

Research on the Dissemination of Chinese Wushu under the Influence of Buddhist Culture

Shuai Yang

*Emilio Aguinaldo College, Manila, Philippines
511382142@qq.com*

Abstract. Buddhism is one of the major religions in China, introduced to China during the Eastern Han Dynasty. Buddhist culture has a close relationship with Chinese Wushu, and Shaolin Wushu best embodies the "Zen" culture formed under the influence of Buddhism's localization in China. As a major representative of Chinese Wushu, Shaolin Wushu has five main dissemination channels: dissemination among master and disciple in temples, dissemination among the folk in the jianghu (the community of martial artists), dissemination in ancient battlefields, dissemination in film and television works, and dissemination in foreign exchanges. The dissemination of Shaolin Wushu not only enables Chinese people to have a better understanding of Shaolin culture, but also makes the world view China with new admiration.

Keywords: Buddhism, Chinese Wushu, Shaolin, Dissemination

1. Introduction

As one of the three major religions in the world, Buddhism has a long and profound cultural history. Since Buddhist culture was introduced to China, it has been deeply integrated with Chinese culture through the localization of foreign Buddhist dissemination, namely the localization of Buddhism in China. Sinicized Buddhism serves China itself and has exerted a profound influence on Wushu, one of China's traditional cultures and a unique treasure of China. The combination of Wushu and Buddhist culture has to a certain extent highlighted its mystery. Later, this kind of Wushu has been pursued worldwide and widely disseminated across the globe, which also means that Chinese Wushu and Chinese culture have flourished all over the world.

2. The origin of Buddhism

As one of the three major mainstream religions in the world, Buddhism is said to have been founded by Siddhartha Gautama (Sakyamuni) in Kapilavastu, along the ancient Indus River basin, between the 6th and 5th centuries BCE. In Journey to the West, Sakyamuni governs the real world and is revered as the Buddha, that is to say, Buddhism is generally believed to have been founded by him. It is said that he attained enlightenment and became a Buddha under a Bodhi tree, also known as the Tathagata. When he came to a Bodhi tree in Bodh Gaya, India, he spread a straw mat, sat cross-

legged, and made a vow: "Unless I attain the supreme enlightenment, I will never rise from this seat [1]."

The most widely spread story about Buddha Sakyamuni is "cutting flesh to feed the eagle". It is said that the Buddha was practicing under a tree when an eagle chased a pigeon, wanting to eat it. The pigeon saw the Buddha under the tree and immediately hid in his sleeve. When the eagle caught up, it demanded the pigeon from the Buddha. The Buddha asked the eagle if it could spare the pigeon, and the eagle replied that it would starve to death if it did not eat the pigeon—saving the pigeon but letting itself die would also be killing a living being. The Buddha then asked the eagle what to do, and the eagle said it must be given flesh equal in weight to the pigeon. At this time, the Buddha took out a balance, placed the pigeon on the left pan, then took a knife and cut a piece of flesh from his own body and put it on the right pan. But the balance tilted, so the Buddha cut another piece, yet the balance still did not level. It was not until the Buddha had put all his flesh on the right pan that the balance finally balanced with the pigeon! At that moment, the sky turned blood red, and the true Buddha was born.

3. The founding of Shaolin Kung Fu after the introduction of Buddhist culture into China

Buddhism originated in ancient India and was introduced to China in the mid-1st century CE, namely the Eastern Han Dynasty. As a foreign culture, Buddhist culture took root, sprouted, developed and grew strong in China by relying on and integrating with local Chinese culture. Buddhist culture teaches people to be kind, to have compassion, and its tenet is to save all sentient beings, which has had a profound impact on the later development of Chinese Wushu. There is an old saying in the Chinese Wushu circle: "All martial arts under heaven originate from Shaolin", which clearly means that Shaolin Kung Fu is the ancestor and prototype of other martial arts in China, holding the highest status and thus being the best representative of Chinese Wushu.

When it comes to Shaolin Kung Fu, we have to mention the Shaolin Temple, a millennium-old monastery. It is said that the Shaolin Temple is located at the foot of Wuru Peak, on the northern slope of Shaoshi Mountain, northwest of Dengfeng County, Henan Province. It was built in 495 CE, the 19th year of the Taihe reign in the Northern Wei Dynasty [2]. In the 19th year of Taihe in the Northern Wei Dynasty (495 CE), the Indian eminent monk Batuo came to China. Due to his profound Buddhist attainments, he was respected and trusted by Emperor Xiaowen Tuoba Hong of the Northern Wei Dynasty. To settle Batuo for missionary work, Emperor Xiaowen ordered the construction of a monastery at the northern foot of Shaoshi Mountain in Songshan. Because the monastery was located in the dense forests of Shaoshi Mountain, it was named "Shaolin Temple" [3]. Several decades after the founding of the Shaolin Temple, in the third year of the Xiaochang reign of Emperor Xiaoming of the Northern Wei Dynasty (527 CE), Bodhidharma, the 28th patriarch of Sakyamuni Buddha, came to the Shaolin Temple. He meditated facing a wall in a stone cave on Wuru Peak of Shaoshi Mountain for nine years and finally comprehended the great Buddhist principles, founding Zen Buddhism. Hence, the Shaolin Temple was later known as the "Cradle of Zen Buddhism".

As the founder of Zen Buddhism, Bodhidharma is also called the "First Patriarch". It is said that when he taught his disciples to sit in meditation and practice Zen, due to the weather and the disciples' long hours of sitting still, they became physically exhausted and always felt drowsy. Seeing his disciples listless, Bodhidharma imitated the daily movements of birds, beasts, insects and fish and created a set of fitness exercises to invigorate the body and stretch the muscles and meridians—this was the embryonic form of Shaolin Kung Fu. Later, the two well-known secret books of the Shaolin Temple, *Yijin Jing* (Muscle/Tendon Changing Classic) and *Xisui Jing* (Marrow

Washing Classic), one for external training and the other for internal cultivation, emphasizing the cultivation of both internal and external aspects, were gradually improved with the development of Shaolin Kung Fu and also created under the influence of Buddhist Zen.

4. An overview of major Chinese martial arts under the influence of Buddhist culture

After being introduced into China, Buddhist culture gradually integrated with local Chinese culture, that is, Buddhism was "sinicized", and the founding of Shaolin Zen is proof of the "sinicization" of Buddhism. Patriarch Bodhidharma meditated facing a wall in the Bodhidharma Cave for nine years and founded Zen Buddhism, which advocates "not establishing written texts" and "transmitting the mind through practice" [4], a process of sudden enlightenment. This also confirms that Shaolin Kung Fu was formed and developed under the influence of sinicized Buddhism, integrated with it as its carrier, and also served as a representative of Chinese Wushu. Therefore, it can be said that Chinese Wushu under the influence of Buddhist culture can also be referred to as Shaolin Wushu.

According to the boxing manuals handed down in the Shaolin Temple, there are 708 sets of Shaolin Kung Fu routines, including 552 sets of boxing and weapon routines, 156 sets of various skills, and 72 unique skills. Statistics show that 178 sets of Shaolin boxing, 193 sets of weapons, 59 sets of paired practice, and 115 sets of other routines still exist, totaling 545 sets. Shaolin Wushu routines contain many Buddhist elements, such as "Arhat Fist", "Bodhidharma Sword", "Prajna Palm", and many movement names are Buddhist terms, such as "Boy Worshipping Buddha", "Arhat Carrying Firewood", "Vajra Viewing the Sea" and so on [5].

4.1. Overview of Shaolin Boxing

Shaolin Boxing is one of the traditional Chinese martial arts boxing styles, originating from the Shaolin Temple on Songshan Mountain, Henan Province, during the Northern Wei Dynasty. The technical characteristics of Shaolin Boxing emphasize the cultivation of both internal and external aspects, the combination of hardness and softness, and its movements follow the principle of "Liuhe" (Six Unities), namely the unity of hands and feet, elbows and knees, shoulders and hips, intention and mind, Qi and will, and Qi and strength. It has a wide variety of moves, covering various attack methods such as fists, palms, fingers, claws, legs, feet, elbows and knees, as well as various techniques including kicking, striking, throwing, grappling, pushing and pulling, with strong practicality. Based on Buddhist Zen, Shaolin Boxing embodies the concept of "the unity of Chan and Wu", requiring practitioners to temper their minds through practicing martial arts, cultivate perseverance and a state of mind indifferent to fame and wealth, and abide by the Buddhist martial ethics [6].

4.2. Overview of Shaolin Staff

The staff is known as the "ancestor of all weapons", and the Shaolin Staff is an important part of Shaolin Wushu and the most renowned weapon in Shaolin Kung Fu [7]. Shaolin Staff Technique is characterized by simplicity and dangerous stances, advocating "striking a wide area along a single line, swirling the staff to protect the body like dense rain, and thrusting forward with the staff like a spear piercing through". It only focuses on actual combat effects rather than external beauty. Its basic techniques include eighteen methods such as striking, lifting, chopping, blocking, lifting and stabbing. In terms of training methods, it mainly relies on arm strength, focusing on practicing swinging, whirling and chopping the staff, as well as repeated practice of turning over, jumping and

swirling the staff. In application, it takes actual combat as the standard: thrusting with the staff is the main method when advancing, blocking and striking skillfully on both sides when moving left and right, using the root of the staff to poke when retreating, and chopping, pressing and smashing when striking downward. Shaolin Staff has rich practice routines. As many as fifty sets of routines were commonly practiced by the monks in the Ming Dynasty, such as the Eyebrow-high Staff, Wind-fire Staff, Great Yaksha Staff, Small Yaksha Staff, Five Tigers Herding Sheep Staff, Ape Cudgel, Coiled Dragon Staff, etc.

4.3. Overview of Shaolin Sword

Shaolin Swordsmanship is a highly representative weapon routine in Shaolin Wushu, famous for its unique style and profound cultural connotation. The origin of Shaolin Swordsmanship is closely related to the development of the Shaolin Temple. Although the specific founding time is difficult to verify, as early as the Tang Dynasty, the Shaolin Temple had a small workshop producing swords to meet the needs of monks for fitness and martial arts practice. By the Ming Dynasty, Shaolin Swordsmanship had matured. Literati such as Wen Xiangfeng and Gong Ding witnessed the spectacular scene of warrior monks practicing swords when visiting the Shaolin Temple. Shaolin Swordsmanship has a variety of routines, including Bodhidharma Sword, Heaven and Earth Sword, Plum Blossom Sword, Nine Palaces Sword, Eight Immortals Sword, etc. Among them, Bodhidharma Sword is the most basic and famous routine, with 46 moves including Boy Worshipping Buddha and Bodhidharma Facing the Wall; Shaolin Heaven and Earth Sword includes moves such as displaying the stance, receiving the sword and chopping downward. Derived from Patriarch Bodhidharma's concept of "proving Chan through martial arts", Shaolin Swordsmanship embodies the unique style of "the unity of Chan and Sword". During practice, swordsmen need to focus on the sword moves to achieve a state of mental calmness and freedom from distractions, integrating Zen into the sword moves.

4.4. Overview of Shaolin Double Hooks

Shaolin Double Hooks are a distinctive category of double weapons in Shaolin Wushu, characterized by "hooking, hanging, locking, grappling, flexible offense and defense", and are classic weapons in traditional Shaolin Wushu with both practicality and skill. The origin of double hooks can be traced back to the ancient weapon "Wu Hook", which was later introduced to the Shaolin Temple and improved by warrior monks combining the actual combat needs of Shaolin Wushu and the concept of Chan and Wu, forming the unique Shaolin Double Hook technique. Core techniques: the main techniques are "hooking, hanging, locking, grappling, lifting, chopping and stabbing", excelling at "controlling weapons with hooks"—restraining the enemy's swords and other weapons through the curved structure of the hook head, then counterattacking in a favorable position. Double hooks emphasize coordination between left and right, the intergrowth of emptiness and reality, with coherent movements like flowing clouds and flowing water, and rapid conversion between offense and defense. Common martial arts routines include 24 Forms of Shaolin Double Hooks, Continuous Routine of Double Hooks, Double Hooks vs Single Saber, etc. The technical design of Shaolin Double Hooks reflects the Shaolin martial arts thought of "using the enemy's strength to strike back, and gaining the upper hand by responding later". The practice process requires freedom from distractions and focus on movements and weapons, which is a concrete embodiment of the concept of "cultivating Chan through martial arts".

4.5. Overview of Shaolin Nine-section Whip

The Shaolin Nine-section Whip is one of the eighteen kinds of weapon martial arts in the Shaolin Temple, belonging to soft weapons, characterized by flexibility and variability, and the combination of hardness and softness. According to the Shaolin Boxing Manual, in the Song Dynasty, the great monk Fujū invited eighteen top martial arts masters from all over the country to gather at the Shaolin Temple on Songshan Mountain to exchange martial arts for the development of Shaolin Wushu, and the nine-section whip was introduced to the Shaolin Temple at this time. After research and practice by warrior monks of successive dynasties, it gradually developed into the Shaolin Nine-section Whip with a unique style and practical significance. The nine-section whip consists of a whip handle, a whip head and 8 steel sections in the middle, each connected by 3 iron rings, hence the name. There are six routes of the Shaolin Nine-section Whip: the first route is the Body-protecting Whip, the second is the Rolling and Lying Whip, the third is the Four Gates and Eight Steps Whip, the fourth is the Fire Dragon Whip, the fifth is the Double Flower Whip, and the sixth is the Plum Blossom Whip. In addition, there are also the Saber plus Whip and the Scythe Breaking Whip for paired practice. In the early Song Dynasty, the Shaolin Nine-section Whip had only ten moves, such as striking left and right around the elbows and Black Dragon Entering the Cave, which were gradually enriched by warrior monks of successive dynasties, with more moves added over time. Technical characteristics of the Shaolin Nine-section Whip: the whip techniques are mainly circular movements, with the characteristics of flying up and down, flexibility and variability. Its unique technical style is dominated by winding movements, collectively called whip flowers, which are combined with basic techniques such as whirling, striking, sweeping, hanging and lifting, forming the technical characteristics of "flowers connected to flowers, flowers nested in flowers, all flowers linked; flowers connected to flowers, flowers strung with flowers, ever-changing".

4.6. Summary

Shaolin Wushu is a major representative of Chinese Wushu and an excellent traditional Chinese culture. The combination of Buddhist culture and Shaolin Wushu is a concrete embodiment of the sinicization of Buddhism. In Shaolin Wushu, the shadow of "Zen" can always be seen—Buddhist Zen is presented to the world with Shaolin Wushu as its carrier, and the dissemination of Shaolin Wushu is also the dissemination of "Zen" culture and Buddhist concepts. They have long been integrated into one and accepted by the world.

This section mainly introduces five representative types of Shaolin Wushu: Shaolin Boxing represents the culmination of Shaolin "unarmed" martial arts; Shaolin Staff is the most common, representative and easily accessible type of Shaolin "long weapons"; Shaolin Sword is the representative of Shaolin "short weapons"—the sword is known as the "monarch of all weapons" in the jianghu, and there have always been many people practicing swordsmanship, with Shaolin Swordsmanship being one of the profound martial arts that people all over the world want to learn; Shaolin Double Hooks represent Shaolin "double weapons" martial arts, a type of double weapons commonly practiced by Shaolin warrior monks; and the Shaolin Nine-section Whip represents the "soft weapons" category in Shaolin Wushu. Shaolin Wushu is extensive and profound, with "long", "short", "double" and "soft" weapons each having their own strengths, which also represents that Chinese martial arts culture is inclusive and progressive with strong integration.

5. Dissemination channels of Shaolin Wushu

5.1. Dissemination of Shaolin Wushu among master and disciple in temples

As a representative of Chinese Wushu, Shaolin Wushu has always been pursued by people. Its enduring vitality is the result of the diligent research of warrior monks and masters of each generation. In Chinese tradition, martial arts have been inherited and disseminated from generation to generation with blood ties as the link, while Shaolin Wushu is inherited and disseminated through master-disciple relationships. As an old saying goes, "One day as a teacher, a lifetime as a father", which imitates the way of family blood ties [8]. Shaolin monks regard the temple as their home, so Shaolin Wushu is disseminated among masters and disciples in the temple. Historically, there is a saying of "Southern Fists and Northern Legs" in Shaolin Wushu: "Northern Legs" refers to the Shaolin Temple on Songshan Mountain in Henan Province, and "Southern Fists" refers to the Shaolin Temple in Fujian Province. They had exchanges in history, which also reflects the dissemination of Shaolin Wushu in temples.

5.2. Dissemination of Shaolin Wushu among the folk in the jianghu

The saying "All martial arts under heaven originate from Shaolin" fully shows that Shaolin Wushu has never been "practiced behind closed doors" but has had exchanges with the outside world. Historically, many people in the jianghu came to the Shaolin Temple to take refuge, either for a living or to escape from enemies, becoming monks halfway. Because the Shaolin Temple is the "Cradle of Zen Buddhism" of Buddhism [9], and Buddhism advocates compassion and saving all sentient beings, the abbot would likely take them in and keep them in the temple. As they were originally people from the jianghu and knew martial arts, after entering Shaolin, they learned Buddhism, purified their minds, integrated the martial arts they had learned before with Shaolin Wushu, created new Shaolin Wushu, and became warrior monks. Shaolin warrior monks have always had the habit of going down the mountain to beg for alms. When they go down the mountain, on the one hand, they may spread Buddhist teachings; on the other hand, they may encounter challenges from people in the jianghu, at which time they would display Shaolin Kung Fu. They may also meet ordinary people who want to learn Shaolin Wushu and give them some guidance. In this way, Shaolin Wushu is disseminated among the folk and in the jianghu, and also attracts more martial artists to exchange with the Shaolin Temple and become lay disciples of the Shaolin Temple—this is the dissemination of Shaolin Wushu among the folk in the jianghu.

5.3. Dissemination of Shaolin Wushu in ancient battlefields

The Shaolin Temple has a history of more than 1,500 years. In the long course of history, there are many moving stories about Shaolin Wushu that took place on ancient battlefields, which also established the status of Shaolin Wushu in history. A well-known story to the public is "Thirteen Monk Warriors Rescuing the Tang Emperor" [10]. It is said that at the end of the Sui Dynasty, the world was in chaos and warlords separated the country. Wang Shichong of Luoyang proclaimed himself "King of Zheng" and fought for the throne with the Tang army (led by Li Shimin, the Prince of Qin), with fierce battles breaking out around Luoyang. The Shaolin Temple was within Wang Shichong's sphere of influence (Songshan was under the jurisdiction of Luoyang), and "Baiguwu", 50 li northwest of the temple, was a fertile land granted to Shaolin by the imperial court in earlier years, with a military fortress. It was forcibly occupied by Wang Renzhe, Wang Shichong's nephew,

who also used it as a stronghold to resist the Tang army, seriously threatening the livelihood and practice of the Shaolin monks. At that time, although the Shaolin Temple mainly focused on Zen practice, a group of warrior monks had already formed. Faced with Wang Renzhe's oppression, they not only wanted to recapture their territory but also saw that Li Shimin was a wise ruler who could pacify the troubled times, so they finally decided to assist the Tang Dynasty. The Shaolin monks first sent disciples to secretly contact the Tang army to express their willingness to help in the war, and Li Shimin was overjoyed, agreeing to a coordinated attack from inside and outside—the Tang army pinned down the enemy from the front, while the monk soldiers launched a surprise attack from inside Baiguwu to capture or kill Wang Renzhe. With 13 monks including Zhicao, Huiyang and Tanzong as the backbone, the Shaolin monks led the crowd to participate in the war, sneaking into the Zheng army's camp at night and capturing Wang Renzhe to present to the Tang army. Li Shimin highly praised the merits of the Shaolin warrior monks and immediately issued an imperial edict: conferring Tanzong the title of "General Monk" and allowing the Shaolin Temple to have monk soldiers [11].

From the historical story of "Thirteen Monk Warriors Rescuing the Tang Emperor", we can see the application of Shaolin Wushu in ancient battlefields, and at the same time, Shaolin Wushu was disseminated on the battlefield, making it famous far and wide and laying a certain foundation for its later widespread dissemination.

Another story of Shaolin Wushu appearing on ancient battlefields is the resistance against Japanese pirates by Shaolin monk soldiers in the Ming Dynasty. In the mid-to-late Jiajing reign of the Ming Dynasty, the chaotic Warring States period in Japan led to a large number of samurai and ronin colluding with Chinese pirates to form "Japanese pirates", who frequently invaded the coastal areas of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Fujian. They burned, killed and looted, committing all kinds of evils. The local government troops had weak combat effectiveness and suffered repeated defeats, and the coastal people suffered greatly. Although the imperial court had an army, the process of dispatching troops was cumbersome, and some government troops were afraid of fighting and avoided battles. Helpless, local officials thought of the reputation of Shaolin warrior monks for being "brave in battle and strictly disciplined", so they sent people to the Shaolin Temple on Songshan Mountain to ask for help, inviting warrior monks to go out to resist the Japanese pirates. The Shaolin Temple responded to the call of justice, selecting highly skilled warrior monks with a sense of family and country to form a team and march south to resist the Japanese pirates [12]. The first batch of Shaolin monk soldiers arrived in Zhejiang under the leadership of Yu Kong, first training at Zhaoqing Temple in Hangzhou, then joining the battle. Once Japanese pirates raided the outskirts of Hangzhou, the monk soldiers fought as the vanguard. Yu Kong led 40 monk soldiers holding iron staffs to charge directly into the enemy formation. The Japanese pirates were good at swordsmanship, but facing the heavy Shaolin iron staffs, their swords were smashed or broken. The monk soldiers "advanced one after another, not a single one retreated", killing dozens of Japanese pirates on the spot, and the rest fled in disorder. The first battle made Shaolin famous. Shaolin monk soldiers became an "elite force" on the battlefield against Japanese pirates, repeatedly breaking the myth that Japanese pirates were invincible, alleviating the coastal war situation, and gaining time for the imperial court to mobilize a large army to counterattack. Their staff techniques and formations were also learned by some government troops, improving the army's close combat capabilities.

From the historical event of Shaolin monk soldiers resisting Japanese pirates in the Ming Dynasty, the monks' act of "sacrificing themselves for the country and saving the world with compassion" broke the stereotype of Buddhism as "practicing in seclusion", extending the concept of "the unity of Chan and Wu" from the temple to social responsibility, and becoming an important

part of the "patriotism and family feelings" in Shaolin culture. Their Shaolin Kung Fu was also absorbed and learned by the Ming army, playing a huge role in the struggle against Japanese pirates, thus reflecting that the dissemination of Shaolin Wushu on the battlefield is of great significance.

5.4. Dissemination of Shaolin Wushu in film and television works

In modern times, film and television works emerge one after another. As an excellent traditional Chinese culture and a synonym for "Kung Fu", Shaolin Wushu culture is naturally highly sought after by many martial arts lovers. Shaolin Wushu-themed film and television works run through the history of Chinese-language films and television, with passionate action, the spirit of Chan and Wu, and patriotism and family feelings as the core, giving birth to many classic works.

The Shaolin Temple (1982): The most milestone Shaolin-themed film, starring Jet Li and filmed on location at the Shaolin Temple in Songshan. Based on the story of "Thirteen Monk Warriors Rescuing the Tang Emperor", the film presents Shaolin boxing, staff, sword and other Kung Fu in real scenes, and Jet Li's "Drunken Fist" and "Shepherd's Whip" segments have become timeless classics. It not only made Shaolin Wushu popular worldwide but also set off an upsurge of Chinese martial arts films, directly promoting the contemporary dissemination of Shaolin culture. It is said that the ticket price of this film was only 0.1 yuan at that time, but it still set a box office record of over 100 million yuan, which can be called a "milestone" in Kung Fu-themed films. At the same time, it made Shaolin Wushu known to every household and played an absolute role in its dissemination.

North and South Shaolin (1986): Also starring Jet Li, it focuses on the story of disciples from the North and South Shaolin Temples joining hands to resist tyranny. The film integrates the toughness of Southern Fists and the stretch of Northern Shaolin, with realistic and smooth action design. Scenes such as "Shaolin Staff Formation" and "Lightness Skill Duel" are highly ornamental, further consolidating the status of Shaolin Kung Fu as a film and television IP. Film and television works about "Southern Fists and Northern Legs" make people know that the distinctive feature of Shaolin Wushu different from other martial arts schools is "Chan"—the key to Chan is enlightenment, "Wu" is the carrier of "Chan", and "Chan" is manifested through "Wu" [13].

There are many other film and television works about Shaolin Wushu, such as Shaolin Kids, New Legend of the Five Great Shaolin Masters, Shaolin Soccer, New Shaolin Temple, Legend of the Shaolin Temple and other films and TV dramas. These excellent works have brought Shaolin Wushu into thousands of households and made Chinese traditional culture endure. These works are not only entertainment products but also become "living advertisements" for Shaolin Wushu, promoting the development of Shaolin tourism and martial arts training, and making "Shaolin" an international symbol of Chinese traditional culture [14].

5.5. Dissemination of Shaolin Wushu in foreign exchanges

Shaolin Wushu, a representative of Chinese culture, has long gone to the world, showing the "Shaolin" business card to the world [15]. For example, some Kung Fu stage plays have toured around the world to show the "Shaolin Heroism". Take the stage play Shaolin Soul as an example: set against the background of war, the protagonist Huiguang is separated from his mother unfortunately, then adopted by Shaolin warrior monks and taught martial arts. During his life and training in the Shaolin Temple, Huiguang gradually grows into an outstanding martial artist and finally reunites with his mother. The play integrates boxing, weapons, internal skills and combat techniques in Shaolin Wushu, and incorporates elements such as Tai Chi and acrobatics, matched

with powerful background music and gorgeous stage lighting and other exquisite stage art, making Shaolin Kung Fu more ornamental and shocking. On January 15, 2009, Shaolin Soul·The Story of Huiguang officially premiered on Broadway in New York, with seven consecutive full-house performances. From 2009 to 2025, the play has been performed more than 700 times in countries such as the United States, Australia, Italy, Norway, India, as well as Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan regions of China, attracting more than 800,000 audiences. The display and performance of Shaolin Wushu on the world stage also reflect the positive role of foreign exchanges, not only disseminating Shaolin Wushu culture but also enabling the world to understand China and Chinese Wushu more quickly and comprehensively.

6. Conclusion

(1) Chinese Wushu under the influence of Buddhist culture mainly refers to Shaolin Wushu, whose most distinctive feature is the unity of Chan and Wu, with "Wu as the body of Chan" and "Chan as the application of Wu".

(2) The main dissemination channels of Shaolin Wushu are five: dissemination among master and disciple in temples, dissemination among the folk in the jianghu, dissemination in ancient battlefields, dissemination in film and television works, and dissemination in foreign exchanges.

References

- [1] Xiong, H., & Shi, D. Y. (2006). Religion and martial arts. *China Religion*, (9), 32-34.
- [2] Zhang, L. (2011). Secularization development of contemporary Chinese Buddhism [Master's thesis]. Wuhan: South-Central Minzu University.
- [3] Ku, P. H. (2014). A study on the influencing factors of Buddhism on Shaolin martial arts [Master's thesis]. Lanzhou: Northwest Minzu University.
- [4] Xu, F. (2020). A study on the thought of traditional Chinese martial ethics [Master's thesis]. Nanjing: Nanjing University of Science and Technology.
- [5] Zhang, D. W., Liu, T. W., Wang, R. Z., et al. (2010). A study on the relationship between Chinese martial arts and religious culture. *Combat (Martial Arts Science)*, 7(11), 26-28.
- [6] Li, W. X. (2019). On the interaction and difference between the development of traditional martial arts and religion. *Hubei Sports Science*, 38(6), 494-497.
- [7] Pu, L. Z., Pan, X. B., & Dong, Z. S. (2006). On the positive influences of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism on martial arts. *Shandong Sports Science and Technology*, (3), 52-54.
- [8] Yang, S. (2025). A study on the inheritance and dissemination of Chinese swordsmanship culture. *China Sports Research*, 7(2), 126-130.
- [9] Zou, Y. B., Wang, X., & Yu, Z. S. (2015). Understanding Tao through martial arts: Religion in martial arts. *China Religion*, (11), 72-73.
- [10] Zhao, Y. H. (2012). An analysis of the development reasons of Songshan Shaolin martial arts cultural industry [Master's thesis]. Taiyuan: North University of China.
- [11] Wan, Y. (2011). On the connection and mutual influence between religion and martial arts. *Journal of Sports Science*, 18(6), 130-133.
- [12] Zhang, Z. H. (2008). A study on the relationship between the development of Chinese martial arts culture and religious culture. *Journal of Xiangnan University*, (2), 120-123.
- [13] Wang, Q. S. (2009). A study on the cultural connotation of Southern Shaolin martial arts. *Bulletin of Sports Science and Technology Literature*, 17(2), 11-13.
- [14] Li, Q. S. (2013). A preliminary discussion on the relationship between martial arts and Buddhism. *Sports Culture Guide*, (5), 112-115.
- [15] Zhai, J. Y., & Zhou, Q. J. (2013). The history and current situation of religious martial arts exchanges between China and Southeast Asian countries. *Sports Culture Guide*, (10), 114-117.