

CULTURAL TOURISM

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Attractiveness of a martial arts Grand Master in Tourism

Submission: 12.06.2021; acceptance: 10.07.2021

Key words: cultural tourism, fighting arts, Grand Master, attractiveness

Abstract

Background. The theoretical perspective or scientific framework for the considerations undertaken here is jointly and complementarily created by the General Theory of Fighting Arts (GTFA), the sociology / anthropology of culture, and the theoretical concept of “martial arts tourism”.

Problem. Can we consider the person of a martial arts master and his mastery in terms of tourist attractiveness as a magnet attracting enthusiasts? How can we evaluate this attractiveness and what is its source?

Method. Three qualitative research methods – analytical (analysis of the content of the literature on the subject), analysis of the content of mass media (film, books and popular magazines, internet content), the author’s own long-term participant observation, and autoethnography were used.

Results. Criteria for the tourist attractiveness of a champion have been established. Significant examples from different countries are shown, which are illustrative of the issue under consideration. The source of the attractiveness of masters-teachers is especially their authenticity (which applies to both mastery and the martial arts taught) and the high level of teaching.

Conclusions. The number of student-tourists coming to a master’s school or to their seminars is a significant criterion of attractiveness. It is undoubtedly very important for commercial success and participation in the martial arts tourism market. On the other hand, in order to build a school and organization, it is no less important to train future master teachers well. Years of constant cooperation between the master and the student are an indicator of this.

A brief introduction

The cultural phenomenon of martial arts covers the areas of mass culture (martial arts cinema and action film, comics, and computer games), sports culture (competition in combat sports), physical and health culture, including tourism and physical recreation. The imagination of the 21st-century man is still influenced by the archetypal master of martial arts and his almost magical skills. Can we consider his person and mastery in terms of attractiveness as a magnet attracting enthusiasts of tourism? After all, in the General Theory of Fighting Arts (GTFA) this master is treated as an art cannon – the one that they cultivate.

The theoretical perspective or scientific framework for the considerations undertaken here is jointly and complementarily created by: GTFA and the theoretical concept of “martial arts tourism” [Cynarski 2019,

2020]; the concept of participation in culture according to the sociology of culture and the sociology of leisure [Golka 2008; Cynarski 2017]; and an anthropological and systemic theory of tourism and recreation [Obodynski, Cynarski 2006; Cynarski 2010]. The indicated concepts and theoretical approaches are described in the literature on the subject mentioned here (above).

It is still worth establishing in advance who is the master. The master, as a conceptual category, has been analysed for many years in research on the phenomenon of martial arts. On the basis of GTFA, we use the following definition: “Master in martial arts is: 1) the founder of a school or a succeeding teacher; 2) someone who knows the whole system and educational programme of that school; 3) the holder of a high rank (e.g. 8-10 dan / duan) in a martial art; 4) a sports champion. However, the Master title or even more so, Grand Master (GM), refers only to martial

arts” [Cynarski, Skowron 2014: 63]. So it may be the founder of the martial arts school or its legal successor; a teacher who knows the whole system; holder of the highest degrees, licences or master titles. A sports champion is a separate conceptual category that relates to combat sports. Mastery in the way of martial arts refers not only to the highest technical skills but also to the spiritual maturity of man, his moral level, knowledge, and pedagogical or organisational skills. It is also an assessment of achievements [cf. Cynarski 2002; Sieber, Pawelec 2016].

The way to mastery in martial arts is studied in the field of physical culture, as a form of progressive development, the function of activity and creativity, the effects of a long-term training process, and in many aspects [cf. Cynarski 2001; Cynarski, Cieszkowski 2009; Cynarski *et al.* 2015; Cynarski, Yu, Pawelec 2017]. Achieving this mastery is especially favoured by circumstances such as learning under the supervision of an authentic master. In order to meet him, adepts of martial arts undertake journeys, known as martial arts tourism. This is the reason for trips even to distant countries, although in some cases an outstanding master can be met relatively close [Sieber, Cynarski 2003; Figueiredo *et al.* 2020]. On the other hand, it is this master who attracts students – martial arts tourists.

Methodology

The author uses as a base three qualitative research methods – analytical (analysis of the content of the literature on the subject), analysis of the content of mass media (film, books and popularising magazines, internet content), and his own long-term (since 1977) observation of participating in the martial arts community. It has been almost 20 years of searching for a master-teacher and (among others) and over 20 years of regular cooperation with one of the Grand Masters. The observations were accompanied by up-to-date notes from numerous trips and stays at training courses or as part of the “*uchi deshi*” institution (Japanese “inner student”, who lives and trains with his master). Such a study also meets the requirements of autoethnography [Marechal 2010; Bielecka-Prus 2014; Green *et al.* 2019; Cynarski 2021a]. They were also strictly scientific trips; research and conference-related to the study of martial arts as a cultural phenomenon [cf. Kubala, Cynarski, Swider 2019]. The study is illustrated by the photo material, which is a kind of factography [Pink 2021; cf. Gonzalez de la Fuente 2021].

Criteria for assessing the attractiveness of tourism have been adopted. Similarly to the indicators of participation in culture, in the case of martial arts, the frequency of contact with culture, in this case with the master and his martial art, should be taken into account. Moreover, the long-term teacher-student relationship. On the other hand, for tourism, the number

of students visiting the master in a given period of time is of great importance. In total, it can be:

- number of student-tourists per year;
- years of cooperation between the master and the student (multiple arrivals).

Scientific research results

Criteria of the attractiveness of the master in tourism

A reason for fame, popularity or fashion for a given martial art is the number of tourists / students who come to, for example, *karate* schools in Okinawa, *Muay Thai* schools in Thailand, or especially to Shaolin centre in Dengfeng (Henan province, South Central China) [The Songshan and Shaolin Wushu Center 1995; Shahar 2011; Cynarski, Swider 2017; Skowron-Markowska 2019; Cynarski 2020].

Numerous *karate* schools in Okinawa, the island where *karate* was born [Alexander 1991; Gonzalez de la Fuente 2021], have few local students, but many groups of tourists go there. In the case of the famous Shaolin Monastery, it is even mass tourism. The legend of old masters also attracts tourists to other places of particular importance to the history of martial arts and the tradition of Chinese *wushu* [Raimondo 2011; Wang 2021]. Participation in *aikido* and *krav maga* training seminars, forced by the promotion regulations of these fighting arts, became popular. Due to the fashion for Bjj (“Brazilian jiu-jitsu”) and MMA (the so-called “mixed martial arts”), training with specialists in these sports is popular, and MMA specialists should be called trainers rather than masters of martial arts in their traditional meaning. It is still fashionable to go to Brazil for *capoeira* [cf. Griffith 2016]. In turn, each year masters-teachers from East Asia, whose names attract European enthusiasts of martial arts, are invited to the so-called international internships in France [Cynarski 2020].

The author came to the school of master Lothar Sieber as an instructor of several martial arts and a holder of black belts. It was in 1992. Since then, he has been constantly and regularly visiting this Munich school for further martial arts studies, especially *jujutsu* and *karate, ido* and *iaido* [Blumentritt, Cynarski 2008; Cynarski, Sieber, Mytskan 2015]. So it is 30 years of practical studies and cooperation under the watchful eye of this outstanding master, the holder of the highest degrees and master titles in several martial arts.

It is difficult to judge whether the attractiveness of this master, to whom the already highly advanced student still finds himself, is greater, or the one who has many students. But was he able to bring them to a high level? Is the arrival of one student 20 times more important than the arrival of 20 students once? Basically, it is fame that attracts students. Thus, the masters try to gain popularity by working on the brand of their name.

Monuments, paintings and photos of famous masters

The fame of the master translates into the attractiveness of the tourist place. If there are memorabilia of him in the *dojo* of Master Kenji Tomiki at Waseda University in Tokyo to this day, it is used to show the historicity of this training room – the ghosts of the old masters co-create the spirit of this place [cf. Cynarski 2020, photo 1]. In several places in Japan, there are monuments devoted to professor Jigoro Kano [photo 2], of great merit for the educational use of martial arts. Master Kano is a kind of patron of research into martial arts and martial arts in Japan.



Photo 1. On the wall – calligraphy made by J. Kano for K. Tomiki, *aikido* training room at Waseda University in Tokyo [Cynarski 2020: 39].

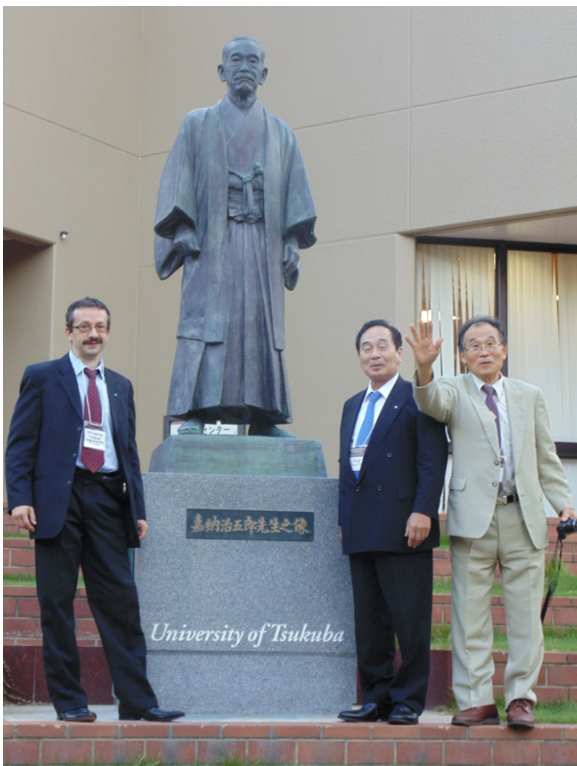


Photo 2. Statue of Dr Jigoro Kano in Tsukuba. Next to it, Professors F. Nakiri, T. Sasaki and the author [Cynarski 2020: 40].

In turn, Bruce Lee's photos are adjacent to the photos of *Shaolin kung-fu* long-fist practitioners, for

example, at the *Shaolin* Hotel in Dengfeng near the Shaolin Center. His profile and fame are here to promote a place that lives from martial arts tourism, even though Lee never visited the monastery. He lived and worked mainly in Hong Kong and Seattle (USA). Therefore, in Hong Kong there is his monument [photo 3]. He is also an icon of the martial arts community in the USA, because the *Tao Jeet Kune Do* system was created during his stay in the United States [Lee 1975; Rodriguez-Sanchez 2019].



Photo 3. Bruce Lee – a monument in Hong Kong [Cynarski 2020: 41].

Photos of martial arts masters and martial arts film heroes are used to promote various types of martial arts. Countries for which it is an element of national cultural heritage promote their martial arts even on postage stamps and coins [Sieber, Cynarski 2008]. So isn't it a given martial artist also a cultural asset? However, in the case of Western countries and the martial arts practised here of mostly Asian origin, state and local authorities do not care very much about these masters. Therefore, they are often enthusiasts who live modestly, little known to the general public, with a small group of students in their care.

Posthumous legend

Some masters pass away more unknown or forgotten. Those who gained fame through their own effective promotion or popularity gained with the help of students find their place in factual accounts or in posthumous legends. The historian then comes to compare numerous statements of various authors, often completely incoherent, and usually contradictory. "Legendary" biographies are usually the coloured ones. Book descriptions, especially internet content, require critical analysis. For example, the descriptions of the miracles of the creator of modern *aikido*, Morihei Ueshiba, such as the disappearance and similar paranormal abilities, are definitely unreliable.

Museums of martial arts present tangible testimonials, artefacts, for example traditional weapons and other equipment, costumes, and documents (e.g., as far as Bruce Lee is concerned, the example can be The Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience

in Seattle). This is, of course, much more plausible. The museum can also function as exercise rooms, especially of centuries-old martial arts schools. Then the master's achievements and fame contribute to the attractiveness of the place of his teaching. Such a school of martial arts is actually a ready museum, which in many cases still functions in a regular way.

Care should be taken in the descriptions of the creators of individual schools and styles. Their legend strengthens the functioning of the school over the next generations, so it is sometimes coloured, or less glorious elements are omitted. Sometimes, however, this fame is well deserved. For example, the founder of the *Tenshinshoden Katorishinto-ryu* martial arts school, established in the 15th century – master Choisai Iizasa Ienao (1387–1488) – became famous not only for his great skills, but also knowledge and wisdom, emotional balance and peaceful disposition [Reid, Croucher 1986; Otake 2007].

Examples

Let us analyse a few selected examples of the masters and their attractiveness in tourism. These will be examples from China, Japan and Europe and they would apply either to legendary masters or those still active today [cf. Cynarski 2021b].

Master Chen Wangting (1580–1660) is considered to be the creator of the *Chen taijiquan* style. He was the commander of the provincial troops and a specialist in then-known combat techniques. He specialized in wielding a halberd. The forms of *taijiquan* of the Chen family that are cultivated today are probably from that master. He preferred the use of low positions and coordinated work with the whole body. The effect of the evolution of Chen's style was a unique compilation of energetic *qigong* exercises (under the poetic name of “Unwinding the Silk Cocoon”) and “combat” forms containing also dynamic blows. Other *taijiquan* styles practised today are derived from the Chen style, especially the popular *Yang* style (19th century). The Chen family teaches their style to this day, and Chenjiagou is a place of “pilgrimages” for enthusiasts who want to see this place and pursue their practical studies of *Chen taijiquan*, including *qigong*, at its source [Raimondo 2011; Wasson 2018; Cynarski 2020].

In Hong Kong, the popularity of Bruce Lee and his teacher – Grand Master Yip Man works for the benefit of Master Leung Ting's *Wing Tsun kung-fu* school and organization operating there. He collaborates with the German master Keith Kernspecht, who is also able to attract hundreds and thousands of students to his international seminars. The EWTO (*European WingTsun Organization*) is one of the largest commercial martial arts companies in Europe. EWTO organises, among other things, large annual seminars in Hockenheim, Germany. Grand Master Kernspecht (10th *WingTsun* master's degree) is now developing its own inner *WingT-*

sun style based on the teachings of several of its masters [photo 4]. He has enriched it, inter alia, with the concept of “I” from *I-chuan (Yi-quan) kung-fu*, referring to intention, idea and mind [more: Kernspecht 2014; Sieber, Pawelec 2016; Cynarski 2020: 63–69]. In the pandemic era, this master was able to gather several dozen people from many countries around the world at his remote workshops carried out by Zoom video communication.



Photo 4. Prof. Kernspecht teaches *Inner Wing Tsun* in Hockenheim, 2016 [Cynarski 2020: 67].

The above-mentioned GM Jigoro Kano is not only the founder of the *Kodokan judo* school and the popular sport *judo* today but also a co-creator of the idea of today's *budo* [Kano J. 1932; Kano R. 1950; Rzany, Cynarski 2001]. Hence his monuments in Tokyo and Tsukuba, unwavering authority in the community, especially in Japan, and pedagogical concepts developed to this day by his followers. The Kodokan Institute, the Judo Kodokan museum, and numerous foundations and associations still function. Players and coaches from many countries of the world make pilgrimages to the Kodokan many times – to test technical and tactical skills in competitions and sparring, acquire new practical skills and knowledge. It is not strictly a trip “to the master” anymore, but to a school where the spirit of Master Kano and other great masters still lives on. Tokyo's *Kodokan* still attracts tourists – sportsmen and *judo* enthusiasts.

Old Japanese fencing *Tenshinshoden Katorishinto-ryu* has been taught for several hundred years according to the same canon. One of the outstanding masters of this school was Yoshio Sugino (1904–1998, 10th dan). The author of this study met him in France during summer training internships, where he could study directly under his supervision. His presence attracted dozens of enthusiasts from Europe and Canada to the town of Lagord near La Rochelle and to Tample sur Lot near Bordeaux. The city of Kawasaki is still the permanent seat of his school. The preaching in this master's lineage is called the *Sugino dojo*. To this *dojo* in Kawasaki, instructors from France, the Netherlands, Italy and also from Poland travel to this day [Sugino, Ito 2010; Cynarski 2020: 16–26]. However,

at present, master Yukihiro Sugino (9 dan), son of Yoshio Sugino, is responsible for teaching.



Photo 5. At the GM L. Sieber's school in Munich [Cynarski 2020: 59].

The “*Jiu-Jitsu und Karate Schule L. Sieber*” school in Munich is the headquarters of the *Zendo karate Tai-ten-tao* style and the *Idokan* system [Sieber, Cynarski 2002; Sieber, Cynarski, Kunysz 2008; Sieber 2011]. It has been operating since 1975. Teaching is conducted by GM Lothar Sieber (10 dan), Hannelore Sieber (9 dan) and their assistants [photo 5].

People from different countries practise here. They are mainly Germans, Turks, French, also Poles and Russians. The school has been visited many times by martial arts masters from several Asian countries – China, India, Japan and Korea. Martial arts taught at this school are relatively unknown, so they retain their elitism, which is valuable to connoisseurs. The *jujutsu* and *karate* taught here emphasise the effectiveness on self-defence, *iaido* (the art of drawing a *samurai* sword) preserves the old tradition, and interested people can also learn about martial arts medicine [Cynarski 2019]. The main teacher is the main magnet for students who practise regularly in regular groups and for students-tourists who travel periodically. Lothar Sieber is also invited to many countries as a martial arts teacher [Figueiredo *et al.* 2020].

Summary and Conclusions

Where does the attractiveness of the master for students come from? Perhaps authenticity – both the mastery and martial arts taught. The masters mentioned here – Choisai Iizasa Ienao, Chen Wangting, Yip Man and Yoshio Sugino codified and passed on classic fighting techniques. In turn, the reformers and modifiers of the older systems were Jigoro Kano and Bruce Lee. Keith Kernspecht and Lothar Sieber are creative, they develop martial arts and teach at a high level. This is appreciated by many of their students.

The teacher and the students need each other. Especially open schools and the organization of open training serve to increase the number of students and increase popularity. On the other hand, if running a martial arts school is a hobby and not the main source of income, the master does not have to seek to attract more students.

For commercial success and participation in the martial arts tourism market, the number of student-tourists coming to the master's school or to seminars / internships conducted by him is important. However, for building a school and organization, it is probably more important to train future master teachers well. Years of master-learner collaboration can be an indicator of this. Both of these parameters reflect the attractiveness of the master as a magnet in martial arts tourism.

As for the individual charisma of the master and its influence on the perception of him in terms of tourist attractiveness, further research is needed, together with social psychologists and sociologists of various sub-disciplines, including the sociology of leisure, tourism, sports and culture, and even specialists in the field of philosophy culture.

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Atrakcyjność turystyczna Mistrza sztuk walki

Słowa kluczowe: turystyka kulturowa, sztuki walki, wielki mistrz, atrakcyjność

Abstrakt

Tłó. Perspektywa teoretyczna lub ramy naukowe dla podejmowanych tu rozważań są wspólnie i komplementarnie

tworzone przez Ogólną Teorię Sztuk Walki (GTFA), socjologię / antropologię kultury oraz teoretyczną koncepcję „turystyki sztuk walki”.

Problem. Czy możemy rozpatrywać osobę mistrza sztuk walki i jego mistrzostwo w aspekcie atrakcyjności turystycznej, jako magnesu przyciągającego pasjonatów? Jak możemy ocenić tę atrakcyjność i co jest jej źródłem?

Metoda. Zastosowano trzy jakościowe metody badawcze – analityczna (analiza treści literatury przedmiotu), analiza treści przekazów masowych (film, książki i czasopisma popularyzatorskie, treści internetowe), własna długoletnia obserwacja uczestnicząca oraz autoetnografia.

Wyniki. Ustalono kryteria atrakcyjności turystycznej mistrza. Ukazano znamienne przykłady z różnych krajów, będące ilustracją podjętego zagadnienia. Źródłem atrakcyjności mistrzów-nauczycieli jawią się zwłaszcza ich autentyczność (co dotyczy jednocześnie mistrzostwa i nauczanej sztuki walki) oraz wysoki poziom nauczania.

Wnioski. Liczba studentów-turystów przyjeżdżających do szkoły mistrza lub na jego seminaria jest znaczącym kryterium atrakcyjności. Dla sukcesu komercyjnego i udziału w rynku turystyki sztuk walki jest to niewątpliwie bardzo ważne. Natomiast dla budowania szkoły i organizacji niemniej ważniejsze jest, aby dobrze wyszkolić przyszłych mistrzów-nauczycieli. Lata stałej współpracy mistrza z uczniem są tego wskaźnikiem.

Jeśli chodzi o indywidualny charyzmat mistrza i jego wpływ na postrzeganie go w aspekcie atrakcyjności turystycznej, to konieczne są dalsze badania, wspólnie z psychologami społecznymi i socjologami różnych subdyscyplin, z uwzględnieniem socjologii czasu wolnego, turystyki, sportu i kultury, a nawet specjalistami z zakresu filozofii kultury.