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IMITATION OR GENUINE FORMS? CHINESE MARTIAL ARTS IN THE PROCESS OF CULTURAL GLOBALISATION

Abstract

Far Eastern martial arts are now practiced worldwide and adopt a broad spectrum of forms, from traditionalist schools to combat systems or sports. It is hard to see them only as part of oriental culture, since they are substantially modified by the logic of capitalism and integrated into Western cultures. However, there is a risk that imitations might be taken for genuine forms. Commercialisation has influenced the way Far Eastern martial arts are understood today. They have become commodities belonging to the entertainment industry. Although very popular, the commercialised forms of martial arts do not reflect their true nature. This article poses the question whether it is still possible for traditional Far Eastern martial arts to exist in a commercialised and globalised world. It focuses on the case of *kungfu/wǔshù*, referring to how they are perceived, understood and adapted to contemporary conditions.

Key words: Far Eastern martial arts, Chinese martial arts, *kungfu/wǔshù*, combat sports/systems, traditional martial arts, traditional family style

The aim of this article is to discuss the challenges of globalisation for Far Eastern martial arts. The first section reviews selected critical accounts of the commercialisation of Far Eastern martial arts as a whole. In the second section, I move on to definitions of such martial arts as *wǔshù* and *kungfu* and show the differences between traditional martial arts and combat sports. The final section is focused on a traditional *kungfu* style called *Choy Lee Fut*. The aim of the case study is to show a new type of threat to

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traditional martial arts which concerns not only *Choy Lee Fut* but also other styles based on the traditional transfer of knowledge from family to family. The latter issue is rarely discussed among the researchers of Far Eastern martial arts, who usually focus on the most commercialised styles. Nevertheless, the situation of traditional family styles is becoming increasingly undermined in the face of the current acceleration of globalisation processes.

EXAMPLES OF THE IMPACT OF COMMERCIALISATION ON FAR EASTERN MARTIAL ARTS

Many experts agree that globalisation and the logic of capitalism have transformed Far Eastern martial arts into a “product” that is simple, repeatable and standardised, as well as simple to understand by audiences from other cultural circles. For example, Paul Bowman claims:

In the process, martial arts have become increasingly deracinated and commodified. Deracination means that ethnic or cultural characteristics are “uprooted” and sometimes sanitized for external consumption; commodification means that goods or services that were never originally intended to be bought and sold are transformed into things that can be bought and sold. Thus, traditional martial arts have been uprooted from their historical locations, new hybrid forms have emerged, and in the process, the places, roles, and functions of martial arts have changed considerably. (Bowman, 2010, p. 436)

The first dimension of the transformation process takes place in the sphere of literary and film fiction. The image of Far Eastern martial arts created in popular films is one saturated with brutality and devoid of the ethics that characterises traditional martial arts. Thus, it is difficult to find the true meaning of martial arts in the image created by the media. Moreover, a cynical and simplified vision of this Asian legacy is present beyond popular blockbusters, in magazines, martial art festivals, popular books and TV programmes. Opinion in this matter is expressed by Wojciech Cy-narski, who described the image of martial arts created by popular culture in the following way:

In the area of mass culture, the image of this spirituality (the religious dimension and the sacred sphere) is neglected, ignored or shown in a homogenised version. The example of known films shows the richness of martial arts, or

the diversity of their symbolism and spiritual traditions with which they are associated, or the confusion of these traditions and symbols . . . Ethical content, fashionable ideologies or the goals of producers, the attitude to aesthetics, realism and violence, especially the intuitions and visions of directors, have influenced the popular image of the spiritual side of martial arts. (Cynarski, 2012, p. 25)

Both Bowman and Cynarski emphasise the negative impact of commercialisation on Far Eastern martial arts, paying special attention to the image created in film productions. However, in the multitude of films where impressive combat scenes are more important than the plot, exceptions may also be found. In 2002, film entitled *Hero* (Chinese title *Ying Xiong*, directed by Zhang Yimou) appeared on the screens of cinemas, showing Chinese martial arts in a completely different light. The film stood out with its beautiful, sophisticated combat scenes, the capture of *wǔdé* values, and a complex plot. Moreover, in the second decade of the 21st century, the image of martial arts in films is evolving towards the humanisation of the presented content. The brutality, ruthlessness and bloody scenes are shown to a lesser extent and more and more often the films contain the spiritual message of martial arts. Examples include films such as *Ip Man* (Chinese title *Yip Man*, 2008), *True Legend* (Chinese *Su Qi-Er*, 2010), *Shaolin* (Chinese title *Xin Shao Lin Si*, 2011), *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* (Chinese title *Wo hu cang long*, 2000), *Man of Tai Chi* (2013), *Rise of the Legend* (Chinese title *Huang Feihong Zhi Yingxiong You Meng*, 2014), among others. While one can agree with both Bowman and Cynarski that the true spirituality borne within martial arts is distorted by the processes of commercialisation which makes it difficult to understand their true meaning, not all manifestations of commercialisation can be univocally defined as negative.

Another dimension of commercialisation is the process of “sportification” of many traditional martial arts combined with a departure from their ethos and ethics and proposing a fashionable lifestyle instead. Collecting ranks has become a common practice among adepts, one which has changed the meaning of promotion to higher ranks of students and masters. Traditional martial arts has never been as focused on winning competitions, medals, tournaments, and sporting idols. It used to be a way of self-development based on mastering traditional techniques aimed at self-defence rather than winning tournaments. Old masters enjoyed much

more respect than nowadays, when the biggest fame is reserved for winners of popular tournaments, such as the Olympic games. In such a way sportification brings commercialisation to traditional martial arts. For example, *wǔshù* as a sport is also gaining interest among sports companies, with major world brands such as Nike and Adidas offering collections of sports clothing for *wǔshù* training. Unfortunately, these garments are not related to the traditional costumes used in Chinese martial arts which makes them not so different from the clothes used in other sports. One of the effects of martial arts' commercialisation is the creation of the category of so-called "combat sports". Classifying all varieties of martial arts as combat sports displays a misunderstanding of the specifics, subtlety and differences of many Asian systems (Cynarski, 2004, p. 351).

Commercialisation of contemporary martial practices may be seen as reversal of the traditional way of self-improvement (Cynarski, 2004, p. 315). This is a quite common practice among masters or students starting their own path as leaders of their own schools. The possibility of shortening that path by the simple use of financial means is very tempting in today's world. The switch from tradition and adjustment to the laws of the market offers an escape from the need to make difficult decisions and face challenges that determine the true meaning of Far Eastern martial arts. In the age of globalisation, it is no longer possible to verify either the competences of masters/leaders of schools or the knowledge they provide. For example, the availability of a huge amount of "training" materials, provided by YouTube, for instance, leads to valuable knowledge disappearing among a flood of simplified hints and losing its unique value at the same time (see: 6 Dragons Kungfu, 2019; How You Can Learn Martial Arts at Home by Yourself, 2018). All this contributes to the creation of pseudo-martial arts and thus pseudo-schools of martial arts. An extreme example of a hybrid created for the needs of the modern customer who is looking for an interesting form of sporting activity that does not require a long-term process of learning and technique improvement is provided by Tae Bo, developed by Billy Blanks. In 1989 Tae Bo was introduced to the United States of America – it was promoted as a kind of fitness exercise that took movements from amateur boxing, muay thai and taekwondo, and combinations of them were created to be performed, accompanied by background music (Tae Bo, 2014). Combat elements were eliminated and just its visual attractiveness made Tae Bo very popular in the world of aerobics (Bowman, 2010, p. 3).

We should also bear in mind the commercial use of symbols of tradition, e.g. the myth about the creation of Chinese martial arts in Shaolin was used to develop the Shaolin Temple as a tourist destination and to create a brand recognisable all over the world in the form of Shaolin monks' display groups. The topic of the strong commercialisation of the Shaolin Temple by its current Abbot Shi Yongxin, who has been developing the commercial potential of the temple since 1999 using typical business practices, has been widely discussed. Thanks to a series of marketing measures, he transformed the name Shaolin into a world-famous brand and the monastery itself became a tourist destination, not necessarily connected with a spiritual experience. The name itself is registered as a trademark to which only monks of the monastery are entitled. The monastery has also hosted a reality show *Kung-fu star* (Bloomberg Businessweek, 2015). A BBC (2014) report offers a perfect example of marketing activity: a job advertisement for a PR specialist and a social media specialist, proving that steps have been made towards image building. Shi also founded a Shaolin-based film studio, an online shop and a beverage brand. One of his latest business projects is to build a powerful "branch" of the Shaolin Temple in Australia, including a Buddhist temple, a hotel, a martial arts academy and a golf course (TVN24, 2015). The Shaolin Temple is often featured in advertisements for Western brands, such as Pepsi or Mountain Dew in order to attract the attention of the audience with an unusual idea. A similar process is also taking place in other monasteries famous for the "birth" of Chinese martial arts, such as the Wudang Temple or the Emei Temple.

The number of examples of commercialisation influencing Far Eastern martial arts is enormous. Instead of adding to these examples, my plan is to move on to the main problem and ask to what extent can traditional martial arts, such as the *Choy Lee Fut kungfu* style, retain their traditional message within the style itself. However, before focusing on this issue, the basic types of Far Eastern martial arts have to be discussed.

BETWEEN TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS AND COMBAT SPORTS – THE MEANING OF CONCEPTS

First of all, "Far Eastern martial arts" is the most general term used here and one which includes all other terms discussed below. According to Cynarski:

martial arts are a historical category of perfect hand-to-hand and weapons-based combat systems originating from warrior cultures, linked with ethical codes and elements of metaphysics. The humanistic theory of martial arts offers a broad perspective on the phenomenon of these psycho-physical practices and of their practitioners. From that perspective we know that the Path of the Warrior is about going beyond your limitations, in a way about transcending yourself through the constant effort of working on yourself; this is a moral way – of perfecting your character and personality through a struggle with your own weaknesses, one which is the most important and difficult struggle. (Cynarski, 2004, p. 20)

The definition indicates the complexity of Far Eastern martial arts and the need to conduct interdisciplinary research combining various fields of scholarship. For the purposes of this article this definition will be a starting point for the discussion of the form of Chinese martial arts known as *wǔshù/kungfu*.

The Chinese martial arts are most commonly called *wǔshù* (武术).² This term begins with the character *wǔ* (武) which refers to combat. The second character, *shù* (术), indicates skills related to *wǔ*. The character *wǔ* is composed of two signs: *zhǐ* (止) which means “to stop” and *gē* (戈) which is the ancient weapon – “spear/halberd” (Szymankiewicz & Śniegowski, 1987, p. 9). The essence of the character *wǔ* is indeed to stop conflict and promote peace. Another similar term often found in the literature is *wǔyì* (武艺). The first character, *wǔ*, is shared by both terms and refers to combat, while *yì* (艺) represents sublime abilities expressed as art. Only some English-language and Polish scholars use the term *wǔshù* to refer to martial techniques and *wǔyì* to martial arts (Henning, 2010, pp. 92–99). Most of the literature does not differentiate between the two and tends to take a simplified approach by using only the term *wǔshù*. In the 20th century the term *guóshù* (国术) was also introduced, meaning a national art. This term was used in Taiwan at the time when *wǔshù* was forbidden in mainland China.

The term *gōngfu* (功夫) in Chinese means attaining a high level of skill in some particular area. The term itself is made up of the characters *gōng* (功) – “achievement, output” and *fu* (夫) – “a man” (Szymankiewicz

² In the article, I use the *pinyin* transcription system and, if possible, transcription in the form of signs. In reference to *Choy Lee Fut kungfu*, due to the origin of the style, the names are written in Cantonese dialect.

& Śniegowski, 1987, p. 9). This may be interpreted as the whole of man's achievement and output. The most commonly used term is *kungfu*, referring collectively to all martial arts in China. However, strictly speaking, it should only be used together with the name of a style (Osuch, 2002, p. 12), e.g. *Choy Lee Fut kungfu*, *Chow Gar kungfu*, *Hung Gar kungfu*, where it simply means being highly skilled in a given style.

The term *wǔshù* was popularised in the 20th century, for the purposes of the authorities of the People's Republic of China, which decided to create a sport based on *kungfu*, a means of education for the new generation. Earlier, the same authorities had rejected this form of self-defence as it was considered a dangerous tool in the fight against the state system. Partial rejection of *kungfu* history, its modification and compilation led to the creation of a new unified system called *wǔshù*. This became more of a combat sport with a well-developed competition programme. Although the new *wǔshù* structure did not reflect true historical martial arts, *wǔshù* has become more than just a simple system of attack and defence – it has become a way of cultivating the body and mind.

The above issue is a good starting point in order to identify the basic differences between **traditional martial arts** and **combat sports/systems**. According to Krzysztof Jankowiak:

The *traditional martial arts* represent a way for the adept that he may adopt for his entire life. First, he practices it for many years and follows the way of a defined "martial" tradition. Throughout the duration of the training process, regardless of the adept's age, his fighting spirit is developed – one of the key characteristics of a "warrior". This is an extraordinary experience, especially when the adept, already in his old age, still cultivates the art, remaining on the True Path of the Warrior. (Jankowiak, 2013, pp. 80–81)

The process of shaping a martial arts' adept, arriving at his spiritual maturity and perfecting a given discipline was supposed to take place based on so-called traditional training which may be considered to be a specific educational method. When examining various Chinese martial arts schools, it is frequently to be noticed that each of them put an emphasis on the strict compliance with the rules of such training, even though in each of them that traditional training may have taken different forms. A closer look at what a given school understood as traditional training usually reveals a collection of exercises and forms of behaviour. These were related to a specific etiquette, a hierarchy within the group, or ceremonies.

It should be pointed out that the ritualisation of certain forms of behaviour of family members (the family *jiā* being the basic functional unit of Chinese society) and the ritualisation at martial arts' schools had the same purpose. The clear influence of Confucian philosophy is to be seen here. Each of the schools developed its own characteristic, unique collection of rituals, so that adepts could identify themselves with a given style. Those rituals involved not only etiquette and ceremonies but also cultivating the school's symbols and the tradition passed down from generations of masters. There were different ways of understanding what characterised traditional training. This was the case even regarding the very manner of teaching by the master.

The master – *shifu* – was the central figure in traditional Chinese martial arts. He was responsible for the process of teaching and for the selection of appropriate methods to convey his specific knowledge to his students. The scope of his teachings extended to various areas of life as also discussed by Jankowiak:

The master also bears the moral responsibility for the behaviour of his school's students not only on the training mat but beyond it too. What is meant here are the adepts' ethics, their morality, discipline, customs, non-aggression, kindness and helpfulness to other people as well as care for one's family. (Jankowiak, 2013, p. 81)

The role of a guidepost here is taken by the *wǔdé*, which is a code of honour. In martial arts, the master only shows the way to the adept – he does not set out the way and most certainly does not lead the student by the hand. Moreover, everybody has his own unique way that develops in the course of his education and draws on his life experience. A “true master” should speak truthfully, be reliable, fair and communicative.

He is to be an internally developed man (spiritually, morally) who has shaped his ability to defend himself and combines the values of philosophers, educators and warriors who oppose evil in its various forms. (Kalina, 1991, p. 85)

As Andrzej Szyszko-Bohusz claims, the teacher should be a carrier of symbols and values which he propagates through his personal example (Szyszko-Bohusz, 1989). In a similar vein, Cynarski claims that the message of a martial arts master “flows straight from his heart into his student's heart” (Cynarski, 2000, p. 49), so the master may exert a far greater

influence on the adept than the trainer on the athlete. However, Edmund Baka adds:

In China, the traditional training was never about blindly repeating the movements of the teacher. Indeed, the key objective of the training is not to shape the adept in accordance with a rigorously defined model but making it possible for his *dé*³ to manifest itself. (Baka, 2008, p. 12)

Traditional training was also to inculcate the student with a desire to make progress in both the physical and mental sphere from day to day. Thus, studying martial arts required continuous efforts on many levels. Taking up such a challenge also involved gaining the trust of the master *shifu* on which a relationship was built. In this relationship the training served higher purposes, in accordance with the principle “Meet valuable people and imitate them, meet valueless people and consider yourself” (Qian, 2014, p. 44). Learning from examples was one of the methods of self-improvement. Examples could be good or bad and the most important skill to learn was to tell imitation apart from self-observation (Qian, 2014, p. 44). Another method of self-improvement was error correction. Confucius believed that a man was not born a sage and was imperfect, that a man not only had many faults but also constantly erred. Therefore, self-improvement is a continuous process of correcting one’s own errors. Arduous training where even single movements were repeated many times until perfection was reached taught the students to apply the same great care to solving problems in their life. As Confucius said: “Not correcting errors is also an error” (cited in Qian, 2014, p. 45).

Martial arts schools were to function as households where the process of upbringing took place. Both the school itself and the person of the master always enjoyed great respect without which the learning process could not be conducted properly. A school of martial arts was seen as *jiā*, representing the structure of a family home which, by extension, covered a group of people devoted to the same ideal or establishing, within their own circle, relationships similar to those found in a big family (Yao, 2009, p. 29). Already the acceptance of a student into a traditional school was an event of great significance, accompanied by a ceremony performed in accordance with a specific etiquette/ritual. This honour could only be

³ *Dé* – virtue / goodness / morality / ethics / kindness / favor / character / kind.

achieved by the best students following a long period of probation during which they had displayed the characteristics desired by the master. Every form of behaviour at a martial arts school was precisely defined. Mutual relations represented for the student/adept continuous training in modesty and respect for others. An example of this is bowing, which expresses respect for the tradition inherent in the system of etiquette. Modesty and respect are just some of the Confucian values so ardently instilled in martial arts' adepts in the course of their upbringing. The set of values also includes humaneness *rěn*, loyalty *chéng*, sincerity *xìn*, respect *lǐ*, virtue *dé* and integrity *yì* (Qian, 2014, pp. 19–20). As Confucian morality is focused on family relationships, especially those between parents and children, older and younger brothers, husband and wife, similar relationships are to be seen at a traditional martial arts school. These are first of all the relationship between master and student (corresponding to the filial love *xiào*) and between older and younger students (corresponding to the brotherly love *tì*). The most prominent aspect of these relationships was the performance of mutual responsibilities with a sincere and devoted heart *xìn*. The Confucian ethics were not limited just to the family circle. Their sense was based on the family as the basic unit of the human community. The family represented a microcosm in relation to the macrocosm, that is society (Yao, 2009, pp. 34–35).

Cynarski describes traditional martial arts schools in the following way:

The environment of martial arts adepts is based on a unified system of standards, models and beliefs within a hierarchical structure and represents a spiritual community based on the tradition of those Far Eastern martial arts. (Cynarski, 2004, p. 158)

Another aspect is highlighted by Juliusz Piwowski, who points out that traditional martial arts taught by a master are a way of conduct adopted for one's whole life, enabling adepts to build their mental and physical health and to remain fit and independent until the end of their days. Moreover, the health aspects of martial arts are important and exercises should strengthen the adept's vital forces (cultivating the *qi* energy). Practicing a martial art leads the adept along a path built upon an old tradition of improving one's body and mind (Piwowski, 2011, p. 231). Chinese martial arts are similarly described as a way of life by Dariusz Lerner:

For the Chinese, *wúshù* is a way of life, and they do not limit it to a clash in the ring. For there will always be people physically better than us but what we develop internally remains in us forever; it will become the key to the gates on the long and difficult road we walk on. (Lerner, 1992, p. 10)

The essence of traditional martial arts is even more apparent when juxtaposed with the term “combat sport”. When characterising combat sports, Jankowiak (2013, p. 82) names rivalry as a component setting them apart from traditional martial arts. Rivalry is based on a set of appropriately selected rules. Its features include the opponent and the struggle for victory, as well as the victory itself (the reward). The objective of combat sports is thus to win, to attain victory which is described as sporting success. Sports training is clearly different from traditional martial arts training. This is, first of all, external training intended to exercise the body and increase its capabilities. It covers general fitness training, including exercises improving the athletes’ strength, speed, physical condition, coordination, techniques depending on the selected discipline, as well as their psychological preparedness for rivalry (frequently ignoring or marginalizing the axiomatic and normative aspect). These elements are tested in training fights (sparring) and then at sports competitions, in rivalry with an opponent who is a stranger striving to achieve precisely the same objective. Sports develop the skills that are needed to succeed primarily at sports contests, although examples can be found of such skills being used to achieve professional success. Long-term training certainly provides adepts with the mastery of techniques and skills very similar to those seen in traditional martial arts. However, as Jankowiak (2013, pp. 82–83) warns, there is a risk that the continued process of turning martial arts into sports will deprive the former of their existing identity which is strongly present in the traditional forms. Sports combat is rivalry and is always accompanied by the need to dominate another person (athlete). This poses a serious problem as the pursuit of sport rivalry objectives may overshadow the virtues featured in the *wǔdé* code. These objectives, or sports trophies, are really just auxiliary means on the way of self-improvement.

The central figure here is the trainer who manages the athlete’s upbringing and career. The objective of the training is to win a medal or simply to defeat the opponent. However, at the same time, the trainer should be a role model for the athlete, an ideal and a mentor. As Jankowiak (2013, p. 83) puts it, the trainer’s behaviour must be impeccable, he must have

a proper moral attitude, be dutiful, disciplined, composed, cultured and have the ability to ensure harmonious coexistence in a group. The ideal type of trainer is presented by Bogusław Berdel and Anna Kawalec who describe him as a young man's educator, whose task is to "create" what is not in him, to create an inner organising power, to create the will to self-educate (Berdel & Kawalec, 2003, p. 94). However, this is a vision that refers to traditional martial arts masters/teachers.

Combat sports training involves the process of waiting for confrontation. This induces constant anxiety in the athlete, leading to different levels of stress related to the next fight. It may be said that this stress has its positive and negative aspects and is not without influence on the athlete's development. If the athlete follows the rules and regulations and learns to control his stress, he may expect positive effects of this type of self-control. Unfortunately, as the objectives (self-actualisation) and means (medals) are confused with each other, athletes often break the fair play rule just to "win" at any price. Another danger is the instrumental treatment of players by the coach. Zbigniew Czajkowski cautions against it by writing:

Victories, medals, fame become the highest goal, and the competitor is treated instrumentally. In such an approach there are no emotional ties between a coach and a competitor; the educational and psychological aspects of training and sporting struggle; proper motivation and joy. (Czajkowski, 1994, p. 108)

The road leading from combat sports to the world of martial arts is long and arduous. Not everybody will be able to follow it. Besides, the sports activity phase in a man's life is not the same as an activity "for his entire life" as stipulated by the definition of martial arts (Piwowarski, 2010, pp. 64–74).

CHINESE TRADITION IN A GLOBALISED WORLD – THE CASE OF *CHOY LEE FUT KUNGFU*

The above analysis has shown that traditional styles face previously unknown phenomena related to a threat posed by the continuing processes of globalisation and commercialisation. In this context the main question is: to what extent can traditional martial arts retain their traditional message within the style itself? In other words: what are the opportunities

and threats for such styles which are not going to become commercialised combat sports? In order to shed some light on a problem, I plan to focus on the family style of *Choy Lee Fut kungfu*⁴.

The *kungfu* style called *Choy Lee Fut* is a relatively “young” style, just over two hundred years old. Information about the life and work of Master Chan Heung, founder of the *Choy Lee Fut* system, comes from his descendant, Chan Yong Fa, who has promoted the *Choy Lee Fut kungfu* style around the world, revealing facts from the life of his ancestors (Ciembrownicz, 1996, p. 14). The facts come from a biographical work on the history of *Choy Lee Fut* of the Chan family written by his grandfather Chan Yiu Chi, whose original manuscript is in the hands of Chan Yong Fa. All the information is available at every *Choy Lee Fut kungfu* style school. In order not to overinterpret or alter the meaning of Chan Yong Fa’s book, it is he who interprets the content. Chan Yong Fa emigrated to Australia in 1983 and was the first of the system’s heirs to decide that the entire *kungfu* style would be taught to a wider range of people from all over the world. Therefore, he is the first in the generation of teachers who have decided to pass on family knowledge to students from outside the Confucian cultural circle and, since 1996, to licenced masters of the international organisation Wing Sing Tong Choy Lee Fut of the Chan Family in particular (Chan, 2000, p. 45). Maintaining the tradition of the style and adapting it to the requirements of the modern world rest in his hands, especially in the situation when there is no other heir with ties of kinship. In the face of the absence of a successor, the decision to make full knowledge available to the members of the organisation became a necessity, so that the life’s work of the five-generation family would not pass away with the death of the current heir.

All the above issues covered by the research questions should be applied to Chinese culture where Confucian philosophy and ethics have a significant impact on the state, as well as social and family life. This philosophy carries values such as moderation, discipline, obedience, readiness to work hard, the need to observe the norms of social life, collectivism (putting common goals before one’s own). It is characterised by respect for tradition combined with a strong sense of responsibility for the family and great care for the elderly. Collectivism is supported by a commitment to

⁴ The following names are also used: *Choy Lay Fut*, *Choy Li Fut* (蔡李佛拳, *Càilífóquán*).

work on one's own development but above all for the benefit of the family and the state. Building a social group along the lines of the Confucian family *jiā*, based on members from a different cultural background, can cause serious problems. A structure consisting of the head of the family/master *shifu* and then hierarchically subordinate descendants/students with clearly defined relations, duties and responsibilities and the cultivation of ancestral heritage in a foreign environment may not be as strong as a family structure based on blood ties.

To illustrate the tradition of the *Choy Lee Fut* style, the following table shows a system structure that takes into account the family lineage and closest student relationships. In addition, the table contains the most important Confucian relationships on which the hierarchy of the school within the style is based. They take the form of the filial love *xiào* between the master and his students and the fraternal love *tì* between the students themselves – “brothers”.

Traditional Chinese family lineage and structure of the *Choy Lee Fut* style

Name (Cant.)	Transcription (pinyin)	Signs	Traditional signs	Meaning	<i>Choy Lee Fut</i> style structure of the Chen family	<i>tì</i> relation	<i>xiao</i> relation
sijo	shi zu	师祖	師祖	founder of the system	Chan Heung		Xiao
sitaigung	shi tai gong	师太公	師太公	the master, the trainer of the master trainer	Chan Koon Pak		
sigung	shi gong	师公	師公	the master – the trainer of the master	Chan Yiu Chi Chan Wan Hon		Xiao
sibak	shi bo	师伯	師伯	the “older brother” of the master	the closest students of Chan Yiu Chi and Chan Wan Hon	Ti	
sisuk	shi shu	师叔	師叔	the “younger brother” of the master	the closest students of Chan Yiu Chi and Chan Wan Hon		

sifu	shi fu	师父	師父	the master	Chan Yong Fa	Ti	Xiao
sije	shi jie	师姐	師姐	“older sister”	the closest students of Chan Yong Fa		
sihing	shi xiong	师兄	師兄	“older brother”	the closest students of Chan Yong Fa		
simui	shi mei	师妹	師妹	“younger sister”	instructors		
sidai	shi di	师弟	師弟	“younger brother”	instructors		

Source: Own elaboration.

The detachment from the home country and the need to adapt to a different culture can have a significant impact on the functioning of the family's *kungfu* style. Interpersonal connections have to be based on people from an international environment where communication between representatives of different cultural backgrounds may be hampered by barriers in understanding cultural differences. Any person from outside the Confucian culture will display a different identity. Typically, Chinese cultural values may not be fully understood. Conflict-generating situations are related with communication, not only with language barriers but also to the knowledge of the values of a given culture and the knowledge of the historical context.

Confucian social groups are based on a hierarchical order. Each person is assigned a place that can change over time. Changes in the hierarchy are determined by age or seniority and to a lesser extent by personal achievements. The only way to increase one's prestige is by committing oneself to the goals set by the group. The emphasis is put on self-discipline and the elimination of egocentrism in order to maintain harmony within the group (Gawlikowski, n.d., p. 104). In the Western tradition, individualism is the main value, characterised by a high level of awareness of one's own rights and readiness to defend one's interests and needs. The law is held in high esteem, protecting the individual and not the public. The struggle for self-interest and needs dominates here, which implies increasing competition and rivalry. Unfortunately, observing the international environment of traditional school leaders in different countries (within the same style),

one can see the signs of rivalry between them in the field of style popularisation. Usually, these activities are related to the development of self-interest as the main training centres in a given country are profit-oriented.

In the Confucian tradition, on the other hand, the obligations towards others, towards the whole group and, finally, towards oneself are emphasised. Their purpose is to serve parents and the family, the society and the state in order to be “good citizens” (Gu, 1998, pp. 4–5). In the case of the preservation of family heritage, which consists of the transfer of the traditions of traditional *kungfu* styles, the priority is not the status of individuals but the well-being of all individuals within family ties. The emphasis is put on shared values and mutual trust: in a hierarchical group subordinates believe that their leader works for the benefit of the group, whilst he is convinced that each member of the group will perform his duties with full dedication. The members of such communities condemn competition and disputes and consider cooperation and harmony to be the proper course (Gawlikowski, n.d., p. 104).

Another concern that may generate weaknesses in the structure of the international community is the fact that social relations in Western culture are ritualised only to a small extent, while in the Confucian culture social rituals are developed and respected. The desired behaviour based on the requirements of modesty and care of one’s honour is clearly defined and derogations, even small ones, are not tolerated. According to Gu Hong-ming (1998), it was this care for honour and fulfilling one’s duties that ensured an incomparably better and long-lasting social order. However, in the Western culture, in the absence of rigid norms, the boundaries of appropriate behaviour are quite fuzzy (Gawlikowski, n.d., p. 105). If misconduct occurs within a traditional style of *kungfu*, this results from an unconscious violation of the rules. Developing a consensus between the master and his students to modify the knowledge of the family style, so that it becomes not just “dry” theory but also a “practice” of life adapted to the needs of the modern world, may be a way to address a situation faced by more than one traditional style of *kungfu* now.

CONCLUSION

The case study demonstrates limitations of traditional martial arts’ attempts to retain their traditional message in today’s world. The example of *Choy Lee Fut kungfu* shows that schools of this type now find it hard to

maintain their “cultural identity” in an unchanged form. Cultivating tradition is not an easy task. Globalisation and commercialisation pose a threat to the purity of tradition. Thus, it can hardly be predicted how *Choy Lee Fut kungfu* will be organised in the next decade. My analysis suggests an impact of the globalisation processes. Even traditional martial arts schools which try to avoid commercialisation are no longer able to convey tradition in accordance with Confucian philosophy. A serious threat is posed by the developing competition from new forms imitating the traditional martial arts which leads to the styles being isolated and constrained to small enclaves maintained by genuine enthusiasts. While commercialisation has made martial arts widely available, it has deprived them of their real significance as a way of self-improvement based on traditional training.

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