. Therefore, it is necessary to promote traditional Chinese martial arts which are more suitable for Chinese people. All schools should put martial arts in the gymnastics as "physical education" [Hwang, Jarvie 2001: 11-12]. One can also notice here the emphasis on its separateness from the Western world, pride in the achievements of its own culture and the desire to cultivate its own traditions. Elements of Western culture "weakened" the Chinese people, the Chinese military tradition was to restore lost strength and dignity.

In October 1918, the Fourth National Education Conference approved the proposal to introduce the Chinese New Wushu to the higher education. The new era of Chinese martial arts had already begun. The traditional sport was combined with education, and that made it not only the way of development of the body, but also a new possibility to rise educated and strong citizens [Zhouxiang 2018: 99-100].

¹When the Nationalist retreated to Taiwan in 1949, they continued to promote *guo shu* there. The other term, *kung fu* (literally 'effort', 'ability' or 'skills'), is very popular in China and foreign countries. The term *wuyi* ('martial arts' or 'feats', first appeared in Han dynasty literature [206 BC-AD 220]) it is less frequently used. The more popular, *wushu* ('martial skills') first appeared in Southern Liang Dynasty (502-557). At first, it referred to military affairs and operations. Then it embraced its meaning the military and combat skills, weapon techniques and martial arts performances. The *wushu* term came into common use in the late 19th century. Since that time it has been used as the official term for Chinese martial arts in mainland China since 1950 [Zhouxiang 2018: 3].

Development of selected centers of Chinese martial arts propagating the idea of *guo shu*

By the wave of widespread enthusiasm in the 1910s and 1920s, many schools and associations were founded in major cities to study Chinese martial arts and provide training to general public. Leading societies established at that time: Tianjin Chinese Warriors Society (Zhinghua Wushi Hui, 1911), the Beijing Research Academy of Physical Education (Beijing Tiyu Yanjiu She, 1912), Beijing Fencing Research Society (Beijing Jianshu Yanjiu Hui, 1912), the National Skills Academy (Guoji Xuehui, 1913) in Changsha, the Chinese Wushu Society (Zhonghua Wushu Hui, 1919) in Shanghai, the Shandong Wushu Society (Shandong Wushu Chuanxi Suo, 1919) in Jinan, the Chinese National Skills Wushu Research Society (Zhonghua Guoji Wushu Yanjiu She, 1922) in Beijing, the Anhui Research Academy of Hand-to-Hand Combat (Anhui Quanshu Yanjiu Hui, 1024) and the Zhirou Hand-to-Hand Combat Society (Zhirou Quab She, 1925) in Shanghai (Lu Zhouxiang, 2018:102). Those associations shared common goals, namely the teaching and promotion of Chinese martial arts.

Two associations in particular are worth a broader discussion. Their curricula, ideological commitment to creating a contemporary image of Chinese martial arts significantly influenced the development of the Shaolin monastery management concept since the 1970s: Jingwu and Chinese National Skills Academy.

One of the most influential Chinese martial arts society was the Pure Martial Athletic Association (Jingwu Tiyu Hui, PMAA), founded in Shanghai in 1909. The Jingwu Association was a privately funded academy that taught Chinese martial arts, but also taught Western sports, such as gymnastics exercise, athletics, football, basketball, volleyball, tennis and swimming [Hwang, Jarvie 2001: 12]. It was an association approaching to the issue of promoting Chinese martial arts in a very modern way. This association, despite being active in the nationalist trend, showed an innovative approach in the development of physical culture, combining Western sports with eastern movement forms. However, these were not the only innovations. The Jingwu was the first public Chinese martial arts training facility, the first to teach Chinese martial arts as a sport or recreation, the first to place women's programs on an equal footing with men's programs, the first to use books, magazines and movies, to promote Chinese martial arts [Kennedy, Guo 2010: X]. The slogan of the Association sounded as follows: “Promote Martial Arts, Study Sport, Train Strong Citizens for China”. The PMAA had four departments: the Combat Skills department, the Military Gymnastic department, the Academic department and the Sport and Leisure department. It offered a wide range of Chinese martial arts programs for beginners, intermediate learners and advanced learners. The PMAA had four

departments: the Combat Skills department, the Military Gymnastic department, the Academic department and the Sport and Leisure department. It offered a wide range of Chinese martial arts programs for beginners, intermediate learners and advanced learners [Zhouxiang 2018: 102].

So the association followed a patriotic and nationalist trend, using its founder, Huo Yuanjia, as its promoter. Huo Yuanjia, a Chinese master of martial arts of Northern Shaolin style, arrived in Shanghai in 1907, to compete and to beat down foreign wrestlers, boxers, strongmen in a duel in *lei tai*, traditional Chinese fighting platform. According to the story, he defeated a Russian or English strongman (in the movie, *Fearless*, 2006, directed by Ronny Yu, Huo Yuanjia [Jet Li] defeated also a Japanese master), who pledged to “flatten any sick man of East Asia”. Then he founded the Jingwu Association [Kennedy, Guo 2010: X].

The second institution, important for these considerations was Chinese National Skills Academy, founded in December 1926, in Nanjing by Zhang Zhijiang. The main goal was to promote *guo shu*. Two years later, on 15 May 1928, the newly established Nanjing Nationalist Government announced that *guo shu* would get official support and that a national academy would be established to serve this purpose. Those initiative was supported by Chiang Kai-shek (1887-1975), leader of Kuomintang. Patronage over the university was also taken by the ministry of education. As in the case of Jingwu, the Academy had four goals: to study *guo shu*, to teach *guo shu*, to publish *guo shu* textbooks and organize *guo shu*-related activities. The academy program offered workouts for children, teenagers and adults. The modules were divided into two categories-academic modules and skills modules. Academic modules included following subjects to study the Principles of Nationalist Party, Chinese Language, Geography, History, Mathematics, the History of Guo shu, Physiology, Military Affairs and Music. Popular *guo shu* styles were divided on Wudang and Shaolin. The Academy also established a training center for *guo shu* instructors in 1933. All young people who had graduated from primary school and were aged between 15 and 20 could apply, and after finishing full program, become professional martial arts teachers and instructors. They were sent to teach *guo shu* in schools and universities.

In November 1937, when the Japanese army captured Shanghai, Jingwu moved its headquarters into the Shanghai International Settlement. Also the Chinese National Skills Academy had to move its headquarters to Chongqing in southwest China. The city was selected to be the temporary capital of the nationalists. After the war, the CNSA moved back to Nanjing, but because of the financial difficulties and civil war situation the Academy was disbanded in 1948 [Zhouxiang 2018:108-109, 111].

Shaolin Temple and *national skills* nowadays

Chinese martial arts and monasteries of fighting monks have become a permanent part of the traditional and cultural landscape of China. Now, the Shaolin Monastery is a specific laboratory, where old traditions are mixed with new trends. Today, the development of Chinese martial arts takes place here on several levels. They are a national heritage and hence their high status. This is also the reason why they became part of the great program of the People's Republic of China, aimed at promoting Chinese culture in the world. Hence, martial arts became an “export goods”, largely subordinated to the sports market and commercial needs, a soft power element. Local tourism would have no chance of development if it did not work under the auspices of the Shaolin monastery, which acts as a magnet for tourists who want to experience something extraordinary. Finally, many people come here to touch and experience the philosophical aspects of martial arts. Many people come to China to take part in the daily training of monks, take a picture under the famous gates of the monastery, or even breathe in the air saturated with history and the charm of this place. The monastery thus changed its function. It is no longer just a forge of Chinese patriots and masters of martial arts who, with their physical prowess, will support the defense and development of the country, but has become an emissary of “kung fu diplomacy”. This does not mean, however, that the training and education of Chinese citizens is neglected here. In 2007, the year before the Olympic Games in Beijing, the number of students, who studied in the monastery clearly pointed out the great boom and fashion among Chinese parents, who send their children to such institutions (of course, the children learn there also in a normal mode school, available in Shaolin) as well as among foreigners (mostly Americans) who are willing to spend in such a school, even 2-3 years. The completion of education at the Shaolin Temple is equivalent to a diploma of renowned American or European universities: “(...) For the Chinese to finish the Shaolin temple school of martial arts is like to receive a diploma from Harvard” [Gienieniczko 2009].

To keep up with the challenges of modern times, the monastery had to make changes. Some of them were forced by the events of 1949-1976, the time of communism and Cultural Revolution. The communist authorities supported the sportiest version of the martial arts, treated it as “a tool for refreshment of body and spirit of Chinese citizens who have witnessed a rapid expansion of western sport” [Shahar 2011: 228], but still the Shaolin temple was perceived as a cultural relic, contrary to the line of values recognized by the ruling communist party. This led the monastery to the brink of ruin. The monastery suffered serious damage during the Cultural Revolution, and the monks were dispersed. According to Wushu Discovery and Archive Group, that was send

to Shaolin Monastery at Mount Song in December 1982, “(...) in the birthplace of the external family of *wushu*, only two former Shaolin disciples can perform Shaolin Hongquan, and they cannot finish the routine. Only a few disciples can perform Shaolin stuff. The Shaolin school had already declined. They (monks) said, “When another monk dies, we will lose one more part of Shaolin kung fu”. So the government started the Rescuing Wushu Cultural Legacies’ campaign, and provided funding of RMB 1 million. Furthermore, 8,000 cadre, *wushu* coaches, teachers and practitioners were mobilized to take part in the campaign [Zhouxiang 2018: 171].

Then, the buildings were rebuilt. The refurbished and slightly overdecorated monastery in the spirit of commercialism has little in common with ancient shrine of fighting monks. As an extremely colorful and important tourist object (a UNESCO heritage site in 2010) attracts every year millions of tourists from China and abroad. Monastic abbots have been continuing for centuries a policy of cooperation with the authorities. As pointed out by Meir Sahar, superior of the monastery in 2010, Yongxin, is also a member of the National People's Congress and vice-president of Buddhist Association of China [Meir Shahar 2011: 227]. As with Jingwu and CNSA, government support and approval for the center's activities is particularly important².

The issue of expanding and making the monastery available to future adepts has been treated very seriously by the administrators of the object. Matthew Polly, who visited Shaolin Temple in 1992, was surprised to see the changes leading to the commercialization of this place have gone far: “(...) *I had expected a windswept, isolated monastery. This is not what I discovered. Cars and tourist buses were backed up before the entrance to a parking lot. Packed along the sides of the road were dozens of lean-to restaurants made of cracked plaster and chipped concrete to feed the tourists, and several dozen corrugated-tin-roof shacks sold kung fu tchotchkes. Donkey-drawn wagons waited at the entrance of the parking lot to carry the tourists the half-mile to the temple. (...) The isolated monastery had been turned into Kungfu World (...). The one exception to all the tourist trappiness was the six or seven private kung fu schools with similar names – Shaolin Kung fu University, Shaolin Wushu Academy, Shaolin Wushu and Kungfu School. Together they trained more than 1,000 teenage Chinese boys – and a smattering of girls – who paid tuition of around \$ 10 a year to study kung fu all day long, six days a week for ten months out of the year. School uniforms were jogging suits made in the school colors – just like Enter the Dragon – so, scattered among the thousands of tourists clogging the road were gaggles of students in red or yellow or blue suits, skinny*

²The Shaolin monastery is also subject to the government's laws, because the Chinese state formally controls the religious institutions (author's note).

and dusty and clutching various kung fu weapons: wooden staff, tin swords, dull-pointed spears” [Polly 2007: 45].

Soon, some leading martial arts schools appeared: Shaolin Expo Wushu Academy (founded in 1977), the Shaolin Tagou Wushu School (1978), the Songshan Shaolin Wushu School (1980), and the Songshan Shaolin Temple Monks Mission Training Base (1997). Now, there are currently over 50 *wushu* boarding schools and academies in Denfeng, accommodating approximately 70,000 students a year. The Shaolin Tagou School is the biggest. It was founded by local Shaolin kung fu master Liu Baoshan and accommodate more than 30,000 students and staff members a year. It offers academic and *wushu* training programs at primary, secondary and higher education levels [Zhouxiang 2018: 170].

The programs of those schools may surprise with the diversity and sometimes incomprehensible, even for experts, complexity of martial arts schools and subjects taught in them. For example, new disciples can study Shaolin kung fu here, but also Taijiquan, Xingyiquan, Baguazhang (so called internal martial arts, that belong to Wudang tradition), Bajiquan, boxing and Sanda. Such a diversified offer is addressed mainly to foreign students. In this way schools encourage students to study in their centers. The wide spectrum of styles gives a comfort of choice, guaranteeing some commercial success. This does not mean that people coming to study martial arts in Shaolin do not realize this eclectic connection. Many foreign students do not like such a “package”, they would like to learn “kung fu from Shaolin”, but after a while they admit that such combinations give the opportunity to learn more about Chinese martial arts. Such an offer for foreigners has, among others, Tagou school. Looking at the training plan (<http://shaolintagou.org/training/training-plan/>) we can see the aforementioned diversity of schools and martial styles, enriched even by Korean Taekwondo, not having any traditional connections with the Chinese temple. It is also worth paying attention to the afternoon classes, learning the mandarin dialect and Chinese calligraphy. We were able to observe such combination of sports / physical tradition and national element science in the case of specialized programs of Jingwu and the National Academy of Skills, which were planned taking into account the instilling of patriotic ideas. Of course, this doesn't mean that there is a Chinese indoctrination in martial arts schools, but “taming” with Chinese culture is certainly much more intensified here. Many students do enjoy this. Most of them cannot speak Chinese, Chinese instructors often have problems with English. So in fact, those classes of Mandarin can serve both for Chinese and foreigners, because they can try to communicate and increase their language skills.

The joint training is getting closer, which is why the trainers really value training with

Chinese masters or older students. Many of them also have the opportunity to participate in training with

Chinese practitioners, especially during sparring training³ (for example *Sanda*, *Sanshou*). However, separate training groups are created for foreigners, but you can still work together after organized classes or most of them, to go deeper into the Chinese culture, to study the Chinese language and philosophy (some school also offer this kind of classes, called Buddhism Study) together with practicing Shaolin kung fu is just the priority. Therefore, such a profile of activities of schools at the Shaolin monastery seems to correspond to the needs of visitors, but also allows the Chinese side to carry out the promotion of the achievements of the nation.

International activities of the monastery. Shaolin sends *guo shu* message to the world

Currently, the Shaolin Monastery is a brand, a cultural and sociological construct that serves the promotion of Chinese culture outside the country. Today the monks are trying to develop its activities through participation in various cultural, Buddhist festivals not only in China, but also in other parts of the world, so the activity of the monastery is not only limited to the territory of Henan and China. The monastery also has the official website www.shaolin.org.cn (the version in English, launched in August 2008).

With the new abbot, Shi Yongxin, (who acquired full rights and obligations of the abbot in April 1999) (http://templates/EN_T_new_list/index.aspx?no-deid=336, access: 29.07.2012) began the modern card of the history of monastery. In 1993 he led the Shaolin Temple Cultural Delegation to Taiwan. This visit was of particular importance, both political and symbolic for both sides, because this was the first meeting of the delegation of Chinese and Taiwanese Buddhists after 40 years of silence and the lack of contact. These actions Yongxin showed a new, cultural and social-political direction of the activities of the monastery under his administration. The abbot Yongxin began to build a solid international foundation of the monastery's popularity. In June 2002, he started his efforts to place a monastery on List of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Abbot Yongxin stressed in his speech over fifteenth-century story of brave monks, their contribution to the culture and history of China and the world. The effort culminated in placing Shaolin monastery on this list, along with other historical buildings in the group “Center of Heaven and Earth” near Dengfeng (K III, VI / 2010) (<http://www.unesco.pl/?id=234>, access: 29.07.2012). The Chinese government quickly recognized the outstanding activities of

³ Interviews with 20 Shaolin foreign students, people aged 18-25, 7 women, 13 men. From Europe (10), Africa (3), USA (7), Shaolin Temple, August 2012.

the abbot and engaged him in political activities. 18th January 1998 Yongxin was chosen to be a deputy on 9th National People's Congress, and then to next, 10th Congress on 9th January 2003 (http://www.shaolin.org.cn/templates/EN_T_new_list/index.aspx?nodeid=336, access: 29.07. 2012).

In February 2004, the main buildings of the monastery complex were renovated, probably getting ready to open for important foreign guests. In May 2005, U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger came to visit the monastery. A year later, abbot Yongxin, together with the monks welcomed Russian President Vladimir Putin. Both visits were honored with a martial arts demonstration, performed by masters of the monastery. In November 2004, the monks and the abbot was accompanied by President Hu Jintao on his trip to South America. Groups of monks visited the Sao Paulo and took part in the "Knowledge about China" competition, organized by that activists. This was the first visit and the first demonstration of fighting monks of Shaolin in Latin America. Also the United States decided to establish contacts with the monastery. Yongxin came to the U.S. at the invitation of the United States Sports Institute and received an honorary doctorate, and also participated in Global Creative Summit held in New York. A year later, in March 2007, the monks came to the Kremlin and were welcomed by President Putin. In the same year the monastery was visited by the president of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Jacques Rogge and his wife and chairman of the Coordinating Committee, Heine Vergruggenem (http://www.shaolin.org.cn/templates/EN_T_new_list/index.aspx?nodeid=336. Access: 29.07.2012).

An interesting initiative is the opening Shaolin "kung fu classes" and Shaolin Institutes/ Academies outside the China. One of this kind of schools is UK Shaolin Temple (<https://www.ukshaolintemple.com>), established in 2003. The mission of this place is contribute to the betterment of society through cultural education and physical activities, to establish a sanctuary for research, learning, and sharing. The second one, is Shaolin Temple LA, more commercial place in CA, USA, officially sanctioned by Shaolin Temple, Henan, China. In New York, since 1994 the U.S. has been running the Shaolin Temple, an institution founded by the monk Shi Yan Ming, of the 34th generation Shaolin Temple Fighting Monks. The main objective is to teach the U.S. ST Buddhist philosophy, traditional medicine and martial arts. Branches of this school are located in Austria, Mexico, South Africa, Chile, and Tobago (www.usashaolintemple.org).

In addition to a range of sports activities, the monks and instructors (Chinese, and non-Chinese) are engaged in organizing and conducting local religious and cultural festivals and spiritual life.

Conclusions

From the center of religion and meditation (because that was and still is, at least theoretically, the main aim of the monastery), Shaolin has become a world center for lovers of Chinese martial arts, an emissary of Chinese culture in the traditional form. Through the implementation of a broad initiative of cultural, social and religious development of their branches (in China) and supervised similar establishments abroad (e.g. ESA), the global impact of "Shaolin culture" is an initiative, that gather together people interested in Chinese culture and pop culture. It is also important that the monastery became the "iron-spot" for foreign trips, visits of important people from politics' and business' world. The Chinese consider this place as representative, very "Chinese" one, related to the tradition and history, a real "nest" of modern martial *guo shu*. The monastery and its monks became a very significant symbol of modern China, which want to operate either as a high-tech superpower, but also as a country with rich history and unique monuments of spiritual and material culture.

Today, the development of Chinese martial arts takes place here on several levels: in real Shaolin Temple, in Mount Song, Henan, China, but also in cyber space, via websites, Facebook, in many branches of Shaolin schools around the world. The mission of Shaolin has changed. More and more visits of trainers from Europe and the United States caused that some changes and regulations had to be made. There were also additional classes aimed at bringing the traditional Chinese culture closer to trainers (e.g. learning the Chinese language, calligraphy classes). Chinese teachers realized that they are not only martial arts teachers, but also act as emissaries of Chinese culture. Their approach to representatives of the Western world is therefore more specific. It is part of a bigger undertaking, which is to promote Chinese culture in the world. An important role in this undertaking is played by the Abbot Yongxin, who manages the temple in a modern way. In this matter, Shaolin returned to the teaching concept previously implemented by Jingwu and National Academy of Skills. Currently, the Shaolin Monastery is a brand that promotes new Chinese *guo shu* and sends a strong message about the potential of China to the world: there is no "sick man of Asia" any more. In the past, *guo shu* and Chinese martial arts served to strengthen against invaders. Today, they promote a strong state and an attractive offer directed to future partners.

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