

CONTRIBUTORS

Fei Chen is an associate professor of Department of Physical Education of China Jiliang University, and PhD candidate of Beijing Normal University. His research project is Chinese martial arts education and culture.

Cuihan Li is a Lecturer in the College of Physical Education and Sports of Beijing Normal University. Her main research interests include Chinese martial arts and folk traditional sports and focus on folk religions and sport culture.

Pierrick Porchet is a PhD candidate and research associate at the Confucius Institute of the University of Geneva. His research project focuses on the impact of current sport and culture policies on Chinese martial arts practitioners in the People's Republic of China.

Shaojun Lyu (Corresponding Author) is a professor in the College of Physical Education and Sports of Beijing Normal University. His research project focuses on the research of Chinese martial arts and national traditional sports.

SAFEGUARDING AUTHENTICITY VERSUS INNOVATIVE DEVELOPMENT: METHODS OF PROTECTING TRADITIONAL CHINESE MARTIAL ARTS

FEI CHEN, PIERRICK PORCHET, CUIHAN LI & SHAOJUN LYU

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ABSTRACT

This article uses semi-structured interviews with experts in the field to explore the conflict between the two main approaches to the protection of Chinese martial arts culture, defined as 'safeguarding authenticity' and 'innovative development'. The article aims to enhance the vitality and cultural heritage of traditional Chinese martial arts and discusses their safeguarding and development from the perspective of intangible cultural heritage protection. Studies indicate that if Chinese martial arts endure from generation to generation, it is necessary to adapt martial arts to the current laws of social and cultural processes. With an eye to improving the vitality of traditional martial arts culture while adhering to the inheritance of the core skills of traditional martial arts, this article advocates an innovative development mode that keeps pace with the times. The fundamental purpose of such an approach would be to enable the sustainable and healthy development of traditional martial arts.

INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly developing modern society, traditional Chinese martial arts culture is facing a crisis of survival, with unique traditional boxing styles gradually decreasing. In officially organised martial arts competitions, all the combatants exhibit the same style. As Federico Lenzerini has said, 'the rich cultural variety of humanity is progressively and dangerously tending towards uniformity'. Since 2006, to avoid the extinction of diverse martial arts styles and preserve their cultural heritage, the Chinese government has included more than 70 martial arts items in five published lists of nationally representative intangible cultural heritage (ICH), including Yang-style Taijiquan, Chen-style Taijiquan, Shaolinquan, and Meihuaquan. Protection can ensure the long-term viability of intangible heritage within communities and groups [Gwervevende & Mthombeni 2023] and protection is immensely important for the continued development of traditional Chinese martial arts culture.

How should ICH be protected? This is a research issue of concern to scholars around the world. In China, academic circles have two main ideological approaches to the protection of martial arts culture. One is to advocate 'safeguarding authenticity' (坚守原真; sticking to the truth), and the other is to advocate 'innovative development'. Although both are aimed at protecting the continuation and development of the traditional martial arts culture, the two approaches are logically contradictory. 'Protection' refers to actions taken to maintain the survival of 'vulnerable content' and is intended to preserve and pass on the 'original appearance' of the ICH. In the new era of rapid development, however, cultural protection without vitality is difficult to maintain. To retain vitality, such cultural protection must be 'innovative' and innovation by definition implies change. This can also be seen in the relevant policies of the Chinese government on the protection of ICH, which not only advocates inheritance and opposes unauthorised changes in core skills and other traditions but also encourages the innovation and development of skills [Ministry of Culture and Tourism 2012]. Moreover, at the 2022 International Martial Arts Study Conference, a discussion on the theme of 'Martial Arts Cultural Protection' suggested that there was also a cognitive contradiction between Chinese and international academic approaches. Whether this contradiction is based on differences in linguistic understanding or cultures, the result is that a consensus is difficult to reach on the meaning of concepts. To paraphrase Jacques Derrida, we must strive to resist the desire to collapse differences into opposites, and in order to resolve the unnecessary cognitive contradictions brought about by such differences, we must first form consensus on the core concepts [Spivak 1990]. Therefore, from the perspective of traditional culture protection, this paper examines the two approaches toward protecting ICH to identify the specific contradictory issues with a view to providing new ideas for the protection and development of traditional martial arts in the future.

METHODOLOGY

In-depth interviews were the primary method of data collection in this study. This method provides a means of developing a deep understanding of scholars in relevant fields on the topic of traditional martial arts cultural preservation, allowing the authors to identify the details behind the different perspectives guiding their work and interpreting them on that basis. In addition to the interviews, a second important data source was provided by existing research evidence, including published academic papers and books. The use of semi-structured interviews is conducive to focusing on the research project and allowing respondents to fully express their views. The interviewees included scholars engaged in martial arts research¹ and folklore research. The questions concerned the appropriate methods for protecting martial arts culture or ICH. The intention was to obtain an understanding of the differing views of the scholars in two fields when they view the same phenomenon and to construct a personal understanding of this issue from the perspective of ICH protection. The ultimate aim was to propose research conclusions that are useful for the protection of traditional martial arts culture.

WHAT MARTIAL ARTS CULTURE SHOULD BE PROTECTED?

Martial arts are ultimately a skill and maintaining the authenticity of that skill is the core of protecting martial arts culture. Thus, the word 'authenticity' is a core term that traditional martial arts protection cannot avoid. However, the difference between English and Chinese contexts will lead to differences in understanding this word. Professor Paul Bowman has given an in-depth analysis of authenticity in his paper 'The Tradition of Invention: On Authenticity in Traditional Asian Martial Arts' [Bowman 2020].² Bowman recognises that any form of development necessitates creativity, that all entities and identities inevitably undergo continuous construction, and that authenticity is inherited on this basis; it is not a matter of whether a 'tradition' is 'false' or 'true' within a culture or context. Consequently, it is difficult to accurately grasp the meaning of authenticity (正宗性) in the context of Chinese culture and, specifically, within traditional Chinese martial arts culture. For Westerners, the image of traditional Chinese martial arts is derived from various forms of popular culture, such as movies, TV shows, commercials, music videos, and the Internet [Bowman 2015]. Westerners' understanding of authenticity tends to be materialised by calligraphy (书法) decorations, with racks of traditional weapons and practice rooms in which the portraits of ancestors are presented (Bowman 2020). Pierrick Porchet notes that 'apprenticeship of the art through the ritual of praying for a master to accept oneself as his/her disciple' (拜师学艺) is often seen by practitioners and institutions as a central feature of what is authentic and traditional in Chinese martial arts [Porchet 2022]. This recognition of authenticity, as generated through material

1 The martial arts are a discipline in China, belonging to the science of physical culture and sports under the designation 'the science of martial arts and ethnic traditional sports'. These scholars have been practicing martial arts for a long time, and they are also engaged in research into martial arts theory.

2 The Chinese version of this article was published in the *Journal of Chengdu Institute of Physical Education* (China) in 2021, with the Chinese title «亚洲传统武术“正宗性”的发明»; authenticity translates as 正宗性.

decoration and ritual means, resembles a blood relationship (血亲关系) since the experts (师父) and apprentices (徒弟) have a relationship based on inheritance, representing the 'authentic Shaolin' or 'authentic Tai Chi'. In ancient Chinese ideological traditions, the strength and continuation of this kinship tradition (血亲传统) is the worthiest of social foundations [Fairbank 1989], hence its extension into the expression of the relationship between *shitu* (experts and apprentices 师徒) in traditional martial arts. Even if there is no blood relationship, it takes on a generalised kinship form (泛血亲关系), namely, 'a teacher for a day, a father for life' (一日为师终身为父) or 'Within the four seas, all men are brothers' (四海之内皆兄弟). In a sense, the familial features of martial arts groups mean that the martial arts as a whole carry an idea of peace and harmony, rather than one of violence [Che & Chen 2020]. The network formed by this generalised blood kinship relationship is called *menhu* (门户) [Dai & Chen 2009]; in a larger framework, it has also become the martial arts community [Lyu & Zhang 2013]. Both the *menhu* and martial arts community are relatively stable, static, and traditional. Entering a *menhu* or becoming a part of a community is not an easy task; it requires a long process of identification. As this process of identification develops, the practitioner becomes more favourably inclined toward the authentic attribution of the martial art they have learned. This kind of identification derives not only from the recognition of practitioner by the *menhu* or community but also the recognition of *menhu* by the practitioner.

The above is an explanation of authenticity from the perspective of traditional Chinese martial arts culture, based on the relationship between blood relatives and the external manifestation of materialisation (such as the decorations in practice rooms and apprenticeship ceremonies). However, from the perspective of cultural protection, the 'falsehood' and 'truth' of traditional Chinese martial arts culture are more important, since truth is another interpretation of authenticity; truth is closer to the Oxford English Dictionary's interpretation of authenticity. The reason why 'truth' is more important in the context of cultural protection is that without authenticity (真实性), those external manifestations of materialisation completely lose their significance. A real-life case provides an example of this. Ma Bao Guo, claiming to be a master of Hunyuan Xingyi Taiji (浑元形意太极),³ was knocked down three times in a row by an amateur kickboxing enthusiast in just half a minute. Even so, he subsequently claimed through the media that his kung fu was so powerful that he was afraid he might hurt his opponent, and his remarks went viral for a short time, as an example of behaviour that Chinese people ridicule. Ma Bao Guo's martial arts hall and apprenticeship ceremony have all the external manifestations of authenticity, but the false 'skill' of his martial art undermines the whole edifice. When there is no foundation, no matter how beautiful the building is, it

is useless. This criterion of authenticity can be called the 'authenticity of skills', comprising the core of ICH (including the martial arts).

Although no traditions can develop without being supported by economic interests, the culture industry can provide a path of survival for disappearing traditions [Zhang 2017]. However, the pursuit of economic interests can easily lead to impure and false traditions and to the emergence of cultural fictions. In recent years, the Chinese martial arts have seen many people dare to call themselves the head of a *menpai* (school) in order to recruit more students and gain financially, causing many new styles to be fabricated (门派林立). They call themselves experts, especially in relation to 'challenges' (挑战) and 'appointments' (*yuejia*; 约架).⁴ This pursuit of authenticity (正宗性) has developed into a desire for the authenticity (原真) of martial arts understood in terms of combat (打), following the logic that returning to the war and battlefield origin of martial arts is the best indicator. Added to this is the belief that practices handed down from ancestors should be passed down according to their original appearance and should not be changed; to change a traditional martial art is to destroy it [Yu 2006].

As mentioned at the beginning of the article, this safeguarding of authenticity is one of approaches to the protection of martial arts culture. However, as Bowman points out: 'In the discourse of traditional martial arts, the term authentic or authenticity has connotations that can easily be taken to imply a kind of unchanging monocultural purity' [Bowman 2020]. In China, adhering to the protection of authenticity can easily fall into adherence to historical relics, insisting that the traditional martial arts should be passed down according to their original appearance, retaining the 'original and authentic' (原汁原味) martial art. Obviously, it is difficult to achieve the goal of returning martial arts to their historical roots. The Chinese martial arts originated from military warfare [Henning 1981], and for thousands of years they were a central feature of military practice [Lorge 2011]. It is obviously impossible to take the martial arts back to their origins in military combat in contemporary society, in which they function for self-defence and sports. The martial arts of today are not a strict continuation of the ancient skills but a modern phenomenon that took shape in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, as Wile [1996] clearly points out. The pursuit of a return to ancient skills led to the 'Xu-Lei Event'⁵ (徐雷事件). Xu understood the authenticity of traditional Chinese martial arts to refer to combat and regarded some fake authentic masters as representing the entirety of the traditional martial arts. Events like this are highly damaging to the protection and development of traditional Chinese martial arts culture.

The Chinese martial arts are part of the ICH of humanity. They represent a living cultural heritage that will change over time, and this change means that 'old' aspects cannot exist for a long time. If we persist

3 Hunyuan Xingyi Taiji is the name of a martial arts style, which was fabricated by Ma Bao Guo.

4 This has been a social phenomenon in Chinese martial arts circles in recent years. It refers to a way for two people to compare their martial arts skills by dueling at an agreed time. This kind of appointment is often spread through the media, and even sponsored by commercial brands, so it is the subject of much public attention.

5 In 2017, Xu, a mixed martial arts practitioner, took part in a highly publicized fight against Lei Lei, a traditional martial arts practitioner who claimed to be the head of Lei Gong Tai Chi. Xu defeated Lei Lei in less than 20 seconds. After the event attracted widespread attention, the public became immensely sceptical about the authenticity of traditional martial arts.

in returning to the past, the result of this persistence is often the loss of cultural vitality, which can easily lead to the phenomenon of 'dead art' (人亡艺绝) or else the loss of the culture as the heirs of the martial arts die off, taking their traditional skills with them. This reflects the contemporary problem of a lack of heirs of ICH, a difficulty in acquiring apprentices, and a difficulty in passing on skills. This is in part because martial arts practitioners have a low social status. Since the Song Dynasty, China has had a tradition of 'supporting literature and downplaying the martial' (重文抑武). In modern society, relying on martial arts skills to make a living is still a relatively difficult task. On the contrary, practicing a martial art is very difficult, leading many young people to reject it as a career, meaning that most martial arts practitioners are amateurs. In addition, martial arts are difficult to integrate into people's lives. Traditional lifestyles have disappeared, especially in civilised societies where violence is discouraged or disapproved of. Moreover, the inheritors of martial arts are lacking in innovative spirit. Many inheritors of ICH projects are limited by their own knowledge and skills, and their thinking is conservative. According to Porchet's ethnography, one of the national inheritors of Taijiquan was only interested as an expert in inheriting 'things from the old masters of the past' (传承老前辈的东西). Here, authenticity is properly understood as something from the past, and this individual has hundreds of disciples seeking this connection to the past, to tradition and authenticity. However, with regard to maintaining the vitality of the culture, only a few people are interested in copying the techniques of the old artists, meaning that these hundreds of disciples are unlikely to become the driving force for continuing cultural vitality. Due to the decrease in the attractiveness of traditional martial arts to young people, the phenomenon of cultural disappearance caused by 'dead art' is more easily understood, and this phenomenon occurs every day in many boxing styles in China, such as *bamenquan* (八门拳), a local boxing style in Gansu of China, which is becoming increasingly rare.

The inheritance of ICH does not mean a return of the origins (原真; combat); rather, it emphasises the authenticity (真实) of skills, and the criterion for judging this kind of authenticity is the natural geography and social and cultural background on which the formation of the traditional martial arts was based, as well as the corresponding social and historical functions, the resulting spiritual and cultural characteristics, and adherence to traditional principles and laws (*lifa*; 理法) (Ruan 2015). This is the cultural essence of Chinese traditional martial arts and the core content of cultural protection.

INNOVATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF MARTIAL ARTS CULTURE

The UNESCO initiatives for the protection of ICH insist on a wide range of practices and living traditions. This insistence indicates a departure from previous initiatives of this type, including folklore festivals, often aimed at building national culture via performance on stage or some other form of revivalist elements that have been recognised as representative of an earlier, traditional culture [Hameršak & Pleše 2018]. In a sense, this culture is constructed in a new social environment. It is not traditional but it is closely related to the tradition. In the field of Folklore Studies, the key information that connects with the tradition are called 'core symbols'. Other symbols that maintain a

temporary identity and whose validity comes from changes in social conditions are regarded as 'random symbols' [Zhang 2018]. The core symbols and random symbols are not fixed and static but dynamic. The same applies to the diverse value functions of the martial arts as they are used in different fields. These functions may transform into each other and develop new cultural traditions in the process of transformation. For example, the competitive sporting event of *taolu* (套路) focuses on difficulty and beauty, while *sanda* (散打) focuses on combat, martial arts fitness focuses on health, and martial arts education focuses on physical education. Thus, the core values of martial arts in different fields are different, even though we could argue that regardless of the field, the practice of a martial art always takes place in the pursuit of 'self-improvement', 'self-transcendence', or a better way of life. This can also be understood as an expression of the traditional Chinese concept of 'self-cultivation' (修身), which includes the nurturing of both body and spirit (Chen 2019). Adherence to this core concept can also be clearly seen in Bruce Lee's creation of Jeet Kune Do. Lee took the essence of the traditional Chinese martial arts, focused on actual combat, learned from others' strengths, and then innovated techniques. The words on Bruce Lee's tombstone, 'Your inspiration continues to guide us toward our personal liberation' (以无法为有法,以无限为有限), have a strong Chinese philosophical strain, as well as being a true portrayal of his continuous pursuit of 'self-transcendence'. The innovative development mentioned in this article is not about the creation of new things but a method of development based on the core of martial arts culture from the perspective of ICH protection. The concept of protection actually includes the idea of innovation. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage has a clear definition of the protection of ICH: 'Safeguarding' refers to measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the ICH, including the identification, documentation, research, preservation, protection, promotion, enhancement, transmission (particularly through formal and non-formal education), and revitalisation of the various aspects of such heritage [UNESCO 2003]. Safeguarding within this context is thus a polysemic concept that includes not only the meanings of preservation and protection in a classical sense but also the ideas of enhancement, transmission, and revitalisation. It is often said that innovation in the traditional martial arts means 'innovating the old and bringing forth the new', but such a revolution is not a complete denial of the old materials. Rather, it is based on traditional practice; with the changes in the material and cultural environment, it is a kind of inheritance innovation, and this innovation contains the meaning of inheritance, promotion, and revitalisation.

The fundamental purpose of ICH protection is to continue and strengthen the inner life of the culture, enhance its own capacity for sustainable development, and guarantee a 'living inheritance' [Qi 2009]. Since the 1980s, China has spent considerable financial and labour resources on the martial arts for this purpose. A thorough process of investigation, collection, sorting, and filing took three years to produce a census of martial arts cultural heritage and for the rescue and protection of many endangered or lost boxing styles. Traditional martial arts cannot simply be left to die, lie dormant in archives, or sit in museums and showrooms for everyone to look at. Whether traditional martial arts want to play a social function or a cultural function, the first premise is that they must live. To survive in modern society, however, they must

adapt to the needs of modern society. As it happens, innovation for survival is not uncommon in the development history of the traditional Chinese martial arts, especially in the modern period. The Chinese martial arts have achieved a transformation from traditional to modern, and martial arts education, competition, and other aspects resemble those of Western sports [Morris 2004]. This change is exactly the dynamic change characteristic of the core symbols mentioned earlier. The expert-apprentice (师徒) relationship has become a teacher-student (师生), and the family-style teaching of *rumen* (入门) has become organised teaching. These changes do not mean the demise of traditional martial arts, only that as Chinese history and culture have changed, the 'most important' meaning of the martial arts has changed accordingly [Chen & Lyu 2022]. Strictly speaking, the traditional martial arts are regarded as traditional because they contrast with the modern martial arts, such as those seen in competitive events, schools, keep-fit classes, etc. For example, the thinking, system, and operational mode of competitive martial arts have been gradually integrated into the Western sports model, meaning that traditional and competitive martial arts have different value orientations, leading to their differentiation. Of course, not all traditions are able to stay unchanged over the centuries. The protection of the traditional Chinese martial arts cannot be like the protection of historical cultural relics, which will never change. Doing so would inevitably lead to a disconnection from social development, a gradual departure from people's lives, and a gradual disappearance, contrary to the original intention of protection. Effective inheritance (innovative development) on the basis of respecting traditions (real skills) is worthy of affirmation and recognition, whether it is for the needs of the times, adapting measures to local conditions, or for the purpose of sustainable development.

CHOICE OF METHOD FOR PROTECTING TRADITIONAL MARTIAL ARTS CULTURE

The traditional Chinese martial arts constitute a traditional skill, and thus skill is the core carrier of its ICH inheritance and the core of martial arts culture protection. The core skills and values represent their authenticity (真实) and thus their culture, which is the foundation of the protection and development of the traditional martial arts. The authenticity (真实) mentioned here is also referred to as *shouzheng* (守正), emphasised by the Chinese government, based on innovative development (*shouzhengchuagxin* 守正创新) while drawing on the core true culture of tradition, respecting the basic connotations of ICH, and promoting the contemporary value of the ICH [General Office of the CPC Central Committee 2021].

With regard to protecting traditional martial arts culture, we must first acknowledge that the ecological environment of traditional Chinese culture has undergone tremendous changes against the background of globalisation. The rapid development of modernisation, the dissolution of urban and regional boundaries, and the coordinated development of the regions have brought economic prosperity but have also catalysed 'cultural convergence', manifested in the simplification of culture and the gradual decline of local cultural characteristics. Due to the convenience of the advanced means of transportation, the mobility of human

beings has increased. At the same time, as people are the carriers of traditional martial arts skills, their movement has meant that they have taken their culture with them, resulting in the fusion of regional cultures. As a result, traditional martial arts relying on regional customs and local culture have gradually become consistent (南拳北腿; *nanquan beitu* are the simplest example of the regional characteristics of martial arts). The place where today's martial arts master is located will form the corresponding traditional martial arts framework. To survive in the new geographical environment, this new framework must adapt to the culture of its location. Newcomers adapt to the existing residents and vice-versa. This kind of 'cultural convergence' has been staged repeatedly, as manifested in the simplification of culture and the gradual decline of local cultural characteristics and gradual disappearance of distinctive regional martial arts categories. From the perspective of modern sports competition, this kind of simplification and standardisation is more conducive to fair competition and judgement. From the perspective of cultural protection, it is obviously not worth advocating. As a source of exchange, innovation, and creativity, cultural diversity is vital to humanity and is inextricably linked to the safeguarding of ICH [Federico 2011]. In this situation, the protection of the diverse characteristics of traditional martial arts must adhere to the core symbols of the regional culture and, under government institutional incentives, strive to protect the diversity of traditional martial arts culture as much as possible.

Second, it has become increasingly difficult to attract modern young people to participate in martial arts or sports, and innovations must be made to maintain the traditional culture. The German sports sociologist Helmut Digel has noted that the influence of the Olympic Games is not as strong as it once was. Some developed countries in Europe downplay them. The younger generation likes sports but not necessarily competitive sports [Miao 2018]. Consequently, many international sports organisations regard the need to increase sports interest and participation, especially among the young, as an important factor in future development. The creation of the Youth Olympic Games is an example of one innovation made by the International Olympic Committee to attract younger generations. There is no doubt that young people are the key to sustaining the vitality of culture. However, it is difficult for traditional martial arts with a strong traditional rural life and a strict system of accepting apprentices to attract the young. Like the Olympic Games, the traditional martial arts must also move with the times to attract more young people. At present, the Chinese government regards the 'inheritance protection system' as an important means of ICH protection, especially encouraging young inheritors to continue their skills. The government gives policy and funding guarantees so that they can have a better environment and conditions to spread their skills. The universities (sports colleges) encourage traditional martial arts inheritors to study and develop, and some colleges offer exams for practitioners of traditional martial arts.

The changes in the traditional cultural living environment pose a huge challenge to adherence to the principles and rules (*lifa*; 理法) of the traditional martial arts. The Chinese government promotes and safeguards outstanding traditional Chinese culture (*tuiguang yu baohu zhonghua youxiu chuantong wenhua*; 推广与保护中华优秀传统文化) and empha-

sises that the use of traditional wisdom to solve problems in the development of the new era is an important way for the innovative development of traditional culture. This is the 'creative transformation and innovative development of Chinese traditional culture' emphasised by President Xi Jinping. Traditional Chinese culture is spiritually symbolic of the Chinese nation and the basic and lasting force in the development of the country [General Office of the CPC Central Committee 2017]. The Chinese government has elevated the inheritance and protection of outstanding Chinese traditional culture to a major national development strategy, which has created a favourable policy environment for the protection of ICH and fundamentally improved the social living environment and professional status of ICH practitioners. Of course, as noted earlier, with the development of the times, great changes have taken place in politics, the economy, and culture, and traditional culture can only continue to develop if it keeps pace with the times. However, innovation of traditional Chinese martial arts must nonetheless adhere to the *lifa* of the traditional martial arts. Jizheng Ruan believes that modern martial arts represent a change in cultural heritage; thus the traditional routines (传统套路) are not the same thing as the traditional martial arts whereas new routines (新编套路) that adhere to traditional principles and methods can still be regarded as traditional martial arts [Ruan 2015]. Many inheritors have begun to publicly display martial arts skills that were previously kept secret within the master–disciple relationship, and there are some well-known martial arts masters who now are successfully sharing the secrets of boxing power and exercises through TikTok. These cases are indicative of the new ways of spreading real martial arts skills and constitute a new form of cultural transmission and development model integrated with the modern social and cultural environment [Chen 2021].

CONCLUSION

In 2020, Taijiquan, as a representative of the Chinese martial arts, was included in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, which demonstrated the significance of Chinese martial arts culture to the world and brought opportunities for the global spread of Chinese martial arts. In the context of international martial arts research, the existence of ideological contradictions between Western and Chinese martial arts research is obvious in relation to the core issue – authenticity (正宗性) – of martial arts culture protection. In the current Chinese context, in which the martial arts are covered by the ICH protection state policy, the tension between the

two conflicting ideas of 'guarding authenticity' and 'innovating' is an important issue in the implementation of this policy. This article aims to understand how this dichotomy plays out in academic discourses in Chinese academic literature. It is clear that there are still debates on this issue in Chinese academic circles; in particular, it has always been difficult to form a consensus on whether to 'return to combat'. Chinese scholars have noted the changes in the natural and social environment in which traditional martial arts exist and believe that it is impossible to return Chinese martial arts to the genuinely 'traditional' (the past). The result of adhering to the 'past' of martial arts can only be the gradual disappearance of the culture. Many of the scholars who participated in the 7th International Martial Arts Studies Conference in July 2022 were very interested in the methods of protecting the traditional Chinese martial arts. All of them wanted to see some concrete and effective policies or successful cases so that people could see the work done to protect ICH. At present, the protection methods most recognised by Chinese scholars focus on the 'core skills' (核心技艺) and keeping pace with the times. This is the *shouzhengchuangxin* (守正创新) advocated by the Chinese government. Although most of the current academic research discusses how *shouzheng* should be implemented and focuses less on ways to innovate, there are many vivid cases exploring innovation and development, such as the government's support for the protection of inheritors, the encouragement of colleges and universities to recruit traditional martial arts practitioners, and traditional martial arts practitioners undertaking an obligation to pass on the traditional martial arts culture related to their own style through various channels. These are all examples of new development models responding to the characteristics of particular martial arts.

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