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History and features of Wushu

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Wushu is an ancient martial art that originated in China and is also referred to as 'Guoshu', or 'Gongfu' in some areas.

Its origins can be traced back to the early activities of the ancestors of the Chinese people who struggled for survival. During the prolonged cold weaponry age, wushu was employed by the army to fight enemies and was practised by ordinary people as a means of self-defence and physical training, as well as for self-entertainment. As long ago as the 7th century, there are records of exams and selections for wushu talent. The skills and arts of wushu were later promoted by the introduction of Leitai contests.

The Chinese Central Wushu Gymnasium, a professional wushu organization, was established in the 1920s, and from 1932 a national wushu tournament was held almost every year. A year later wushu was officially listed as a competitive event at the national games.

During its modern development wushu has been separated from military skills. With attack and defence as its basic movements and the Chinese traditional culture as its background, wushu has become a competitive sport event comprising Taolu and Sanshou disciplines.

After the foundation of the People's Republic of China, the Chinese Wushu Association was established in 1958, the Chinese Wushu Research Institute opened in 1987, with the Wushu Administration Center of Chinese General Bureau of Sports following in 1994. Wushu was also officially brought into the sports competition system and entered in the National Games of the People's Republic of China.

In schools, wushu has become an important part of physical education. Wushu has also become popular as a health-improving exercise for the public. Wushu has also been significant in the physical training and combat exercise for the army and the police.

Wushu has come to the attention of martial artists outside China and has developed wide interest as a competitive sport.

In 1990, the International Wushu Federation (IWUF) was set up in Beijing, and became a member of the General Association of International Sports Federations (GAISF) four years later. In February 2002, the International Wushu Federation was admitted to the 113th session of the executive meeting of International Olympic Committee and the IWUF now has 119 member federations in countries and regions in all five of the world's continents.

Since the foundation of IWUF, it has hosted or co-operated with several international tournaments. The World Wushu Championship began in 1991 and has been staged every two years – and nine times so far - in China, Malaysia, USA, Italy, Armenia, Macau, Vietnam and Hong Kong, China. It has been an official sport in every Asian Games since 1990 and East Asia Games since 1993. In 2001, IWUF hosted the first Asia Junior Championships in Vietnam, with tournaments later in Malaysia and Singapore. The Sanshou World Cup started in 2002 and has been held in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Xi'an in China. The IWUF hosted the First World Junior Championships in Malaysia in 2006.

The Wushu Tournament Beijing 2008 will be held during the Olympic Games at Olympic Sports Centre Gymnasium.

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