

## Article

# Chinese Destinations Related to Martial Arts Tourism from the UNESCO Perspective

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**Abstract:** The aim of this article is to investigate the authenticity of Shaolin Temple and Chenjiagou Village in the context of intensified martial arts tourism and UNESCO documents. Desk research, structured interviews and participant observation were used to investigate the issue. The issue of cultural and natural heritage has become part of the modern image of a powerful new China. They particularly use these resources in cultural tourism, where boasting of heritage listed on UNESCO's tangible and intangible heritage list is certainly an appropriate impression. The UNESCO intangible and tangible heritage list also includes objects related to martial arts tourism (Shaolin Temple, Chenjiagou Village). The article presents how Western (American, European) preferences and expectations are visible in the way of preserving and using these objects with an attempt to maintain UNESCO standards. It has been noticed that the added objects/events/shows are accepted by the Chinese as increasing the attractiveness of the place, even if they are not thematically and historically related to it. The authors checked whether a certain cultural compromise is possible or whether these places are a completely Westernized product, taking the form of theme parks or ethnoparks. For Western tourists, such phenomena are often synonymous with the commercialization and falsification of the authenticity of a place, which is why the role of cultural education is very important, both in China and in Western countries.

**Keywords:** cultural tourism; martial arts; heritage protection; cultural security; Shaolin temple; UNESCO



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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Cultural Tourism

Cultural tourism is a very popular form of spending free time, self-improvement or learning about the world. "Cultural tourism is one of the oldest forms of travel in the world and one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism market today. An important element of this form of tourism, both on a global and regional scale, is the cultural heritage, which may be one of the most important motives for tourist peregrinations. During the journey, tourists visiting new areas learn about their history, traditions, everyday life of the inhabitants and the customs prevailing there. Culture and tourism are intertwined: culture initiates and develops tourism, and tourism popularizes culture." Przeclawski indicated five relationships that illustrate the relationship between culture and tourism: tourism is a function of culture, tourism is an element of culture, tourism is a message of culture, tourism is an encounter between cultures, tourism is a factor of cultural changes [1]. All these elements are therefore in constant motion, and the change of one element of the system keeps the system in a state of dynamic, dependent equilibrium. Cultural tourists look for different experiences, among which we can distinguish people looking for products of cultural heritage (e.g., historical buildings, archaeological excavations), cultural events, and thematic culture parks, often combined with the creation of historical and artistic theme parks [1] (p. 45). Cultural tourism also includes martial arts tourism.

It can have at least two broad contexts: social and cultural, both with scientific reflection. As an example of the first, we can give the example of the historical journeys of samurai or Ronin around Japan to learn at various fencing schools and from various martial arts masters (the so-called *mushashūgyō*). Closer to our considerations is China, which has a widely developed thread of stories about wanderers, masters of Chinese martial arts, who traveled to fight with other masters. The defeated asked the winners to learn (if they were still able to train after such a duel) [2]. Such journeys happened not only in Asia. European knights also raised their qualifications in a similar way: "(...) These medieval warriors did indeed do some kind of sports tourism, which concerned both tournaments and real battles. They perfected their knightly craftsmanship—riding skills, the use of all traditional weapons or hand-to-hand combat. Knightly tournaments, as well as duels and battles were a test of real skills" [3]. In the 20th century, traveling to East and Southeast Asia to learn about Asian martial arts became in some way an essential part of learning about the "path of the warrior". It is worth mentioning here the figures of two pioneers of travel to distant countries, seeking the science and practice of Asian martial arts: the Americans Donald Frederick Draeger and Michael Maliszewski [3]. Donald Frederick Draeger ("Donn Draeger", 1922–1982) was a talented martial artist and trainer. He dedicated his life to study Asian martial arts, especially Japanese. "Donn Draeger was the pioneer of field research and participant observation during martial arts research. He collected information about the fighting tradition of Japan, China, Indonesia, Malaysia. He is the author of many significant books on martial arts, including 3 volumes of *The Martial Arts and Ways of Japan*" [4]. Michael Maliszewski is a researcher looking for connections between martial arts and spiritual development. He used his knowledge in the field of psychology to research the spirituality of martial arts on numerous trips around Asia [5]. He is the author of *Great Traditions of the Martial Arts: Spiritual Dimensions in Mind/Body Experience* (2012).

It is worth mentioning the economic aspect of sports tourism, including that related to martial arts. Many times, the proceeds from this allow local communities, managing the area where a given sports activity or a visited facility takes place, to develop. One cannot forget about individual tourists who choose even single routes or trips. "Due to this worldwide development, sport tourism is nowadays one of the most dynamic branches of touristic business. It has been estimated that 15–30% of the global touristic economy are travelers related to sport, and outlook for tourism development in the upcoming years indicates further increase of such trips" [6]. Here, martial arts tourists are an important "stakeholders". Many of them go on their journeys for educational and recreational purposes, wanting to learn about a different culture or improve their martial arts skills. They often want to know more about the country of their Asian master (masters) and to get to know the contemporary situation of the place where martial art was established or developed. Meanwhile, they often become part of the process of global cultural exchange, of the intercultural East–West dialogue [6] (p. 34). Through their presence and tourist preferences, they also influence certain aspects of the places visited. This article will present the phenomenon of martial arts tourism and its accompanying trends (martial arts pilgrimage), which are based on tourists' willingness to practice traditional martial arts in the Shaolin Temple (included with the Dengfeng complex on the UNESCO list) and the village of Chenjiagou (inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List), entering: 15.COM 8.b.21 [7]. In order to maintain/obtain promotion on the UNESCO list of tangible or intangible heritage, these sites must adhere to the rules of this organization.

For a fuller understanding of the specifics of Shaolin and Chenjiagou, it is necessary to briefly introduce the history of these facilities and outline the actions that are currently being taken by local authorities to preserve/create an impression of the authenticity of the place. Complementing the historical sketch are issues related to the World Heritage System.

#### 1.1.1. Shaolin Temple

The temple was built by the order of Emperor Xiaowen of the Northern Wei Dynasty, and the construction of a Buddhist monastery began in 495, at the foot of Mount Shaoshi

in the Song Shan range, in recognition of the Buddhist monk known as Batuo (also called Fotuo in other Chinese sources). The name of the monastery, Shaolin, meaning “Young Forest”, owes to a rare, young forest growing at that time, the remains of which can still be found in the monastery today [8] (pp. 14–21).

The history of the monastery was full of important events connected with the mainstream of Chinese history, but particularly important for this article are the events that took place in the 20th century. The period of civil war in China after the establishment of the Republic of China in the first half of the XXth century was difficult for the monastery. For the first time in history, the abbot made a mistake in choosing the political side he intended to support, and instead of lending support, he defied Chiang Kai Shek. The monastery was seriously damaged and the monks were dispersed. With time, the buildings were rebuilt, and the present condition may even surprise. As Meir Sahar pointed out, the tradition of cooperation with the authorities is still continued: Abbot Shi Yongxin is both a member of the All-China People’s Congress and the president of the Chinese Buddhist Union. Visits by guests such as Vladimir Putin or the American Secretary of State Henry Kissinger and many others also show that the monastery also plays a very important public and political role [8] (p. 227).

The change in the attitude of the Chinese authorities towards martial arts, related to including them among the *guoshu* (national arts), had a positive impact on the situation of the monastery. The communist authorities supported the sporting versions of martial arts, praising them as “a tool to refresh the body and spirit of Chinese citizens who witnessed the rapid expansion of Western sport” [8] (p. 228). The monastery also officially appeared in the virtual world through the official website [WWW.shaolin.org.cn](http://WWW.shaolin.org.cn) (accessed on 6 July 2021), and the English version launched in August 2008 [9]. At the beginning, the pro-cultural activities of the abbot who began to build solid, international foundations for the popularity of the new monastery were essential and most visible. In June 2002, efforts were made to place the monastery on the UNESCO list. Abbot Shi Yongxin emphasized in his speech the fifteenth-century history of brave monks and their contribution to the culture and history of China and the world. Shaolin Monastery has been entered on the UNESCO list as part of the Historic Monuments of Dengfeng in “The Center of Heaven and Earth”, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 2010. This facility meets the criteria (iii): The astronomical idea of the Center of Heaven and Earth is strongly linked with the idea of imperial power, with the propitiousness of establishing capitals at the Center of Heaven and Earth, and with its natural attribute, Mount Songshan and the ceremonies and rituals associated with it. The serial property reflects the significance of the area in terms of prestige and patronage. It also meets criterion (vi): The concentration of sacred and secular structures in the Dengfeng area reflects the strong and persistent tradition of the Center of Heaven and Earth linked to the sacred mountain, which sustained imperial sacrifices and patronage over 1500 years and became of outstanding significance in Chinese culture. The Buddhist structures have come to have a symbiotic relationship with the sacred mountain [10].

#### 1.1.2. Chenjiagou Village

Chenjiagou, Shaolin Temple and Mount Wudang are the most popular martial arts sites in China. Chenjiagou is simply called “Taiji Village”. The village is located in Henan Province in central China, nestled between four large cities: Xinxiang in the east, Zhengzhou in the south, Luoyang in the west and Jiaozuo in the north. The villagers, linked to the Chen family for generations, cultivate the tradition of studying and teaching Taiji. It is a bond for them, a determinant of their identity. The people of Chenjiagou trace their ancestry to the 17th century, and the people of Chenjiagou trace their descent to Chen Bu, the historic patriarch of the Chen clan. Chen Bu founded the village in the tumultuous early years of the Ming Dynasty, under the Dynasty’s first emperor, Hongwu (1368–1398) [11] (p. 85). The intensive development of martial arts began with Chen Wangting (1600–1680). Chen Wangting was a military officer and garrison commander in Wen County. Chen

family chronicles say that by the end of the Ming Dynasty, Chen Wangting was already known for his fighting skills. Apparently he specialized in the martial art of the halberd. It is a heavy weapon, so this is the reason for low Chen-style positions and voluminous hand movements [11] (p. 169).

Chen taijiquan style was gaining more and more popularity, and more and more tourists appeared, especially from outside of China. The Chinese government declared taijiquan a part of the national heritage in March 2006. The following year, the state body of China, the Folk Culture Association, certified Wenxian County as the birthplace of taijiquan, while another public body, the Chinese Wushu Association, designated it as the birthplace of Chinese Wushu Taijiquan. Wenxian County is located in Henan Province, the most populous Republic of China, dotted with many sites that are documented in the oldest Chinese language history and culture. In 2008, the Chinese government, through the Jiaozuo Chenjiagou Taijiquan Research Institute, launched the UNESCO procedure for recognizing Taijiquan as the intangible heritage of China [12] (p. 54). The county authorities began the process of rebuilding Chenjiagou because, as the birthplace of taijiquan, the village retains deep cultural and historical interest not only in China but also around the world [11] (p. 94). Currently, the heir of the 19th generation of Chen Taiji is Chen Xiao Wang, a famous and famous respected teacher all over the world. He is the founder and chairman of the world organization World Chen Xiao Wang Taijiquan Association (WCTA), with branches in many countries, including Poland [13] (p. 170). Taijiquan (with Chenjiagou as a representative site) was entered on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List during the UNESCO Session on December 14–19, 2020 (nomination document No. 00424) [14].

### 1.2. The World Heritage System

The World Heritage System is based on the Western understanding of authenticity, meaning objective authenticity. Objective authenticity has been widely used as a criterion to measure the genuineness of material heritage. This approach focuses on the “traditional” feature of the objects and opposes commodification and commercialization. It holds that something is authentic if it is “created for a traditional purpose and by a traditional artist”, but only if it “conforms to traditional form” and is not manufactured “especially for the market” [15].

The World Heritage System, its development and the consequences of inscribing properties on the UNESCO list are therefore discussed and analyzed. Thus, World Heritage is subject to internal reflection, control and improvement [16].

Authenticity due to heritage protection has two conditions. The first one assumes that the value of the goods must cross the borders of many countries—this means that the assessment of the value of the goods must be made on a scale that goes beyond the borders of the state; it must be a supranational scale. The second condition assumes that this value must be universally recognized (to be of universal importance) for the present and future generations of humankind—that is, the recognition of values must be made on a scale of all humankind [17].

In many regions of the world, especially in the past colonized by Western civilization, the approach that combines the spiritual aspects of culture with material heritage is understandable. In many cases, however, this means the recognition of a heritage that is primarily spiritual and whose material representation is modest. Inscribing such properties (e.g., all kinds of holy places) is difficult because only materially existing objects can be entered on the World Heritage List. Intangible assets can be an extremely important component of these goods, but the entry—and the protection system—must be tangible.

In the World Heritage system, it can be considered that the authenticity attributes are all the elements and features of goods that create their unique universal value. Attributes are tangible and intangible. Attributes have material representations, which are the so-called carriers. In the case of material attributes they are also carriers, and in the case of non-material attributes their carriers are separate. One should consider whether cultural goods can be considered separately from their social context.

### 1.3. Literature Review

The cultural tourism topic, its varieties and the role it plays in the process of the self-improvement of a traveler, seeker and pilgrim, as well as the practice of martial arts, are wide. From the theoretical point of view, this phenomenon was analyzed and described by S. Gammon [18] and Ramshaw [19]. M. E. Bruner wrote about internal transformation under the influence of travel [20], and L. Miller Griffith analyzed the pilgrimage in the martial arts [21]. One of the classics of literature on the Shaolin Monastery is the monumental work by Meir Shahar [8], and traveling for traditional training there was described by Matthew Polly [22] in his book *American Shaolin: Flying Kicks, Buddhist Monks, and the Legend of Iron Croach: An Oddysey in the New China*. Polly's observations on Chinese culture indicate the need to get to know the broad cultural context of martial arts practiced by tourists. Among the articles about visiting the monastery, it is worth mentioning the relation of Cynarski, W.J., Swider P., [23] and L. Miller Griffith [24]. Their texts are anthropological studies of the classic martial arts pilgrimage. The issues of the commercialization of the monastery have been thoroughly researched and presented in the article of Kam Hung, Xiaotao Yang, Philipp Wassler, Dan Wan, Pearl Lin and Zhaoping Liu [7], and the influences of Cross-Cultural Awareness and the search for authenticity during the trip were examined by Hao Zhang, Taeyoung Choi, Huanjing Wang, and Quansheng Ge [25]. Lu Zhouxiang presents an interesting point of view on the history and contemporary reception of Shaolin Monastery [10] (p. 610) [24,26]. An article by Sergio Raimondo is important to outline the situation of the taijiquan village [27]. Sergio Raimondo is a long-time successful practitioner of Chen taiji style, visiting Chenjiagou in 2009–2010. Gaffney also wrote about Chenjiagou [11] based on interviews with the masters of Chen style. In Polish literature, the topic of the Taiji village was taken up by Antonowicz and Dzieciatko [13]. The above literature is an important contribution to the study of the martial arts tourism phenomenon. They are often case studies supported by the long experience of the authors, who are also martial arts practitioners, making their understanding and study of the problem more complete.

The literature on the protection of cultural property or cultural heritage is mainly directed in two directions. Most often it is an analysis of specific legal acts in the local and global aspect. The work that should be mentioned here is Wiescher's and Manukyan's *Scientific Analysis of Cultural Heritage Objects* [28]. It is a book covering subjects such as the characterization of cultural objects that are essential for conservation, restoration, dating and authentication purposes, whereas the presentation of national or world heritage is the second area dealing with the subject matter. The topic of saving cultural heritage often appears in a historical context, mainly from the Second World War. It is generally believed that the damage done to the material and non-material culture of Europe and its unprecedented scale resulted in the emergence of the Geneva Conventions, which emphasize the preservation of cultural heritage and define it in individual conventions, as mentioned in Chamberlain's *War and Cultural Heritage* [29]. It is also necessary to mention reports from recent years that deal with threats to the intrinsic cultural heritage, especially among minorities. Some of the most comprehensive, which are also based on the analysis of the material, are the Minority Rights Groups reports (2018, 2019, 2020) [30].

Of the interesting authors of the topic, UNESCO, it is worth referring to the book by Sophia Labadi [31]. This paper refers to the notion of outstanding universal value conducted from the standpoint of the World Heritage Committee. It also situates itself within recent critical analyses of the use of the Convention for the construction of the nation and of the exclusionary nature of heritage. It also describes the respective use of heritage for building national identities, enhancing cultural diversity and promoting sustainable tourism, development and authenticity. Very relevant to the study of the question of the authenticity of Shaolin Monastery and at the same time the cultural circle it produces around is the article of Xiaoyan Su, Changqing Song and Gary Sigley [32]. It explores the question of the authenticity of a material object such as Shaolin Monastery, and shows in the context of Western Authorized Heritage Discourse (AHD) how China implements local

heritage practice. A book by Comaroff, *Ethnicity, Inc.*, which deals with the authenticity of culture at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, is a very interesting work [33]. The authors discuss the creation of cultural villages not in accordance with cultural traditions, but based on Hollywood-type standards, that is, increasing the attractiveness of culture in order to attract more tourists. They perceive culture and cultural heritage through the prism of market value, something that can be earned.

To better outline this legal situation, we will use the relevant UNESCO documents. The problem of trying to reconcile Western values, represented by UNESCO conventions [34], with the values and priorities of Chinese culture, as well as the expectations of foreign tourists, will be presented from the perspective of the anthropology of martial arts tourism and cultural safety sciences. This will help to show the delicate state of balance, which is in some way the assumed ideal state, during which the UNESCO site retains its unique character and at the same time meets the UNESCO standards and gives a sense of authenticity to visiting tourists. This is, of course, a model assuming an ideal situation, but we will try to analyze the current state of these objects on the basis of such a simulation. For this purpose, materials collected during field research in China (Shaolin Temple, Skowron-Markowska 2019) as well as documents and publications related to the village of Chenjiagou will be used.

In addition to field work with the interviews and participant observation, the authors also used the desk research method to analyze the laws and opinions on UNESCO World Heritage regulations. The conventions for the protection of cultural property from the Geneva Conventions with the location for 1972 and the emergence of the UNESCO heritage have been analyzed. Subsequently, a detailed analysis of all additional protocols and draft versions of the convention was carried out. Particular emphasis was placed on the Convention on the Intangible Cultural Heritage introduced in 2003 due to the dual nature of this article [35–51].

Information on the village of Chenjiagou was gathered from the available materials and from the accounts of European martial arts practitioners who visited the village and trained there. In the section on Chenjiagou Village, the authors used source materials that were selected to compare the tourism situation of the village with Shaolin Monastery. As the authors did not conduct field research, structured interviews or participant observation in Chenjiagou Village, they chose to refer to selected publications, described in the Literature section. The comparison of these sites seems quite relevant in light of the martial arts pilgrims' journey, as both are key sites: Shaolin for kung fu, Chenjiagou for taijiquan practitioners.

However, it should be emphasized that the manifestations of non-material culture differ from their material references. As a rule, non-material culture consists of forms of temporal, variable and dynamic character; therefore, their identification, protection and interpretation presuppose the creation of a completely different system of legal and administrative tools.

Moreover, in national legal regimes, the standards of protection vary greatly—from the inclusion of the protection of intangible heritage into the provisions of the fundamental laws, to political initiatives aimed mainly at attracting material foreign aid.

There are no studies on the views of Western martial arts tourists on the local heritage protection program implemented by the Chinese authorities. In the case of the Chinese, "protection" is often synonymous with "promotion", which for Western tourists is often synonymous with commercialization, and thus the lack of authenticity.

On the other hand, theorists and practitioners of research on national and cultural heritage emphasize the significant preservation of heritage and characterize objects, often placing them in a historical context. There are no studies on the issue of cultural authenticity referring in its content to the definition according to UNESCO standards in the case of intangible culture.

## 2. Aim and Methods

This paper aims to address how Western martial arts tourists perceive the authenticity of the place where they train (Shaolin Temple), how their expectations clash with the tourist-like reality of the current theme park, and how the Western vision of authenticity contained in UNESCO documents influences local heritage practiced in China.

Combined research approaches were used in the preparation of this article. Desk research, structured interviews and participant observation were used to investigate the issue. The research conducted by the author at Shaolin Temple required the use of ethnographic methodology, including interviews (structured interviews) and participant observation.

### 2.1. Circumstances of Research

During her stay in Shaolin, the author was trying to better understand the expectations of European martial arts practitioners coming to Shaolin Temple for training and practice. Additionally, the mismatch between practitioners' expectations and actual on-site experience was examined. The research used the qualitative methods approach as the most appropriate for the analysis of the individual experiences of people from Europe training in the monastery. This perspective allowed her to take a closer look at the phenomenon of "martial arts pilgrimage" of individual practitioners. One of the main tools was the author's stay and training at Shaolin Temple in August and September 2019. During her stay, the author took part in training for foreign students from Asia (but not Chinese and Taiwanese), Europe, the United States and Polynesia.

The author was particularly interested in the motivations and expectations of individuals from Europe who undertook "their own journey" with knowledge and training. Individual tourists are not the only beneficiaries of teaching in the monastery. It is necessary to mention organized group trips (e.g., a group of 30 from the Canary Islands, from the branch of Shaolin Monastery) and multi-day trips to Shaolin for parents with children (learning Tai Chi and Gong Fu individually or in a group).

### 2.2. Interviews and Questionnaire

The basic tools were structured interviews and participant observation. Most of the interviews were conducted in Dengfeng, a city 11 km away from the monastery, where hotels and supply facilities are available for practitioners.

The set of questions prepared for the interview consisted of three main areas. The first of these concerned the very place they visited, Shaolin Temple. The most important aspect of this part was obtaining information on the individual understanding of this place by visitors, determining the purpose of coming to the temple. Respondents were asked about their expectations of the temple (including training) and their ideas of this place, which they created based on sources available to them, such as literature, the Internet and movies. This fragment of the interview was intended to set the conversation in order to describe a specific vision of the place where they planned to travel. This served in the next part of the interview to confront the expected image with the existing reality. Here, respondents were asked about the impressions and reflections evoked by the meeting of their expectations with reality. The second part concerned training and monastic life. The third part of questions was about Chinese martial arts teachers' methods and their reception by visitors. Interviews were conducted in English.

### 2.3. Characteristics of Research Group

Groups of individual practitioners usually have 4–10 people. During the author's stay there were two groups, each of 10 people. The groups consist of both women and men, but generally more men come to train in Shaolin. In the author's group there were three women (including the author). The selection criteria for interview participants were (1) participation in Chinese martial arts training (more than two years) and (2) a training stay in a monastery (more than two weeks at a time). In the author's opinion, people with three years of experience are already able to assess their progress in martial arts, their needs and

expectations towards training and the teacher. They are also often interested in the cultural and historical context of martial arts, so they are a proper group to carry out this type of research. Since the monastery does not share the data of people who expressed their willingness to train, the snowball sampling method was used to track down other potential participants through recruited respondents. Future respondents were asked to describe their experience in Chinese martial arts, indicating the dominant styles they practice. They were also asked about the planned duration of their stay in the monastery and whether they were here the first time. Ten people met the criteria set out in the survey. Among the respondents were four people from Italy, one from Sweden, one from Denmark, two from Germany, one from France and one from Poland. Most of the respondents had at least three years' experience (60%) in Chinese martial arts, and the others trained for more than three years. Among the trainees were people who came for short stays (2–3 weeks), but most often they were 1–3-month stays, and even longer, for a year and more. The group is joined by “non-Chinese” students from, e.g., Taiwan, and children from mixed marriages (Malaysia–France, Russia–China). There are also children who join the group if they come for a short time to train. The age of the adult group members ranges from 21 to 45 years. Most often they are students (stay for 1–3 months) and working people (short stays, 2–3 weeks). People with higher education dominated (60% of the group), and the rest were students. In groups are both students and working people who come here as part of their vacation. The monastery helps such people obtain a tourist visa by sending an appropriate invitation. A tourist visa is also the most popular among students. Those who come here to train and study benefit from a student visa for people studying in China.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. *In Search of Authenticity*

In order to understand the issues raised in the research, it is necessary to return to the subject of authenticity. In the 21st century, more and more critics of reconstruction as a cultural protection appeared, and this threatened its authenticity. Here, emphasis should be placed on understanding the concept of “cultural heritage”, which is covered depending on the cultural area. Authenticity was first used to verify that the items on display in museums are authentic [52]. Operational Guidelines for Implementation of the World Heritage Convention (OGIWHC) considers authenticity as one of the key criteria for World Heritage inscription. In due course, authenticity became a fundamental feature of Western heritage discourse, incorporating both movable and immovable objects.

Authenticity has become a concept to preserve cultural heritage. In the 1980s, Cohen proposed the concept of authenticity in reference to what was produced within a culture in order to arouse the interest of tourists [53] (pp. 15, 371–386). He claimed that “authenticity is conceived as anegotiable rather than primitive concept, the rigor of its definition by subject depending on the mode of their aspired touristic experience”. Eco raised the concept of postmodern authenticity, which suggests that no attention should be paid to the authenticity of an object and that no strict boundary should exist between true and false [54]. Authenticity in measurable, objective terms is used as a criterion for measuring the authenticity of cultural heritage with emphasis on its material part. This approach is based on the tradition and traditional characteristics of an object or object, considering commodification or commercialization as the destruction of authenticity. What is authentic is to be created by a traditional artist from traditional sources and in traditional ways. The basic principle of objective authenticity is not to create something for sale. Viewed in this way, the criterion of authenticity limits the range of products that can be considered authentic. Authenticity in the World Heritage Convention is based on the criterion of objective authenticity and is recognized as such by international society. With cultural tourism of interest, the concept of authenticity as a tourist destination also emerges to confront it with the inauthentic and performative nature of tourist sites. The commodification of culture is condemned by researchers of cultural authenticity because it transforms traditional culture into a culture for sale that has little to do with traditions [55] (pp. 26,



349–370). Here, it should be emphasized that the criterion of objective authenticity has been criticized by researchers who deal primarily with intangible culture, who believe that cultural authenticity changes with culture, the basic feature of which is variability over time.

MacCannell argued that the primary motivation for modern tourists is the search for authenticity, a search that is confronted with the inauthentic and performative nature of tourist sites [56]. Boorstin describes the transition from the “traveller” of times past to the “tourist” of the present, a transition he regards in the negative insofar as the “tourist” becomes insulated from the “authenticity” of the places visited [57]. He condemns the commoditization of culture in that it transforms an “authentic culture” into that of the “inauthentic theme park culture”; as an example, we can see this in historical China’s monuments. However, we must remember that the definition of “authenticity” set in the West might be different from the Eastern point of view. There is no corresponding Chinese concept for “authenticity” [58] that perfectly matches the Western notion of this term. In China, the matter of the material authenticity of the past and the reconstruction of built heritage was relatively uncontroversial. Additionally, the problem of goods which are subjected to works aimed at increasing their “attractiveness”, often destroying the cultural context of a given place or custom, is not only connected to non-European countries.

In the paper *Influence of Cultural Identity on Tourists’ Authenticity*, the authors summarize the result of their research with the following words: “tourists’ perception of authenticity is really influenced by cultural identity in intangible cultural heritage tourism”, and they add that the perception of authenticity “affects tourists’ experience and behavior—existential authenticity only affects tourists’ satisfaction experience, while constructive authenticity affects tourists’ satisfaction and loyalty at the same time” [59] (p. 14).

### 3.2. Research on Authenticity

A very important issue was the motivation and reasons why the trainers decided to come to the temple. One respondent made the decision to come to Shaolin because he could not attend a group trip organized by his martial arts teacher. Encouraged by his co-trainers, he came alone, combining his trip to the temple and martial arts study with his plans to study sinology at Beijing University. Thus, he combined his passion for training with his professional plans by studying Chinese. For all the trainers it was very important to taste more than just Gong Fu classes—the “real Shaolin”. One of the respondents answered that:

*(...) was wondering to come here and train with the masters and breathe the air of the temple Buddhism, because for doing the martial arts that is called Shaolin Gong Fu, and then visiting Shaolin 20 years after that’s going to be a waste of time, so I have to be there.*

Therefore, it was obvious to him that visiting a Shaolin temple, when one is an adept of styles derived from that place, is simply part of serious practice. Other respondents felt the same way. An Italian martial arts adept had a similar opinion. For her, traveling and training in Shaolin is part of the important process of learning martial arts, as it is a journey in itself, into oneself.

Expectations of demanding training and achieving training goals in the Shaolin Temple can be seen in the following excerpt from an interview with an Italian respondent:

*So, the first time when I heard about Shaolin was when I saw a documentary on YouTube. It was very interesting documentary. Shaolin monks were training all day, and that was really important thing, because I was really into train, I wanted to do something like real strong stuffs, tiring staff, and all day train in full immersion, and all kind of drill that makes stronger, like, you know, Iron Fist, climbing up to the mountain, and doing forms that makes you faster, becoming stronger these were my objective, so I said Shaolin Temple is where I want to go because there are the best masters and where I can find a real training I want to do so I came here. (Student from Italy, age 24)*

The expectation of intensive, even rigorous training is therefore embedded in the respondents’ perceptions of the monastery itself and the way in which physical exercise is

practiced. All respondents agreed that students' involvement in practice is the key. A lack of commitment when coming to the monastery, or sometimes bordering on total dedication, is a very serious mistake, according to the respondents. The "European" attitude, understood by respondents as the expectation of teaching from a master without student involvement, is wrong. The "I pay, so I demand" approach is pointless. A group of younger trainers (under 25 years old, men themselves) thought that training is not difficult. When they applied themselves to the training, they expected more difficulties and a greater load of discipline in the training:

*(...) And talking about the training, there is complete not, yhmm, no discipline. I thought that discipline is the first thing in a training, in any training in any sport. And here, a Shaolin monk, and as a master, and not demonstrating discipline in a training, means you are not even respecting him and his experience.*

Three Italian respondents pointed out that training in the martial arts schools in which they studied was often more demanding in their own country. Both groups, however, were aware that they were really assessed by teachers during these introductory exercises in the main training. Some of them were disappointed with the lower intensity of the training. One Italian respondent expressed an interesting doubt pointing out the commercial and financial aspects:

*(...) Sometimes it's like being on vacation. I think that in my opinion they do not press too much on this site, because we are foreigners, so they do not want to create problems, maybe problems with wages, and make our stay here more convenient, and not ruin the vacation for foreigners. But that means we shouldn't be tourists, we should be students. The master should be the master... (student from Italy, 26 years)*

Over time, however, they came to understand the difference between Chinese training and its variant for foreigners, which also differed significantly from the exercise pattern they had encountered in their home countries. The approach of Chinese master-teachers was also assessed. Most of the instructors are young people, aged 20–30. Sometimes they are much younger than their foreign students. However, the age of the teachers is not an issue, and according to the selected respondents, the essence of the matter is their approach to teaching. Here, again the starting point is of course the figure of the teacher from their country (sometimes he/she is Chinese). Two respondents from Italy pointed out that some masters in Shaolin are not as demanding as teachers in their Italian martial arts schools. Respondents attached great importance to spiritual practices that they believe should accompany martial arts. Almost everyone indicated their willingness to participate in *Qigong* practices, meditation or prayer meetings. Unfortunately, as it turned out, despite the assurances of the monastery office that such meetings would be available to groups of individual practitioners, there were far fewer than promised and they were available only to men.

It is worth mentioning here a few additional "attractions" that make the visits of tourists to the Shaolin Monastery more enjoyable and the opinion about them given by respondents. For example, richer tourists can buy a helicopter trip over the monastery and admire the entire facility from a bird's eye view, as well as places important for the tradition of the monastery (Buddha Cave). Those who also want to have similar experiences, and cannot afford a helicopter flight, can take advantage of the two roller coasters to the stations at the tops of the mountain, from where is a view of the monastery and its surroundings. The model farm of the Shaolin Monastery, where vegetables, fruits and herbs are grown, later used by monks in traditional medicine practiced in the monastery, is also clearly visible. All these things convince the visitors that the monastery is ecological and self-sufficient. One of the more unusual, typically commercial attractions is VR Shaolin—the opportunity to watch unique scenes from the history of the monastery in virtual reality. Right next to it there is a hall presenting "Ice Sculptures—the world of monks and the Shaolin Temple". Visitors wear long, hooded coats, as the temperature in the exhibition area is maintained at minus 10 degrees Celsius. The attraction is also available in summer. The idea itself and its

implementation aroused astonishment and disgust among the respondents asked about it. It was a typical market attraction for them, which they did not want to use. Additionally, the use of a coat rental shop aroused reluctance and hygiene concerns in them:

*... these coats unfortunately did not smell good.... I can't imagine wearing such a garment in the middle of summer. I viewed the exhibit in my own clothes. Unfortunately, it's just the usual tourist trap.... another item on the "must see" map, but only because it's in Shaolin.... (...) where did the idea for ice monks come from anyway? Maybe it's cool for kids... (student from Italy, 26 years)*

The idea of visiting the monastery from the helicopter was also unusual for the respondents. One person even described it as grotesque.

The souvenir business is an important element of promotion, but also a real danger to the image of the UNESCO site. In front of the entrance to the Shaolin Scenic Area (a huge landscape and theme park area), there is a promenade where tourists can buy souvenirs related to the monastery: fridge magnets, monk figurines, replicas of weapons, training weapons, training clothes and "monks" coats, T-shirts, traditional Chinese clothes for children, and sweets, but they can also use the services of a masseur and chiropractor, buy herbal mixtures prepared on the spot in Chinese medicine stores, or finally take a photo in a Chinese emperor or princess outfit in a special, climatic scenery or even order a copy of the Buddhist sutras. It is interesting that among the numerous replicas of weapons from the Shaolin Monastery, sold in souvenir shops, you can often find a Japanese katana or the more typical Okinawan *nunchaku*. When the author asked about it, the sellers replied that "it is also from Shaolin". This is one of the common ways of misleading less informed tourists, who of course are more likely to buy the "Shaolin katana". Interestingly, Chinese people visiting the monastery often buy such a "Shaolin katana" for their children, as a souvenir. Certainly, such a "Shaolin katana" is much more attractive than an ordinary monk's stick, which is, however, the basic and historical weapon of monks. However, there are opinions that defend Shaolin Temple's commercial position:

*Training fees, souvenir stores, side attractions—why not? The monastery has to make money too. Why should it give it up? Is it just because it is a monastery? Around the world, monasteries and temples also benefit financially from their history and traditions, if they can boast of such... (Respondent from France, age 37)*

An active way to introduce visitors to the world of Shaolin monks is through demonstrations at the Wushu Training Center, located next to the main entrance to the Shaolin Scenic Spot. They invariably attract crowds of tourists eager to admire the combat skills and acrobatic dexterity of young adepts. The show consists of several permanent elements, which include among others a calligraphy show, concluded with an auction of the created works, and a martial arts show. The show is advertised as "The Shaolin Monks Show" and is performed by the members of The Shaolin Temple Wushu Training Center (STWTC), which was jointly constructed by the China National Tourism Administration and the Henan Provincial Tourism Administration in the mid-1980s [32] (p. 10). All respondents admitted that they believed they are "real monks", not well trained athletes. One of the respondents even call it a kind of "cheating":

*I also went there to watch the monks and the performance. (...) I thought is the Shaolin. And they said no, we are just the kung fu school, the Shaolin is the name of our team to have the performance. And it's just to show the tourist what is the model of Shaolin kung fu ... I thought, ok, yeah, it can be like this, but for my expectation it must be all of the monks, I thought it must all be monks ... (student from Italy, age 22)*

The above-mentioned attractions are purely entertaining in nature, but they give the feeling of participating in a great event, including martial arts and the world of monks. As the tour of the complex usually begins at this stage, the show is a ritual introducing tourists (Chinese and Western), preparing them for a further journey into the world of monks. After leaving the demonstration in the center, all visitors head to monastery's facilities. One of

the respondents summed up the commercial activities of the monastery as follows (quoted statement in the original):

*( . . . ) they are keeping the less important part and they lose the one they should keep. ( . . . ) Shaolin is now like a brand, the success of Shaolin, fame, its fame relies on the thousands of year past, so all is thanks to their past. If they follow like this, they will lose their authority, and get to kind of museum with the circles, amusement park. Also from the business part of view I have seen that they should decide what they should focus on. They are also not doing business in wright way. I mean, from my point of view, when I'm a single foreign student, they just don't care about my opinion and my problems, and it's clear, that they just want to get my money. So overall, it's disappointing, because it is supposed to be a temple, secondly is disappointing, because they promised me something, I paid a lot of it, and not getting that and it's not good for them, because when you think about your business, you shouldn't let your customer go unsatisfied. Because, we are single students, ok, we gonna spread so much more that school students. Once they will go back, they will go to the same school and just talking with each other. When we go back we will talk about it with our school so, maybe 20 more people each, so . . . And the bad marketing is so much more effective than good one. And everyone knows that, from the business point of view.*

Here, one of the respondents (student from Italy, age 24) referred to the question of a training offer for individual martial arts practitioners, which turned out to be inadequate to the actual quality of martial arts practice in a monastery. A similar opinion was expressed by a respondent from Poland (age 40):

*Is it even possible to speak of the authenticity of the monastery? For sure you can feel the kung fu spirit here, for sure training within such walls is motivating, but modern monks are not authentic for me... They do not relate their attitude to the historical vision of Shaolin monastery... The walls themselves are more authentic for me, the buildings, because I know the history of the monastery, I know when the monks had to leave the monastery due to historical circumstances... Going to the monastery today I look more for this hidden kung fu spirit, than for inspiration of modern monks. The monks I see here, especially the young ones, do not have much in common with Buddhism for me. They are more like actors, ready to play all the time. Some who teach foreigners here do not feel the spirit of the martial arts at all. It happens that these young teachers play on their phones while teaching, and yet you have to pay for training. Sometimes I think it's completely inconsistent with the spirit of the martial arts to conduct training so hopelessly and then send a foreigner with a diploma of 'training in Shaolin' when you haven't really taught that person anything...*

Other respondents commented, among others, on the issues of superficial and, in their opinion, careless attempts to refresh the walls of monastery buildings, the use of colors that are too bright for this, etc. Therefore, here we still have the "I understand-but-don't accept" aspect, which is the result of being brought up in a different culture.

All respondents also noted the politicization of the Shaolin Temple. As Sofield and Li rightly point out [60] (pp. 362, 392), the link between the political goals of power and government, the protection of the cultural heritage of the nation, sustainable environmental values and the development of tourism are problematic for many countries. The politicization of national heritage is not a new phenomenon, and is particularly common in the case of communist states. In such cases, various types of cultural collages are possible, which will play a more popularizing or soft power function than actually maintaining the authenticity of the phenomenon or object. The Shaolin Temple is perceived by respondents as one of them. They disapproved of the monastery's very consistent policy of clearing the area of private martial arts schools that could compete with Shaolin. Although the monastery carried out these activities without publicity, these facts were known to all respondents:

*...it's all Chinese government . . . Wanzhigou village was destroyed. We all know about it, but in the temple monks don't speak about it, even Mr. Wang (tourists' coordinator*

*in Shaolin Temple). It was a great place, lot of kung fu schools . . . to close to Shaolin Temple. Is it all about the money? Where is the place for real kung fu? (Student from Germany, age 27)*

Even if we assume that martial arts practitioners visiting Shaolin Temple bring with them an idealized image of the place, it is indeed difficult to justify the lack of competence of Chinese teachers as alleged by the aforementioned two interviewees. The respondent from Italy rightly points out that Shaolin Temple's business activities need a lot of changes in this field. His statement implies that if the monks are already planning to do business in the monastery, it should be done well. If a martial arts tourist comes here and pays for instruction, they should receive it and the teacher should be involved in the process of training the student. The respondents also pointed out that such activity would, of course, monopolize the position of the Shaolin masters in the region, which, in their opinion, however, was a restriction of the schools' freedom of activity and development.

### 3.3. Research on UNESCO Conventions

Due to the 1st Article of the *World Cultural Heritage Convention* [61], cultural property is defined as:

- Monuments of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- Assemblages of separate or combined buildings which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history;
- Historic places having exceptional universal value from a historical, aesthetic, ethnographic, or anthropological point of view.

In order for a cultural site to be inscribed on the World Heritage List, exceptional universal value must be recognized on the basis of at least one of the five criteria outlined below, with criterion VI used only as a supplementary criterion.

The goods should:

- I. Represent an outstanding work of human creative genius; or
- II. Represent a significant exchange of values, occurring in a given period of time or in a given cultural area of the world, in the field of architectural or technical development, monumental arts, urban or landscape design; or
- III. Bear unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or civilization still living or no longer extant; or
- IV. Be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural ensemble, set of engineering objects, or landscape that illustrates significant stage(s) in human history; or
- V. Be an outstanding example of a traditional settlement, traditional land or sea use representative of the culture(s) in question, or illustrating human interaction with the environment, particularly if/the asset/has become vulnerable due to irreversible change; or
- VI. Be associated in a direct or material way with events or living traditions, ideas, beliefs, artistic or literary works of outstanding universal significance (the Committee believes that this criterion should generally be used in conjunction with the other criteria).

The basic requirements that any cultural property must meet are authenticity and integrity. Due to the difficulty with the concept of authenticity, it has been assumed that it should refer to the design, materials, craftsmanship and surroundings, and in the case of cultural landscapes, to their characteristics and components. Exceptionally, a reconstruction may be accepted if it was made on the basis of full, detailed documentation of the original and was not of a conjunctural nature.

Due to the analyzed cases, the Shaolin Temple meets all the requirements for inscription on the list. It is an outstanding work attesting to the creative genius of man. The cited history of this place testifies indisputably to this point. The way it was built and the architectural style determine the exchange of cultural values in a given period of time. It should be noted here that foreigners visiting Shaolin are delighted with the monastery's

efforts to keep the building in good condition. They just do not understand why it is often connected with tacky—in their opinion—painting in bright colors, or just too frequent renovation of selected parts of the building. A still dusty, time-worn monument evokes in them a greater sense of authenticity than a renovated building, even one with an interesting history. However, as far as the additional point six of the article is concerned, there are debatable issues that make it impossible to include martial arts related to the monastery on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which is discussed further.

As defined by the UNESCO Convention, the text of which was adopted at the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO in October 2003, intangible heritage is customs, oral transmission, knowledge and skills, and the objects and cultural space associated with them, that are recognized as part of one's heritage by a community, group or individuals. This type of heritage is passed from generation to generation and continually recreated by communities and groups in relation to their environment, history and relationship to nature. For a community, intangible heritage is a source of a sense of identity and continuity.

In terms of the UNESCO Convention, this would seem to warrant inscription, as intangible heritage includes “oral traditions and transmissions, including language as a vehicle for intangible cultural heritage; performing arts; customs, rituals and festive rites; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; skills associated with traditional crafts” (“Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity”) [62]. However, in the case of martial arts, the basic condition for qualification to the list is not fulfilled. It is supposed to be “intangible heritage (...) handed down from generation to generation and continuously reproduced by communities”. As far as the analyzed case is concerned, not the question of authenticity itself, the discussion of which has already been presented in this article and which is questionable from the point of view of the anthropological concept of authenticity, but continuous transmission does not allow martial arts to be included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Especially the events of the twentieth century, caused by historical circumstances (the destruction of the monastery in 1928 and the actions of the government after the implementation of Deng Xiaoping's reforms), caused disturbances and consequently the disappearance of the authenticity of Shaolin kung fu. The project to promote the monastery as a Chinese heritage and tourist attraction, which was carried out as part of these reforms, involved a great deal of interference in the surroundings and in the lives of the inhabitants in the vicinity of the temple. In order to keep the temple as intact as possible, as is expected of a cultural heritage site, the surrounding community was relocated, local martial schools closed and hundreds of families forcibly resettled in a new model village built 20 km away. Given that this population included many of the martial masters who created the uniqueness of the temple site, the Chinese government itself stripped Shaolin kung fu of its authenticity, impoverishing and consequently controlling it. It has also cut off the local population from it, which, according to UNESCO documents, is not in accordance with regulations. Conflicts have even broken out between monks at the temple and teachers in the local community over who owns and can legally speak for Shaolin kung fu. This is different in the case of Chenjiagou Village, where it has been accepted that tai chi and the village, and thus the people who live here, are one. There are over 40 schools around the village which offer tai chi teaching and this is performed in harmony with the community and the heirs of the Chen tradition. Here, then, this community aspect, essential for maintaining UNESCO standards, is fulfilled.

Globalization changes have affected world heritage and do not necessarily prevent the UNESCO intangible heritage listing. Jemaa el-Fna Square as a cultural space can be taken as an example here. Since the 11th century, it has been a symbol of identity for the people of Marrakech. Although today it is surrounded by restaurants and hotels, it still fulfills its traditional role. It is a meeting place where stories are still told based on centuries of oral tradition. In the case of Shaolin kung fu, the tradition has been lost for centuries and adapted to the requirements of commercialization and politicization. China

has a lot of traditions inscribed on the intangible list. These include the art of Chinese seals, the printing technique of Chinese woodcuts, Chinese calligraphy, the traditional mastery of wooden architecture, epics, and the Kun Qu Opera. Of the martial arts, Tai Chi of Chengsiagou was inscribed. However, unlike Shaolin kung fu, here the continuity of the message and symbiosis with the locals who continue to co-create the phenomenon have been preserved. Analyzing selected Chinese cultural properties, one can see that it is not the Western approach to determining authenticity alone that “discriminates” against kung fu. This authenticity was broken when the tradition was tailored to the tourist market in a way that no longer has anything to do with the centuries-old tradition. Although it draws on it, elements have been used to create a kind of ethnopark based on the commodification of culture. At this point, the West of authenticity. The preservation of such a state of affairs is not a matter for UNESCO.

#### 4. Discussion

According to respondents’ opinions, Shaolin Temple is expected to maintain its authenticity and at the same time provide a high class contemporary quality of service. Martial arts tourists want to be participants of this great event for them, which is training in an almost legendary place, but they realize that the contemporary face of the monastery is different from the image created on the basis of literature or popular culture.

However, reconciling these visions is not easy. The thinking of respondents from Europe is clearly conditioned by a Western understanding of the preservation of authenticity, of which the UNESCO conventions are just one expression. They use terms such as “authenticity”, “originality” and “museum” to characterize phenomena concerning the transformation of Shaolin Temple. Two people even called the Shaolin Monastery “an amusement park” in this context, although the concept of theme parks is popular in China (so-called Folk Villages). In such an amusement park/Folk Village, the “actors” and inhabitants should be of the right ethnic origin, and they should not leave their villages to present “authentic” behavior “untainted” by outside influences. Of course, they should be proficient in traditional crafts and skills such as acrobatics, dancing, horse riding, and martial arts. Such guidelines apply to Folk Villages in the Shenzhen zone, where these parks “faithfully represent the life, habits and conditions of different nationalities in villages” (Shenzhen Splendid China Development Ltd. Report 1994). An aesthetic selection of “residents” has been made: we will meet young, beautiful people here. Middle-aged and elderly people are absent. Additionally, some traditional activities have been modified to be presented to tourists in such a way that much of the original form and meaning is lost. The end result is a mixture of authenticity and artificiality [51] (pp. 17–18). The Shaolin Temple has also become a similar place. Each architectural element, historical or tourist, refers to the tradition of monks’ struggle. Decorative replicas of various weapons are visible almost everywhere. Monks and visitors who train here, dressed in gray monks’ clothes, walk around the monastery and its surroundings. We will not see the older monks very often: they protect themselves from tourist traffic in inaccessible monastery buildings. Sometimes they even give up eating together because training tourists, including foreigners, more and more often have access to the refectory. For them it is a real adventure, a great experience. They can for a moment become full participants of a unique community and experience. Here, commerce supports the preservation of a certain cultural “bubble” in accordance with an unwritten agreement on accepting the contractual authenticity of a place. It is worth paying attention to an important phenomenon. Shaolin Temple is listed by UNESCO as a material heritage. For Chinese communities, architectural objects and all kinds of buildings are of significant importance in the social context, while in Western cultures, buildings and monuments are venerated and often cared for out of love for their form. In other words, such facilities are of great value in China as long as they serve social contacts and purposes, so they fully meet criterion (vi): *The concentration of sacred and secular structures in the Dengfeng area reflects the strong and persistent tradition of the center of heaven and earth linked to the sacred mountain which sustained imperial sacrifices and patronage over 1500 years*

and became of outstanding significance in Chinese culture. The Buddhist structures came to have a symbiotic relationship with the sacred mountain [10]. However, it is often incomprehensible for representatives of Western culture, as the free, often loud behavior of the Chinese is at odds with their understanding of sanctity and respect for a unique place. Hence, the situations described above already have two levels of interpretation: Western (respect for the place, appreciation for monuments) and Chinese (an exceptional place, something important happened here, we experience this socially as heirs of the Chinese tradition). Therefore, both playing “students and masters” during the show as well as very exotic ice-cream attractions are part of celebrating the place in a very social and collective way, but this is not always clear for foreigners, even those familiar with Chinese culture, who come here to train and study Chinese martial arts fighting. There was even some resistance among the respondents in accepting such an interpretation, rooted in the cultural conditions in which they grew up. Even though they seemed to understand these phenomena, they found it difficult to distance themselves from typically Chinese sacred space management and disposing of the monastery’s cultural heritage in a very commercial manner. A similar will to practice in a traditional, recognized martial arts center draws taijiquan practitioners to Chenjiagou Village. Here, an additional advantage is nature and natural conditions that perfectly harmonize with the ideas of taijiquan practice: harmony with nature, unhindered Qi circulation. Here, these values are held in particular. Raimondo [27] drew attention to an interesting phenomenon. In conversations with the inhabitants of Chenjiagou, he noted the widespread concern of the locals that the village may undergo changes aimed at improving tourist traffic and increasing the attractiveness of the place (he mentions, for example, interactive displays accompanying exhibitions, especially liked by children), which, at the same time will violate its authenticity. This authenticity was understood here in a way as a combination of natural conditions, traditional living solutions and the tradition of teaching martial arts. The residents realize that the proposed new amenities will improve living conditions not only for tourists, but also for them. They argued that it would not be in line with the expected image of the village. Additionally, tourists who come here are often “disappointed” with modernity. As in Shaolin, they expect a certain “severity” of their living and training conditions, which for them are synonymous with the “traditional”, “exotic” place of the Taiji village in China. This is already widely described in the literature as searching for the “true Far East”, a semi-mythical, spiritual place where a person can escape from the alternative of an industrial society [27] (p. 58). The martial arts tourist, like thousands of others before them, comes here with their vision of a wild, exotic place, full of the magic of ancient knowledge and martial arts. It is worth emphasizing here, however, the care of the Chinese not to let the place become Westernized, to keep the “Chinese spirit”. They see it as a guarantee of the authenticity and familiarity of the place, which is very important to them. However, the situation may change. Due to the inclusion of the village of Chenjiagou on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List in 2020, in this place, this situation may change due to the increase in the intensity of tourism. COVID-19 restrictions for some time will contribute to slowing down this process, but commercialization is a real threat.

Both places, deeply rooted in the history, tradition and culture of China, have become a very important destination for martial arts practitioners. The historical aspect of the facilities covering Shaolin and the continuity of the taijiquan transmission in the village of Chenjiagou have made both these places culturally legendary, and marketing is useful today. They represent two forms of protection granted by UNESCO: the Shaolin Temple, which is among the tangible heritage sites, and Chenjiagou Village, which is on the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List. Their main mission is to preserve the sites and traditions, complying with UNESCO principles. Indeed, there are many similarities between the village of Chenjiagou and the Shaolin Temple, but also many differences that are particularly relevant to this text. Both places are frequented by tourists, including many who plan to train. Both places are important symbols for China, as they refer to the legacy of Chinese martial arts, an important element of Chinese culture. However, the management of the



Shaolin Monastery is much more akin to managing a large company than a religious site, as the respondents pointed out. The village of Chenjiagou seems to be skillfully defending itself against such a commercial model of management, and thus stripping it of its aura of authenticity. Here, the introduction of modernization and technological innovations is controlled and assessed by the residents themselves. They consciously reduce the number of technological solutions, so they do not follow the path chosen by the Shaolin Monastery with its sometimes flashy attractions. This desire to preserve the austerity of life and the stubborn adherence to the “authentic” image of the village, which is considered to be its old unchanged form, can be objectionable. This attitude seems to be much closer to the thinking of preserving authenticity intact that prevails in UNESCO terms.

Compliance with UNESCO is a condition for the maintenance of the facilities on the list, but local authorities invest in increasing the attractiveness of these places, often treating them as investments calculated for high profit and capital in the form of international interest and impact in the field of cultural soft power. However, both Shaolin and Chenjiagou created a specific “offer” in which we can find the promise of a unique place/tradition in a skillful, colorful setting. The given examples also fit into the idea of the so-called commodification of a culture, and the legal and administrative framework and management strategies should take into account the most important issue in the context of spiritual culture and intellectual resources: the commercialization of knowledge and traditional culture as activities that threaten the continuity and transmission of the intangible culture of communities and nations. It is also linked to the fact that substitutive commercialization occurs here, i.e., the transformation of production, which begins to be oriented towards a buyer coming from outside the community. In this case, it would concern the making of the aforementioned Shaolin Temple “training offer”. It is often associated with the decline of the traditional craft or cultural phenomenon involved. In the situation of the next, predatory stage of usurping commercialization (encroaching commercialization), there is a sponsored reorientation of the vital craft production (cultural phenomenon), which begins to be oriented towards the external market. This is also the case with the Shaolin Temple, which has organized Shaolin branches around the world and through these channels popularizes the legend of the temple.

An interesting analysis of such commodifying moves and shifts in authenticity comes from Davyd Greenwood. He based his considerations on observations made in the town of Fuenterrabia, where once a year the inhabitants organized a celebration called *Alarde*, commemorating the 17th century victory. Everyone was involved in preparing the procession, in which members of the various professional groups dressed in their typical costumes followed the music through the town to the main square, where the main part of the spectacle took place. The Council for Tourism, noticing the interest of tourists in the “colorful folklore”, included *Alarde* in its list of local attractions. It was suggested to the locals that they could put on two shows in one day, but they disagreed and even started to become less involved in the whole enterprise. The authorities even started to consider introducing a fee for residents who took part in the show. In this way, Greenwood argues, the authentic ritual became a performance, and the performance became a commodity on the cultural market. The inhabitants of Fuenterrabia were dispossessed of their ritual, and the ritual was destroyed. The commodification of a cultural element strips it of its former value. This is an extreme opinion, as Wiczorkiewicz points out, which believes that objects of interest to tourists gain the status of symbols of ethnic or cultural identity, and that they function as a means facilitating the cultivation of values related to it and enable their presentation to the visiting public. Participants in a religious ritual, aware that they are a “local attraction”, may charge a fee for the right to observe the ceremony and—by cultivating their beliefs—further assert themselves in the belief that it is their property, a treasure not accessible and understandable to everyone. The interest of outsiders in the local culture and the demand for craft and artistic products may even make people start to value what seemed to them to be of little value anymore [63] (p. 71).

The provisions of international law with regard to intangible heritage, developed as a result of a compromise, leave a great deal of freedom in defining models of protection and identification of intangible cultural heritage at the national level. This situation results in a different shape of national legal and administrative systems, often discriminating against certain forms of intangible heritage related to ethnic or national minorities.

## 5. Conclusions

Cultural authenticity is a topic that preoccupies researchers from many disciplines. At the same time, each discipline creates its own definitions, which, just like culture, change. A relatively new phenomenon that emerged at the turn of the 20th and 21st century is that of culture for sale—the creation of identity based on economic gain. This raises the question of the “authenticity” of contemporary cultural creations sold to tourists. In the case of China, commercialization does not exclude authenticity. Commodification is typically defined as tourism that transforms a culture of heritage into a commercialized product, which is packed and sold to tourists for their consumption. Similarly, commercialization involves rendering tourist sites available for profitable purposes. As Gammon mentioned, the commercialization of the past has become an accepted practice of the tourism industry [18]. Both concepts are believed to diminish authenticity and to ultimately reduce the value of a tourism product [26]. At Shaolin, the aspect of the commodification of certain monastery services becomes very visible, and on a large scale it can even be harmful.

In the case of UNESCO documents, what is authentic must be preserved or reconstructed under strict supervision. In this case, the authenticity associated with commercialization is acceptable to the Chinese because it concerns their intangible heritage, which they treat as the fulfilment of certain social needs that are often not present in the needs of Westerners and therefore not understood by them. This combination of culture and its commercialization in the case of Shaolin Temple occurs with the consent of the Chinese, who see it as the promotion of their culture and at the same time are proud that foreigners come here to admire it and participate in it. The people of Chenjiagou are more against changing their village in the name of cultural tourism. They seem more committed to maintaining its authenticity as they understand it, more “private” than “public” as is the case in Shaolin. It is also closer to the Western understanding of authenticity as mapped by the UNESCO convention.

Based on the above research and considerations, it can be noted that the Western vision of authenticity contained in the UNESCO documents remains in some conflict with the local solutions applied, for example, at Shaolin Temple. It seems, in turn, to be accepted and to coexist with a variant understanding of these assumptions of Chinese specificity in Chenjiagou. Here, it even flows naturally from the situation and does not interfere with the local understanding of the preservation of tradition. This is noted by the respondents who spoke about Shaolin in the interviews. They instinctively sense the lack of authenticity, being brought up in Western value standards. It is this understanding of the value of authenticity in a Western way that is identical to the UNESCO concept. Thus, a certain paradox occurs when Western tourists notice the differences in the understanding of authenticity in China and in the West and accept it, considering it to be the existing authenticity.

In China, intangible and tangible cultural heritage is used as a factor to strengthen national and local identity, for political ideology and for the development of tourism and cultural industries for economic benefits. Since the protection of intangible cultural heritage is the domain of the government, the tasks related to it are part of a larger plan. The commercialization of intangible and tangible cultural heritage is the main way to develop and finance it. This happens everywhere, but in China it is firmly rooted in the political system, where art and culture have always served a political purpose. This paradoxically achieves one of the goals of preserving intangible heritage, namely maintaining an unchanging traditional pattern of traditional governance based on local values. Thus, China maintains its position and continues to resist the Western values present in UNESCO regulations. They are trying to work out a new quality, which may

in some time become a compromise, allowing Shaolin kung fu to be added to UNESCO's Intangible Heritage List.

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