Shaolin Temple
Dengfeng, China
Home of Shaolin Kung Fu
Location

- The temple is located on in the foothill of Songshan Mountain in Henan, China.
- Dengfeng is the nearest town (15 min. away) and it offers shopping, restaurants, and a beer garden.

The growth of Kungfu students in the area has increased Dengfeng’s population to 600,000 inhabitants.
History of Shaolin Temple

• The Shaolin temple was originally built in 495 A.D. by an Indian monk in order to spread Buddhism in China. Shaolin Kung Fu was originally founded as exercise techniques to improve the health of monks.

• The monastery has been destroyed and rebuilt many times throughout history because of anti-Buddhist sentiments.

• Under the Qing dynasty in 1644-1911, martial arts was outlawed and monks were dispersed throughout China. This actually helped spread Kungfu as they spread the teachings. New techniques were founded and integrated into the existing Kungfu.

• In 1966 during the Cultural Revolution the temple was “cleansed” and abandoned.

• Donations for the restoration and upkeep of the temple

• Today, the temple is a major tourist attraction for fans of Kung Fu movies.
Staged Authenticities

- **Kung Fu performance:** The performance has been enhanced to be more exciting for tourists by adding flashing lights, modern sound technology, and an announcer.
  - *Shaolin Frog form for tourists*
- **Style of Dress:** All of the people in the temple such as students and teachers wear the traditional Buddhist clothes and have shaved heads.

- **Architecture:** Temple has been refurbished and renovated
- **Fake Kung Fu Completion certificate:** Foreigners can participate in a toned down workout regimen.
Ethnic Marker

• The temple has become an ethnic marker because the global market for martial arts and martial arts movies has spread worldwide, giving fans a desire to go where it was originally taught, which is the Shaolin Temple.
Tableaux

• Miniaturization: Display of statues representing Kung Fu training poses and moves

Over 100 wooden statues
Construction of tourist space

- Over 1 ½ million tourists visit the temple each year
- Hundreds of busses drop off tourists
- Visitors enter through a main gateway
- A large plaza set up with souvenir vendors to surround tourists
- Maximum viewing: tourists allowed to wander around the complex
- 7 main buildings
- Photography opportunities
- Display of signs, markers and statues to guide visitors
Mountain Gate

Souvenir shop

1,000 year-old eggs for a snack, on sale outside the temple
Courtyard outside performance hall

Stone with famous Shaolin song from the movie “Shaolin” (1982)

Walkway with stone tablets
Representations of Race/Identity

- Tourism as a source of ethnic heritage management by the state
- Local government’s (government of Henan province) plan to float shares in tourism assets
- The monastery's business ventures include television and film productions.

Technology + Buddha?
Preservation Issues

• Investments by National touring Bureau and government of Henan Province
• Buildings are in great condition (profit from tourism and student fees)
Consumption and Globalization

• The history of destruction and rebuilding of the temple commonly serve as origin stories in martial arts history, fiction, and cinema

• Shaolin monks perform in world tours

• Schools founded outside China: 3 locations in San Jose, CA

“Kung-Fu Masters Live” at the Peacock Theatre in London (2007)
Commercialization of race

- Selling kung fu dolls and toys and shirts etc.
- Kung fu movies
- Martial arts schools aren’t supported by the temple

Martial arts fan have a chance to learn Kung Fu at the temple
Works Cited

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