

The Driving Role of Martial arts in the New Era of China-Africa Cultural Exchanges

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ABSTRACT:

An old Chinese saying goes, “*State-to-state relations thrive when there is friendship between the peoples*”. And, friendship between the peoples is determined by how far and how deep they understand each other. In short, affinity between the people holds the key to state-to-state relations, while mutual understanding holds the key to people-to-people relations. Cultural exchanges between nations, primarily aim at achieving that goal. The “*New Era of China-Africa Cultural Exchanges*” promoted by the Chinese president Xi Jinping through the “*Belt and Road Initiative*” have speed up closeness of ties and sentiments of friendship between people of China and Africa. However, the Chinese martial arts through Kung fu films, have played a considerable and even earliest role in winning the hearts and minds of the African people, especially from the 70’s Bruce Lee movies, to the today’s Jacky Chan, Jet Li and Donny Yen movies, which essentially use the latest film media technologies to display the Chinese martial arts culture in the finest way, easily acceptable regardless of the moviegoers’ cultural background and languages. Moreover, the martial arts as the crystallization of human’s culture, embodied the quintessence of a nations’ philosophy and wisdom, and then expressed them through a body language in an artistic way. They are a system of thoughts, knowledge and beliefs, that can be encoded on the body and transmitted from generations to generations. This clearly illustrates that, not only martial arts are inalienable part of human culture, but they possess cross-cultural and cross-languages abilities, and therefore appear as an important driver in the process of cultural exchanges. Africa is known to be the cradle of humankind and the birthplace of earliest civilizations. Due to their unique natural environment and social development processes, African people have developed their own martial arts systems and body’s techniques. With the today’s rapid development of Information Technologies, African martial arts could play a decisive role in popularizing the African culture in China and globally. In a general sense, martial arts can shoulder a significant responsibility in this New Era of China-Africa Cultural Exchanges, and the idea of “*Sino-African Kung Fu Films*” suggested in this work as an emerging cultural product, could blow a new wind of cooperation between China and Africa, and conquer new markets globally.

Key words: New Era of China-Africa Cultural Exchanges, Martial Arts Culture, Martial Arts Themed Movies, Sino-African Kung Fu Films, Belt and Road Initiative.

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1. Introduction

The long-standing trade exchanges, similar historical encounters, shared weal and woe, and common development goals have enabled the Chinese and African people to establish sincere friendship and trust over history despite the geographical distance and the different social and cultural backgrounds between China and Africa. And, it is precisely because of the remarkable cultural diversity generated by the huge differences between China and Africa that created a steady driving force for exchanges and collisions among their peoples.

In recent years, cooperation in the humanities field has further elevated China-Africa exchanges and broadened the boundaries of exchanges. In October 2017, at the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, President Xi Jinping clearly stated that: “*Socialism with Chinese characteristics has entered a new era (Xi Jinping 2017).*” The new era has given China-Africa relations a deeper meaning, requiring to deepen the mutual learning and understanding between both peoples, to enrich the content of China-Africa cultural exchanges, and to build a China-Africa community with a shared future where cultures thrive together. The Chinese martial arts have gone through a long history of cultural development, and today are a crystallization of the wisdom of the Chinese people and the quintessence of Chinese culture. With the globalization trend and rapid development of Information Technologies, the movies industry has powered up the popularization of Chinese martial arts through Chinese Kung Fu Films. And, the exportation of Chinese Kung Fu Films abroad has had an immeasurable impact on cultural exchanges between China and other countries. Especially in Africa, where “Kung Fu” has quickly become a label for Chinese people, and Chinese martial arts a sort of “cultural identity” specific to the Chinese people. As consequences, Kung Fu movies have become one of the most important channels for African people to understand China.

Meanwhile in Africa, due to the unique natural environment and social development processes, African people have developed a love for combat sports and have built a distinctive martial spirit through history. In fact, *Africa as the birthplace of humankind (Diop 1970)*, and also as one of the birthplaces of the earliest civilizations (*Herodotus 484 BC*),^{has} naturally witnessed some of the earliest fighting systems and combat traditions. *Such systems as Engolo, Dambe, Laamb, Donga, Sile Tia, Messing, and Zulu stick fighting, as well as various traditional war dances still exist in today’s African society. They have developed their own unique artistic orientation based on the commonality of world martial arts, while reflecting Africans’ unique understanding of martial arts (Taling T. 2018).* These premises pathed the way for African people to understand and interpret other martial arts systems including the Chinese martial arts, based on their own cultural background (preunderstandings). As a bridge of communication between Chinese and African people, martial arts play an important role in tightening the feelings and friendship between the two people. In brief, the Chinese martial arts are a “Name card” for the world to understand China, and in the same way, African martial arts can be and should be an essential window for the world to understand Africa. In today’s world of rich and colorful cultures, Chinese and African martial arts both shoulder the important responsibility of inheriting their own national cultural identities and restoring cultural confidence of their people. And, in the context of the new era, the martial arts culture has the historical mission of promoting cultural exchanges between China and Africa. And therefore, should fully plays its driving role in the comprehensive development and cooperation between China and African countries.

2. Cross-Cultural Communication Ability of Martial Arts

American scholars Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter understand Cross-cultural communication as a situation in which people from different cultural backgrounds are communicating with each other. What should be emphasized in this situation is that the communicators have different cultural (and perhaps language) backgrounds and histories that make communication extremely difficult and sometimes impossible (*Larry A., Richard E., 2010*). Some scholars believe that in the people-to-people direct communication, only 30% of the information is transmitted through verbal language, while 70% relies on non-verbal means (*Deng Ming 2009*). These statistics fully illustrate the importance of cross-cultural communication tools such as body’s signs, body’s techniques (artistic skills), etc. In order to clearly understand the status quo of cross-cultural communication skills embodied in martial arts, we must first understand the concept of “*body language*” on which martial arts

heavily rely to communicate, this includes the physical moves, the internal and external energy discourses, the discipline code, etc. At the same time, we must fully understand the martial philosophy and the guiding thoughts profoundly rooted in the martial arts culture. Secondly, martial arts-themed movies are undeniable communication bridges between people with different cultural backgrounds. The cultural atmosphere and cultural charm created in the movie can directly and firmly affect the emotions and minds of the moviegoers. And throughout the development of storylines, more subtle messages can be embedded so as to reach precise communicative objectives. In this process, the cross-cultural communication abilities of martial arts are brought into full play, such as in Chinese Kungfu Films.

2.1 Martial arts: A body's language

The French anthropologist Marcel MAUS sees the Body as “*Man's first and most natural instrument to explore the society and experiment his milieu...*”. For him, “*different societies, cultures and times encode different categories (realities) on the body through thinking*” (Mauss 1936). In short, the “*Body*” is a show-ground for the thinking. Therefore, the body as an important carrier of thoughts and culture in the history of human development, expresses the true inner world through behavioral movements. And, through visual observation and body perception, the hidden body language codes can be unlocked. This theory applies to the Martial arts. In fact, “*The ways people use their body from society-to-society is particularly meaningful so far as they set their cultural goals. Among these cultural goals are the needs for adaptation and development in well-defined context. Man's aggressive nature and hostile environment have imposed him to engineered violent cultural tools and social practices for the purposes of survival and self-contentment. Through genius cultural refinement, these tools and practices have become comprehensive systems of knowledge*” (Taling T. 2021). Such “*systems of knowledge*” on the one hand, are “*natural response to defend vital interests such as territory, family, or identity if threatened (aggressiveness)*” (Alexander Moseley 2002), and on the other hand, will become a cultural process in which the martial artist expresses his philosophical desire to understand himself and his fellow human (*defensiveness*). This will eventually lead to a redefinition of the martial purposes and will naturally bring into play a more artistic way to manage the relationship with others. Consequently, the ideal pursuit of the martial artist through the body language, won't be any more limited to the destruction of others, but re-oriented to the protection of others including himself. The Chinese scholar, Mr. Dai Guobin, in his book <*Wushu: The Culture of The Body*>, regards Chinese martial arts as “*a cultural practice of the body*” and a “*manifestation of humanization*” of the Chinese people, and regards the “*body of the wushu practitioner*” as the carrier of the “*Wushu cultural expression*”. He believes that Chinese martial arts techniques cover the Chinese understanding and use of the “*Body*” (Dai Guobin 2011). In short, the martial arts culture of each region contains the local people's understanding of the body, which has both similarities and differences. Likewise, *African martial arts* understood as “*a cultural complex of body techniques, systems, beliefs, and practices associated with fighting created by African people in response to their adaptation and development needs over the course of history*” (Taling T. 2016) have shaped their own philosophy and artistic orientation through a long process of development history. *African martial arts* are grounded on the ideal pursuit of physical combat, while remaining deeply rooted in spirituality, namely the set of beliefs and rituals practices that connects the material and spiritual world, and finally express its beauty through the artistic “*Dance*” of the body powered up by the African musical rhythm; The three elements (*Combat+ Spirituality+ Dance*) are integrated into one unique and larger concept of *African martial arts body's techniques* (Taling T. 2016).

In a word, our brain controls our body, and our body expresses our ways of thinking. Therefore, understanding the martial arts culture of a people or nation, eventually leads to the understanding of the way of thinking and behaving of that people or nation. Thus, the martial arts are a set of body languages that expresses the quintessence of a nation's culture. It's a powerful cross-cultural tool that uses the non-verbal language of the body to reach multiple communicative objectives.

2.2 Cross-Cultural Communication Ability of martial Arts through Films Media

Films technologies are well known as popular type of media that combines images and sounds, and have the ability to deliver them through a 3D virtual reality easily acceptable by human mind. It can easily convert the

transmitter's cultural background, customs and ideas to images and sounds, and disseminate them to any geographical area with no time limit. Even without any verbal languages associated, the audience can still have an immersive feeling and comprehensive understanding of the transmitter's reality.

The reason why Chinese martial arts movies are widely accepted by fans all over the world, is not only due to people's innate admiration for the superb offensive and defensive skills displayed by the limbs and trunks in martial arts fights, but also because, the movie technology can give full play to fancy narration and, thus take the audience's visual cognition of the Chinese martial arts to an idealistic level. In fact, Chinese Kung Fu Films since their birth with the new China, tend to emphasized the *aesthetic* rather than the *realistic*. Moreover, the Chinese martial arts have strong cultural connotation and are deeply rooted in Chinese philosophy, arts and religious beliefs such as Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. They were once integrated into sacrificial dances in ancient times. In modern film and television arts, they are also combined with music, opera, dance and other performance forms, making its cultural content even more diversified. Just as people are born with an irresistible love for dance, Chinese martial arts have always carried the charm of dance art Since its birth (*Hao Shenglan 2013*). And, since ancient times in China, there has been a saying that there is no separation between martial arts and dance (*Jia Leilei 1998*).

In the early 1970s, with the emergence of Bruce Lee on the international stage, Chinese martial arts quickly spread to all corners of the world. Later, driven by Kung Fu stars such as Jackie Chan, Jet Li, and Donnie Yen, the influence of Chinese martial arts on the African continent continuous to rise. We can even say that, the dissemination and popularization of Chinese martial arts in Africa is based on film as the leading communication channel, of which "Kung fu Films" account for the great majority. In Africa, in some places such as coffee shops and movie theaters, even if Kung Fu movies are being played with no translation provided, they still remain very attractive to the audience. This shows that Chinese Kungfu have powerful cross-cultural abilities and that up to now, Film and TV media have undoubtedly been the most important communication canal for Chinese martial arts to spread in Africa. Therefore, with the prosperity and development of the film and television industry, martial arts movies have a huge driving effect on the China-Africa cultural communication, and are an important medium for cross-cultural exchanges between the two peoples.

3. The Responsibility of Martial Arts in Building the China-Africa Community with a Shared Future

The continuous development of globalization has rapidly deepened the degree of economic interdependence between countries. The gradually strengthened economic ties between nations have greatly increased the possibility of mutual influence between their respective cultures. In return, the cultural soft-power of countries have become an essential tool to achieve economic influence globally. After the Cold War, culture has played an increasingly important role in international relations, and cultural exchanges have gradually attracted widespread attention from various countries. After more than 60 years of development, China-Africa relations have always maintained a high momentum. And in recent years, the cultural exchanges between China and Africa have been upgraded to an unprecedented optimum. "*The China-Africa community of shared future*" is a high-level summary of China-Africa relations in Chinese President Xi Jinping's Africa policy speech in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on March 25, 2013 after taking office as newly elected Chinese president (*Chang Rongjuan 2021*). "*The China-Africa community of shared future*" was the first regional proposal between China and the rest of the world. It values sincerity and equality, pursues both friendship and interests and puts friendship first, takes a people-oriented approach in pursuing practical and efficient cooperation. It has set a good example of China and African countries building a community of shared future (*State council information office of the PRC, 2023*). Deepening the mutual understanding between the people of China and Africa is the key and most basic step in this process, and, as once said president Xi Jinping in his former speech, "*Affinity between the people holds the key to state-to-state relations, while mutual understanding holds the key to people-to-people relations.*"

The martial arts as inalienable part of humans' culture, has played a decisive role in connecting people in human history, and still shoulder an important responsibility in narrowing the distances between Chinese and African peoples in this new era. This could be achieved through "*Visual and Body Cognition*" as explained in the following diagram.

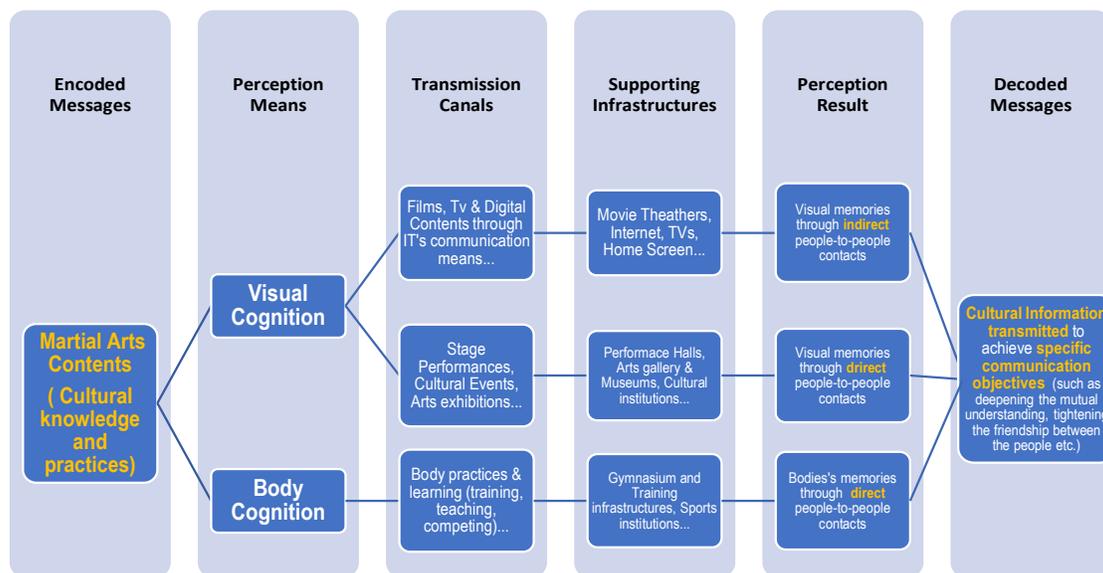


Figure 1. Diagram of Cultural transmission process of martial arts

From the above diagram, we can get to the conclusion that Sino-African martial arts are effective cultural bridges between China and Africa, and, promoting martial arts exchanges between China and Africa can help achieve the effective transmission of the cultural information between the two people, therefore, deepen the people-to-people understanding. Consequently, martial arts could inject strong impetus into the development of China-Africa cultural exchanges in the new era.

4. challenges of the China-Africa Martial Arts Exchanges in the New Era

4.1 The Sino-African martial arts exchanges are still in its infancy.

Although China and African countries have outstanding cultural achievements, due to the long geographical distance and large differences in social backgrounds, cultural exchanges between China and Africa are very limited. In general, Chinese and African cultures have not yet achieved deep integration, and the China-Africa martial arts communication is still in its infancy. In fact, even though Kung Fu Films have successfully pathed a way for Chinese martial arts in the African continent, and thus, set a “cultural name card” for the Chinese people over the continent and beyond, the Chinese martial arts’ communication however *has remained unilateral and influenced by many factors such as the communication carriers (from CDs, DVDs, to Internet, Movie theaters and satellite TV...), the language barrier, the receiver’s cultural background, etc., resulting in the “one-sided” and “biased” understanding of the Chinese martial culture. In general, the lack of the receiver’s perspective in the global communication of Chinese culture has become an obstacle to its internationalization. (Taling T., Zhang Yong, Lei Wen, 2019)* Therefore, the Chinese Kungfu as known from films has been “biased” and “distorted” by the unproper information transmission of film media, and the unawareness of the cultural background of the receivers by the communicator has obstructed the information transmission as well, resulting to the “misinterpretation” of the Chinese martial arts and so creating a “cultural gap” instead. Additionally, the language barrier has undermined a proper transmission of the philosophical knowledge encoded in the martial arts.

4.2 African Arts and Humanities Still Suffer of Its Interrupted History

Humanities can be seen as the study of humans’ culture in a given society. *China since ancient times has shaped a central government, created a written system that has allow the country to write down a continuous history*

and store archives on its long road of development. With a relatively powerful military, China has been able to defend itself against foreign aggressors so as to keep uninterrupted historical records for over 5000 years. The continent of Africa in the earliest pages of its civilizations' history, was centered towards Ethiopia, Nubia (ancient Sudan), and ancient Egypt (Taling T. 2021). And unlikely as China, Africa did not survive foreign invasion in some period of its history. This had led to the decline, interruption and destruction of a great deal of African arts, humanities and cultures. Till today, African arts and humanities in its foundation still suffers from denials and assimilations' attempts by other civilizations, which make it hard to establish a proper communication model with the outside world. Just as warned the scholar Neil M.C Sinclair, "If we cut off the history of ancient Egypt from the history of Black Africa, the history of the entire African continent from 3000 BC to 500 BC will remain a blank-page book. Ancient Egyptian civilization is as important to African history as ancient Greek and Roman civilization is to western history" (Neil M.C. Sinclair 2016). Cut off from its historical roots of Ancient Egypt, the study of African Humanities and arts (including the martial arts) in general sense is simply meaningless. In the case of African Martial Arts for instance, Ancient Egyptian civilization have provided solid archeological evidences for over 3000 to 5000 years of palpable history... (Taling T. 2021) that cannot be ignored. Therefore, unless African humanists, anthropologists and historians commit themselves to resolve some pending questions regarding ancient Egypt and the Nile civilization so that Black African can take full responsibility of their historical legacies, otherwise the Study of African humanities from historical perspective could not and will not be handled properly. Just as warned earlier the famous Senegalese anthropologist Cheikh Anta Diop, "...we must restore the historical consciousness of the African peoples and reconquer a Promethean consciousness. Define the image of a modern Africa reconciled with its past and preparing for its future" (Diop 1974)

4.3 The African Film Industry Still Lack Behind

The weakness and backwardness of the African film industries as well as the continent's media propaganda has not helped the dissemination of African martial arts culture globally. Instead, the related discourse about African arts in general and martial arts in particular have often been dominated by the Western media and film industries (Hollywood being the forerunner). The recent 2018 Hollywoodian movie "Black Panther" is a clear illustration, an American style block-buster with black superhero possessing invincible African martial arts skills, ruling a savage African kingdom where fighters ride rhinos and still fight with daggers and spears, even though empowered by nature gifted special mineral called "vibranium". The movie despite great efforts in displaying the quintessence of African martial arts culture, still reflects the typical western stereotyped view of Africa. In a word, the global dissemination of the African martial arts is not yet a successful story so far. In China, African movies are nearly inexistant as well, not only due to the lack of cooperation between China and African countries in related fields, but also due to the low qualities of some African movies in reason of their tiny funding and critical lack of infrastructures in the African Film industries.

5. "The Belt and Road Initiative": New Opportunities for the China-Africa Martial Arts Cooperation

Since the 21st century, China-Africa relations have developed rapidly. On the basis of maintaining traditional friendship, China-Africa relations have entered a new era of vigorous development. Cooperation in various fields has achieved major breakthroughs, especially in the field of cultural exchanges. The scope has continued to expand and the forms have become more diverse. In 2013, the Chinese President Xi Jinping formally proposed the "Belt and Road initiative". Africa, as an important region along the "Belt and Road", has attracted much attention, which has brought new cooperation opportunities for China-Africa cultural exchanges. China-Africa martial arts cooperation and exchanges should become an exclusive component of China-Africa cultural exchanges agenda. At the same time, the advancement of mass media and the rapid development of the film and television industry will speed up the cooperation and exchange of martial arts culture between China and Africa.

5.1 The Idea of "Sino-African Kung Fu Movie"

From the movies of Kung Fu superstars such as Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan, Jet Li, and Donnie Yen, we can see that the dissemination of martial arts in the form of movies has a huge positive impact on foreigners' understanding

of China and Chinese culture. Generally, movies have contributed significantly in the promotion of cultural exchanges between China and Africa. For this reason, we propose to be more specific with the idea of using movies as the main channel for Chinese and African people to get connected. In fact, the Sino-African martial arts should be the guiding cultural elements of these movies, while China and African countries will be featured as main backdrops storylines, and most importantly, the Chinese and African filmmakers will have to work together for a more balanced portrayal of their respective cultures. This is what we mean by “Sino-African Kung Fu Films”. These new styles of movies must underscore the following points:

- ① *They must provide eye-catching fighting scenes strictly based on martial arts styles of China and African countries.* The idea here is to re-adapt the traditional kung fu films into a Sino-African context, while associating some African martial arts styles, traditional wrestling and war dances alongside with Chinese martial arts styles in the way that suits the Chinese and African screens, as well as the world audience.
- ② *Their storylines must be based on past or present realities of the Chinese and African people, or even projecting the future and common destiny of the two people.* They should embrace new and progressive narrative of China and Africa rather than old made-up cliches. Both China and Africa are oldest civilizations of the world with splendid cultures, with documented history of cultural exchanges for more than 2000 years, they all stood imperialism and numerous battles for freedom and justice, they supported each other at some specific times of history, and today are working side by side for a common prosperity of their people... these are limitless and unexploited source of inspiration for new narratives of China and Africa by filmmakers.
- ③ *Chinese and African Filmmakers must work together for the completeness of a genuine Sino-African Kung Fu Films.* No one can provide a better narrative of African realities than African people themselves, and vice-versa, no one can provide a better narrative of Chinese realities than Chinese people themselves. Therefore, is a sole duty for Chinese and African filmmakers to work together in providing a fair interpretation of their ups-and-downs. And for this to happen, the Movies Industries of China and African countries should be at the frontlines, armed with the latest technologies, talented human resources and knowledgeable experts to be able to fabricate worthy digital contents that could raise the image of China and Africa to the highest peaks. This makes cooperation between China and African countries’ movies industries a “Must”.
- ④ *Chinese and African governments should stimulate and strengthen the Film and TV cooperation through more soft policies, from the movies making stage to the markets’ distribution and commercialization.* Authentic African movies are sometimes ignored or simply inexistant on international markets not only due to the weakness of the cultural diplomacy of African countries, but also due to its low qualities. More fundings, better infrastructures as well as advanced management are urgently needed to developed the African movies industries and guaranty qualities standards of African made movies. In this regard, the “*Belt and Road initiative*” provide a good opportunity to attract more Chinese investment and supports the infrastructure development of the cultural industries in Africa.

The “Sino-African Kung Fu Movies” will not only appear as an emerging cultural product in China-Africa film and television cooperation, but will also set new highs in China-Africa cultural exchanges. In A word, the prospects of the China-Africa cooperation are unlimited.

5.2 Possibility of Disseminating “African martial arts” in China

The Chinese martial arts are part of the Chinese soft-power culture as it has become a window for many foreigners to know China. In a balanced cultural exchange agenda, one would have expected the African martial

arts to equally been disseminated in China through the frame of a win-win cooperation. But what are the possibilities?

Historically, *there is a record of African Acrobats visiting China as early as at the 2nd Century B.C. (Taling T. 2020)*. That was the very first recorded cultural exchange activity between the Chinese and African people. They were very welcome and displayed amazing artistic performances to the Chinese people. With the foundation of the new China and the signing of diplomatic relations with African countries, several African cultural delegations have visited China and offers outstanding cultural performances as well. This shows that, at the people-to-people level, the African culture in general is very welcome to China and the Chinese people remained definitely curious of African cultures and traditions.

Nowadays, we witness day by day African and Chinese Universities signing and implementing MoUs in different fields including Cultural exchange programs, we also see more and more Chinese Universities setting up Centers for African Studies, China-Africa Think-Thanks Forums are being organized, Museums, Cultural Centers and other institutions have been created to deepen the mutual understanding between China and Africa as part of the “*The Belt and Road Initiative*”, which particular focus has been on the cultural exchanges and people-to-people understanding between China and Africa. Following the same path, we believe there is a vast room for Sino-African martial arts exchanges to develop and unlock new possibilities for cooperation between the two peoples. Through the “Sino-African Kung fu Films”, cultural elements full of African characteristics such as the traditional African martial arts spirit and philosophy, the traditional and national costumes, the music and danse culture, etc. will be integrated with each other and exported to China via the screen. The movies or documentaries produced in this framework, not only will satisfy the tastes and curiosity of the Chinese people, contribute to achieve the sentiment of cultural recognition, but most importantly will help African people strengthen their cultural identity at home and abroad.

Moreover, we have noticed that in the today’s dissemination processes of the Chinese martial arts in Africa, Chinese institution such as the Confucius institute have played a key role by inviting Chinese martial arts experts from China, hosting cultural performances, and coordinating further studies of Chinese language, culture and arts in China for some local fans of Kung Fu. This has been the result of a fruitful cooperation between Chinese and African universities and cultural institutions. Not only could these established institutions become excellent platforms for Sino-African martial arts exchanges in Africa, but more, the same model of “Confucius Institutes” like institutions can be replicated in China by African governments to achieve the cultural communication “other way round”.



Figure2. Chinese Kungfu master GUO SHOUJING in Tanzania practicing the Massai stick fighting.

5.3 The African Cultural Industry May be in Shortage of technology but not creativity

As we all know, technical and infrastructural problems in the cultural industry can be solved through assistance and cooperation. But creative capabilities are the gifts of minds, and thus, difficult to improve through technical support. Creative abilities are based on the conceptual or cultural accumulation of a people during a long period of social evolution, and is developed over a course of history.

For thousands of years, people of all ethnic groups in Africa have created rich, colorful and distinctive cultural heritage and a long-lasting and vibrant traditional culture in their unique geographical environment. These traditional cultures provide a solid ground for limitless creativity and untapped sources of inspiration for African films and television. The uniqueness of African martial arts culture as the quintessence of the living customs and cultural concepts of the African people, can produce a huge market effect in China and globally. Through more innovation and cooperation, African martial arts films will surely surprise the Chinese audiences. China's social development has entered a new stage, and it pays more attention to the wellbeing of peoples' minds. Moreover, China's cultural market has fantastic purchasing and consumption power, which is a driving force to the dissemination and popularization of African martial arts in China, and consequently, will achieve the people-to-people communication agenda the other way round. In addition, the rapid growth of Africa's population is providing a huge driving force for economic growth and therefore increasing the livelihoods and consumption power of the young generation, added to the existing fan base of Chinese Kungfu Film all over the continent, this will provide another huge market for Chinese and African films products in the years to come.

The "Belt and Road" initiative can provide the financial and technological resources as well as more soft-policies at the governmental level to ease the China-Africa cultural exchanges and cooperation, and therefore, achieve the construction of a China-Africa community with a shared future in this new era.

6. Conclusion

"If we want to go far, we have to go together" is an African proverb that president Xi Jinping used at the opening ceremony of the 2018 Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation in his keynote speech on China-Africa cooperation. The cultural exchanges between China and Africa in the new era are built under the framework of *"China-Africa community of shared future"* in which the people-to-people understanding is highly valued, and, the martial arts as undeniable cultural bridge appears as an indispensable driver that can play a significant role in that process. There is no doubt that martial arts, as the crystallization of human culture that express itself through body language, is an efficient cross-verbale language and cross-cultural communication tool that serves as a way for people to recognize and understand each other. The martial arts can convey a great deal of cultural information to the global audience through film media and other advanced communication technologies of this 21st century.

Since ancient times, Africa has been part of the "Silk Road" culture. The implementation of the new "Belt and Road initiative" has further up the closeness between Chinese and African cultures. Since the foundation of the new China and the establishment of the diplomatic relationships with newly independent African countries, cultural exchanges between China and Africa have reach its peak in history. The Chinese martial arts through Kung fu films have played a considerable role from the 70's Bruce Lee movies, to the today's Jacky Chan, Jet Li and Donny Yen movies which essentially win hearts and minds in Africa and around the world through the Chinese martial arts culture finely display in Kung fu Films.

Despite these achievements, the China Africa Cultural Exchanges remain hindered by multiple obstacles such as the *"one-way"* (from China to Africa) and *"one-sided"*(from the transmitter to the receiver regardless of the receiver pre-understandings and post-understandings) communication, as well as the problem of African martial arts historical heritage that still suffers of denial and usurpation, these numerous challenges if not properly handled, may lead to more *"acculturation"*, *"miscommunication"*, and *"loss of cultural identity"* of some stakeholders as time goes by. In this new era of cultural exchanges between China and African countries, utmost efforts should be devoted to enhance cooperation, promote understanding, and actively respond to cultural shock.

Therefore, we suggest that more attention should be paid to the Chinese people's understanding and recognition of African culture, especially African martial arts so as to promote the inclusiveness of each other's martial arts culture. This can be achieved through more cooperation between Chinese and African cultural institutions, and for China to open its market for more African cultural products. Among these products we strongly recommend African Films and TV's products. We also suggest to blow a new wind of cooperation between China and African countries' movies industries through the "Belt and Road Initiative" where more resources could be made accessible at the people's level to implement new ideas such as the "Sino-African Kung fu Films" aforementioned. As the economic cooperation between China and Africa is deepening, there is more rooms for cultural exchanges between the two peoples, and martial arts will progressively play its full driving role in bridging the people of China and Africa and tightening the feelings between their nations.

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