

# An Investigation on Wushu as the Main Cultural Symbol of China in Africa

Taling Tene Rodrigue<sup>1\*</sup>, Xu Wei<sup>2</sup>, Guo Shoujing<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Cameroon, PhD, Research Fellow, Executive Director of Center for African Film & TV, Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University.

<sup>2</sup>China, PhD, Research Fellow, Deputy Director, Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University.

<sup>3</sup>China, PhD, Professor, Head of the traditional Chinese Sports Discipline, and the president of Taijiquan Association of Zhejiang Normal University.

\*Correspondence Author

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## ABSTRACT

This study investigates the claims that Chinese wushu is the main cultural symbol of the Chinese culture in Africa, highlights the communication processes of Chinese Wushu on the continent and probe into its localization and interaction with local cultures. The study relies on written documents from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include libraries, specialized archives from some cultural institutions both located in China and Africa. Secondary sources include scientific journals and articles as well as official reports most of which are available online. Our research methods also include interviews, surveys, oral history and participant observation. As result of this investigation, the growing influence of Chinese Wushu through Kungfu Movies in Africa since the late 1970s following the emergence of Bruce Lee et al. has laid down the footprints of a China's image and cultural identity to the African audiences, and therefore shaped their cognition of China through visual and bodies memories. In such a way that the Chinese Wushu has become the main cultural symbol of China in Africa. Meanwhile, the visual cognition of the Chinese Wushu has resulted to the creation of a "cultural gap" with regards to reality. Therefore, the main significance of this study, is not only to illustrate the existing cultural gap in the "Image Cognition" of China by Africans, but also to ascertain through facts that the Chinese wushu remain the main symbol of the Chinese culture in Africa and therefore an important window for African to visualized China.

**Keywords:** Chinese Wushu, China's Cultural Image, African martial arts, Hermeneutics, Visual Memories, Bodies memories.

## INTRODUCTION

### Research background

The first decade of the twenty-first century has already confirmed the significance of China's emergence in the world economy. In 2010, China surpassed Japan to become the world's second largest economy and is expected to pass the United States as the world's largest economy well before 2030 (*The Economist*, 2011).

This fast economic growth has led to China’s global influence in world affairs through more commitment in international geopolitics. But contrarily to other major powers of its rank, China have chosen a different path in managing its relationship with the world. In fact, “peaceful international diplomacy”, “win-win cooperation”, “foreign assistance”, “cultural exchanges” and “people-to-people communication” have been the keys expressions of China’s relationship with the world, making China a softer power rather than a harder one. And to achieve its soft-power global status, China’s culture is playing a vital role. As matter of fact, China’s traditional culture has been the stone foundation on which have been created several hundred Confucius Institutes around the world to teach Chinese language and culture. And consequently, the enrollment of foreign students in China has increased from 36,000 a decade before to at least 240,000 in 2010 (*Joseph S. Nye Jr. 2012*), and to more than 492,185 in 2018 (*Source: Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China, April 2019*). China is the most popular country in Asia for international students (WENR, 2007), the leading destination globally for Anglophone African students (*Breeze, 2017*), and the second most popular education powerhouse in the world (*Yuzhuo Cai 2020, data source: Ministry of Education of the People’s Republic of China*). Not to mentioned that China has the largest diplomatic network in the world, overtaking the US in 2019 (*Global Diplomacy Index, BBC NEWS*). The cultural exchanges have been an essential part of China’s foreign diplomacy, especially when it comes to its relationship with developing countries.

As far as Africa is concerned, Cultural exchanges between China and Africa can be traced back to a distant past. 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. Later between 1405-1433, the Ming dynasty navigator Zheng He sailed westward through the Indian Ocean and beyond for seven times, out of which he reached the African coast four times, some Chinese cultural products such as silk, jade, ceramics, etc. were offered to African kingdoms. Africans in return offered some tributes such as giraffes (*Samuel M. 1992*) and others. Even though ancient Chinese navy was powerful enough by those times, they were no claims of foreign invasion or aggression by the Chinese, especially on the African coast where they sailed four times for cultural exchanges and trade. though exchanges between both sides are not clearly mapped out, still they are claims of earlier Chinese maps of Africa, far before the western exploration and invasion of the continent.



Figure 1. (Right)Map of earliest Chinese Navigator Sailing the East African Waters. (Left) Giraffe from Somalia taken to China in the thirteenth year of Zheng He (1415).

From military to culture and arts performances, Chinese martial arts have always been part of its cultural exchanges between China and the rest of the world. The foundation of New China in 1949 opened up a new era of China-Africa relations. In May 1956, China’s establishment of diplomatic ties with Egypt opened up

diplomatic relations between new China and newly independent African countries.

At present days, the cultural exchanges between China and Africa have reached a new level. To promote the renaissance of Chinese civilization as well as the communication and cooperation between China and the rest of the world, the Chinese government has advocated the “One Belt One Road” construction; and has made cultural exchanges and important part of this agenda, this has opened new windows for internationalization of Chinese culture and arts. To further expand exchanges and cooperation in the cultural sector, the two sides continue to sign implementation plans for intergovernmental agreements on signature programs, and the results have been very fruitful (*According to the white paper of the state office of PRC*). As of December 2020, 346 such implementation plans had been inked and carried out. From 2013 to 2020, Chinese art troupes made 140 visits to Africa to hold performances, while art troupes from 28 African countries have been invited to perform in China. Since 2016, China has also held hundreds of cultural seminars for African countries, with nearly 1,500 African participants in total (*CGTN 2021*). The Chinese wushu have been an important part of this cultural diplomacy and have helped built a certain image of China and cultural identity of Chinese people in foreigners’ eyes. And therefore, have become an important topic for research and study, such as the present work.

## **Background of Chinese Wushu’s Dissemination in Africa**

### **• The Chinese Kung-Fu Films**

Previous studies have shown that Chinese Kung-Fu films are among the earliest China’s cultural products to cross the country’s borders and get popularized successfully around the world. (*Taling T., et Al 2019*). In fact, the early 70’s, Mr. Lee starred in the movie <The Big Boss> in Hong Kong, a film that would become the stone foundation of his entrance in Hollywood. Bruce Lee was per say, the first Chinese actor to break into the United States Movie Industry, so was obviously the first Chinese to conquer the world audiences including the African one. He made a tremendous contribution to the popularization of Chinese Kungfu around the world and in Africa in particular; this was through his famous Kungfu Movies such as: “The Big Boss”, “Fist of Fury”, “Enter the Dragon”, “Game of death” etc. He was then followed by leading actors such as Jackie Chan, Jet Li and Donnie Yen, who still appears as the most famous Chinese figures of the modern times in western countries and Africa (*Taling T. 2019*). In a word, the rapid development of the movie industry and the information technology have speed up the propagation of the Chinese culture, and the leading element in that cultural package have been the Chinese martial arts, simply designated in this research as the “Chinese wushu”.

### **• The Wushu’s Cultural Diplomacy**

The internationalization process of Chinese Wushu was speed up by diplomatic relations between China and newly independent African countries. In fact, many Chinese workers arrived in Africa since the 70’s and introduce the Chinese martial arts in some African countries. however, the First formal Chinese Wushu program for Africans, started at Shaolin Temple on September 25, 2013, known as the “*Shaolin Kung Fu Training Class for African Disciples*” (*Li Shengnan 2013*), held by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and the Henan provincial department of culture, and was officially launched at Shaolin Temple. Twenty Kung Fu lovers from Africa started their journey of martial arts and Zen culture in Henan, China. As a part of the implementation of the “Beijing Action Plan” carried out after the 5th ministerial conference of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC), that training program aims at strengthening efforts to promote the people-to-people communication and talents training between China and Africa and has ever since being carried out every year. It is also an important component of the “*2013 African Cultural Focus*” program. Coming from several African countries, African disciples are elected by their embassies based on their martial arts skills. They live and study at Shaolin Temple for three months. The study programs mainly include the Chinese wushu, language and traditional medicine. According to Zhao Haisheng, Deputy



Director-General at the Ministry of Culture, Shaolin Temple is a sacred place in the eyes of Chinese Kung Fu lovers, and the Shaolin culture is a bridge connecting the people of China with the world. This training program embodies the guiding principle of Chinese-African cultural exchange, which is “to promote political equality and mutual trust, to facilitate economic cooperation and win-win outcomes, and to enhance cultural exchange and mutual understanding” (Li Shengnan 2013). It also has symbolic meaning and reinforces cultural cooperation between China and Africa. Haisheng hopes that disciples will become envoys of Chinese-African friendship, and make contributions to the advancement of human civilization.



Figure 2. Shaolin Kung Fu Training Class for African Disciples (Source, China daily 2013<sup>[1]</sup>)

### • The Information Technology Age

The 21st century’s globalization and the rapid development of the Information Technology have speed up the closeness of the people of Africa and China. The “Access to Satellite TV for 10,000 African Villages” project has opened a window for people living in rural areas in Africa to further understand the outside world, further enriching diverse cultures according to a report of Global Times (Global Times, 2023). “I like Chinese kung fu movies! I like Jackie Chan!” said Jacinta Muthoni Njuguna (aged 22) of her favorite Chinese martial arts actor while switching channels in search of Chinese TV series. Njuguna and her family live an hour’s drive from the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. Their household is just one of many now sporting a StarTimes-provided satellite dish. “We can receive hundreds of channels. The Kung Fu Channel is one of my family’s favourite channels... Although I haven’t been to China, I feel that Chinese people are very friendly and live a happy life through watching Chinese films and TV series,” said Njuguna (Global Times, 2023). The Global Times also found that films and TV series in the kung fu genre, including fantasy dramas, do have a big market in Africa. Additionally, actors starring in popular series like “Eternal Love” and “The Journey of Flower”, like Xiao Zhan, Wang Yibo, Huo Jianhua, and Zhao Liying, have also become household names in Africa.

## RESEARCH PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE

### Cultural symbol of Chinese culture in Africa

This study claims that Chinese wushu is the main cultural symbol of Chinese culture in Africa, highlights the communication processes of Chinese Wushu on the continent and probe into its localization and interaction with local cultures. In fact, because of the huge influence created by the Chinese wushu through films and TV as well as mass media and cultural institutions, the Chinese wushu remain the main identifier of Chinese people in Africa, and “Kung Fu” is still seen as a sort of “cultural name-card” of the Chinese throughout the Continent. Furthermore, the dissemination of Chinese martial arts in Africa is a process that went from visual to bodies memories through several decades of development and transmission of the cultural information. These two kinds of memories eventually shaped China’s main image cognition in the minds of several generation of Africans. The increase of people-to-people exchanges between China and

Africa these recent years have opened the doors to many Africans to get to China just to realized that there is an existing cultural gap between the “Image Cognition” of China and the China in real life. Therefore, the main purpose of this study, is not only to illustrate that existing cultural gap, but also to ascertain through facts that the Chinese wushu remain the main symbol of the Chinese culture in Africa and therefore an important window for African to visualized China.

### **The “one-way” and “one-sided” Communication problem of the Chinese Wushu in Africa**

The communication of Chinese Wushu on the African continent despite of being successful, has been “one-way” or unilateral (from China to Africa), due to the lack of an African perspective and has resulted to a “one-sided” understanding, thus creating a cultural gap between the peoples of China and Africa.

### **Theoretical Approach: The Hermeneutics Theory in Intercultural Communication**

In general, the lack of the receiver’s perspective in the global communication has become an obstacle to the development and internationalization of the Chinese Wushu. In the process of intercultural communication, the dialogue and mutual understanding between “others” (the audience) and “oneself” (the communicator) has always been a topic of prime interest, especially the understanding of “others”, that according to us, should be the real purpose of the whole communication activity; in a word, “misunderstanding” in communication can become a critical problem when it comes to understand the receiver’s needs. From SOCRATES to PLATO, from HEGEL to HUSSERL, understanding “others” has been a philosophical question, and now, has evolved into an independent philosophy widely used in academic research: “Hermeneutics”. Among various philosophical branch of Hermeneutics, HANS-GEORG GADAMER’s (1900-2002) had unfolded the “reader-centered theory” and pointed out “prejudices” and “pre-conceptions” as main obstacles to understand others (*Richard Palmer, 1969*). For him, “pre-understandings” are prerequisite for the reader (receiver) to reach the truth. Therefore, this study is intended to explore the internationalization of Chinese wushu from the receiver’s perspective and to highlight the “pre-understandings” of African audiences.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Concepts Definition African Martial Arts**

*African Martial Arts* can be understood as a cultural complex of body knowledge, beliefs and practices created by Africans in the course of history and in accordance with their needs of dealing with their adversaries. However, from an African perspective, the understanding and definition of the concept *Martial Arts* may differ from that of the West and the East, due to the cultural factors and the uniqueness of African people to deal with nature and their opponents (physicals and spirituals). In fact, Africa is a diverse society with many languages, different ethnic groups have different words to represent their understanding of martial arts. Such as *Nekang* in *Bamilekes* people of Cameroon, *Laamb* in the *Wolof* people of Senegal, *Umladlo Wezinduku* in the Zulu of Southern Africa, and *Mgba* in *Igbo* people of Nigeria etc. If the core philosophy of African Martial Arts could be summarized in three words, it should be “*Combat+Spirituality+Dance*” (*Taling T. 2018*).

### **Chinese wushu**

The Chinese concept of *Wu-Shu* (武術) is profound and contains rich cultural connotation. Chinese martial arts have a long-standing recorded history (Deng Ming 2009). The term *Wu-Shu* first appeared in China during the Northern and Southern Dynasties (420-589 AD) on “*yǎn wǔ xiū wén* (偃武修文)’s *proposition*” (Dai Guobin, 2011), talking about civilian governance without military rule. Literally, *Wu-Shu* is the methods and techniques of “Wu武”. Meanwhile, “Shu術” expresses the artistic skills involved in

an action. Moreover, the Chinese people have two main understandings of the character “武”. The original meaning of “武 Wu” is related to military affairs, the use of violent means and military national governance and laws. The second understanding of “武 Wu” is “止戈 Zhi-Ge”, namely “Stop Fighting”. In other words, in traditional Chinese classics, “Wu” is a military concept that expresses virtuous and morality in the process of dealing with adversaries. “Wushu” is the most complete cultural conception of the expression “Chinese martial arts”.

### Chinese Kung Fu

Bruce Lee referred to his own conception of Chinese martial arts thoughts and practices as “Kung Fu”, and because of him the word “Kung Fu” was written into the English dictionary and became a universal word referring to the Chinese martial arts in general. It is to be acknowledged that the use of film media helped the Chinese martial arts to get popular around the world, but under the label of “*Chinese Kung Fu*” that fundamentally still keeps a distance with the concept of “*Chinese Wushu*”. In fact, Bruce Lee believes that martial arts practitioners should not limit themselves to any particular styles or form of routines, but should fully adapt their potential and body’s characteristics to the most suitable martial arts’ techniques. And therefore, pathed their own martial ways so as to reached the excellence and true knowledge. Following this way of thinking, he created his own style name after him “*Jun Fan Jeet Kune Do*” that he baptized “*The Way of the Intercepting Fist*”. This was his definition of Kung Fu. Bruce Lee’s Jeet Kune Do kept a certain distance and difference with the traditional Chinese Wushu in the sense that he abandoned the “traditional routines” (套路) and focus on combat skills.

### Visual Memories

Visual Memory is an individual’s ability to remember, maintain and reproduce visual experience, and is the input, encoding, storage and extraction of information entering visual channels. In the study of visual representation construction of real scenes, *Hollingworth, Henderson et al. (2004, 2008)* believe that visual persistence, informational persistence, visual short-term memory, and visual long-term memory are the four components of the visual memory system. Visual long-term memory is the ability to explicitly remember a previously seen image that is not continuously activated in the mind (*Brady, Konkle, & Alvarez, 2011*). Over time, the person will gradually forget the information in the memory, even if the information is still stored in the brain but the individual will gradually forget. For example, when we watch a martial arts movie, we not only look with our eyes (images, subtitles, etc.), but also listen with our ears, and even when we recall the information about a movie we watched in the past, we recall not only what we saw but also what we heard and felt at that time. This is the concept of visual memory proposed in this paper.

### Bodies Memories

In the process of human development, the important carrier of mind and soul is the body. It shoulders the heavy responsibility of information transmission and language expression in the process of human daily communication. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, a famous French philosopher, a representative of existentialism and the founder of the phenomenology of perception, said that the body is a bridge of contact between us and the world around us, which is limited in the expression of life, and the body presents a new meaning through behavioral movement: this is truly reflected in the habitual movement (*Zhao He 2015*). The body has the ability to experience memory reflexes. The experience of the body is the experience of growth and the most authentic recorder of witnessing pleasure and pain (*Zhao He 2015*). By “touching”, “perceiving”, and “repeating” an action, our bodies absorb it and transfer it to the physical memory system. *Liang Wei et al* put forward when discussing the physical memory in dance: “Almost all people know the power of ‘repetition’ in dance choreography. This power is the texture that emerges after the repetition of the movement, it is the result of a confrontation achieved by the accumulation and progression of quantities, and

this result is actually the physical memory of the dance.” (*Liang Wei, Liu Liu, 2005*) So are the wushu’s routines and combats practices or art performances in Chinese martial arts we are discussing in this paper.

## Hermeneutics

Hermeneutics is the theory of interpretation; it includes the art of understanding and communication. Modern hermeneutics includes both verbal and non-verbal communication as well as semiotics, presuppositions, and pre-understandings. The process of intercultural communication of Chinese Martial arts in Africa, is the dialogue and mutual understanding between the communicator (the Chinese) and the receivers (the Africans). The miscommunication of the cultural information (Chinese wushu) is inevitable, therefore justify the use of Hermeneutics in this research.

## Pre-understandings & New-understandings

Human as a sociocultural animal is conditioned by his social, cultural and historical background when understanding his fellow human. Therefore, in the process of communication and collision between different cultures, misunderstandings are inevitable. Philosophers such as Heidegger, Gadamer, Taylor...labelled that phenomenon as “*Pre-understandings*” or “*Pre-conceptions*” (*Francisco 2006*). They argued that in the process of understanding a new culture, tradition, or civilization, our main concern is “what we can draw out of that culture, tradition or civilization”, and that “we cannot fully understand others given the obstruction created by our own cultural, historical and environmental background and conditions”. In a word, we interpret others based on our own “*pre-understandings*”, and thus creating a wrong understanding or more technically, a “*new-understanding*” of others. The Chinese culture on its process of going global has to follow this philosophical principle.

## Status Quo of Previous Researches

There is a serious lack of specific research on the dissemination of Chinese wushu in Africa, which is limited to students and volunteers mainly in Confucius institutes, and mainly focuses on the wushu teaching of Confucius as the object of investigation. At present, there is no comprehensive investigation on such a topic as “the cultural symbol of Chinese wushu in Africa”. Regarding the general topic of Chinese martial arts dissemination in Africa, we made the following literature review:

*Gong Maofu*, in his book “*Research on the Status Quo of Chinese Folk Martial Arts and its Mode of Dissemination*”, believes that the Chinese government began to promote Chinese martial arts on a global scale, as early as the early 1980s of last century. In the early stages of the spread of Chinese martial arts to Africa, the Chinese government also adopted the “one-way” communication model. A model that is no longer suitable for the actual needs given the complexity of the China-Africa communication and exchanges (*Gong Maofu, 2012*).

In the article “*The Main Factors Affecting the Dissemination of Chinese Martial Arts in Africa (Martial Arts Science, Issue 1, 2004)*”, Professor *Liu Tongwei* conducted an investigation through the opportunity he got to serve as teacher in the training class of African coaches, referee of Chinese Wushu in Egypt, and found the main reasons affecting the dissemination of martial arts in Africa such as the lack of standard wushu competitions. The Chinese scholar *Wu Qi* (2012) also conducted in-depth research and discussion on the role of Confucius Institutes in the established mode of cultural communication in five African countries in his article “*Study on the Effect of Chinese Culture Communication to the outside World: A Survey of 16 Confucius Institutes in five African countries*”. Mr. *Makpai Hadyr Adebayo* (*He Di, 2014*) from Benin (West African country) in the “*Study of Transmission Mode of Chinese Martial Arts in Africa: Benin as an Example*” points out many problems in the dissemination of Chinese martial arts culture in Benin, including the audience’s different understanding of the definition of martial arts, the insufficient training courses, lack



of professional teachers and equipment.

Han Hongjuan (Northwest Normal University, 2014) through his teaching experience in the Confucius Institute in Cairo (the capital of North African country Egypt), in *“The practice and reflection on the spreading of Chinese martial arts in Egypt-take the spreading of martial art in Confucius institute at Cairo University”*, analyzed the main challenges and stressed on the role play by the Confucius Institute established in 2007 at Cairo University by the Chinese government in the dissemination and promotion of excellent traditional Chinese culture in Egypt, including the Chinese martial arts.

These researches still remain superficial and do not address comprehensively the importance of martial arts in the Sino-African cultural exchanges as well as the cultural symbolization of the Chinese wushu in Africa.

## RESEARCH METHODS & FRAMEWORK

### Methods

- **Literature Review**

This research relies on written documents from primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include libraries, specialized archives from some cultural institutions. For, we had the privilege to search libraries and visited some cultural institutions both located in China and Africa, and therefore got access to written sources of capital importance on our research topic. Secondary sources include scientific journals and articles as well as official reports most of which are available online.

- **Surveys and interviews**

We conducted several interviews both in China and Africa, this included Africans from several countries residing in China, Chinese residing in Africa as well as locals from both sides. In some local institutions in Africa such as the Confucius institute and some local wushu’s clubs, we conducted surveys. A total of two hundreds and more youths were surveyed and interviewed.

- **Oral history**

scholars and experts practicing Chinese martial arts were followed up with historical interviews to explore their experiences. Some third-age people and guardians of traditional cultures in Africa were also interviewed and their memories recorded, and as results we obtained comprehensive materials on the spread and development of Chinese martial arts in Africa, as well as the interaction with the local culture in their evolution process.

- **Participant observation**

The authors teaching experiences and several years of Chinese Wushu’s practice have played a significant role in this research. But most importantly, from May 15, 2023 to September 15, 2023, the corresponding author returned to Africa (Cameroon), for Participant observation, and observed how Africans conduct martial arts routines in their daily training. At the same time, a large number of Kungfu films and wushu TV programs were collected and studied to support the findings of this research.

## APPROACH AND FRAMEWORK

In order to demonstrate the hypothesis proposed above, this study is based on Gadamer’s philosophical hermeneutics and uses the works of African scholars and martial artists such as the Nigerian T.J.Desch Obi



the Gabonese Olivier P. Nguema Akwe, etc. It advocates interdisciplinarity research, surrounding disciplines such as intercultural communication, history, philosophy, cultural anthropology... This study targets the research object from different academic perspectives.

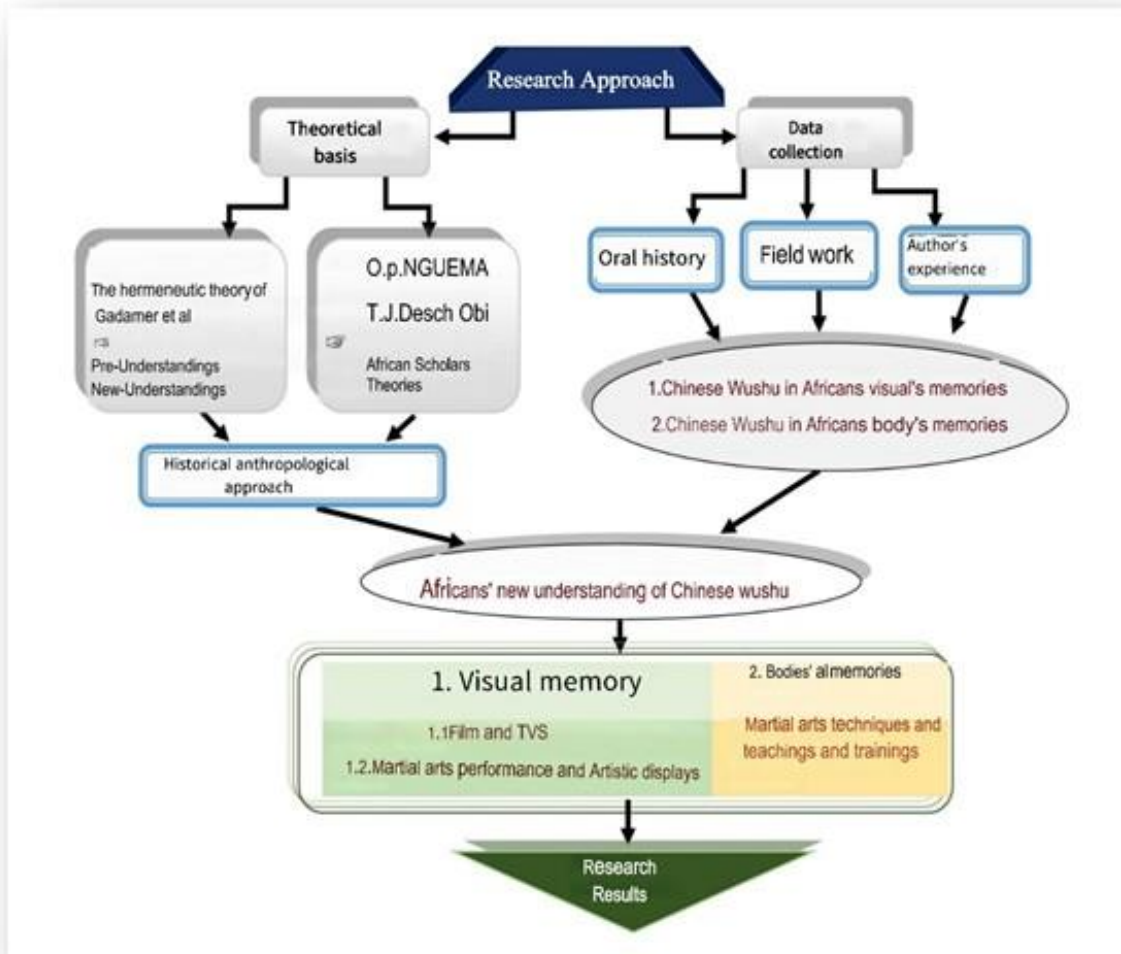


Figure 3: Research Approach and Framework

## RESEARCH DIFFICULTIES

As a cross-borders, cross-cultures and cross-languages research project, there are some natural challenges to produce such a report, some of which are:

- The Cross-linguistic and cross-cultural challenges as well as the cultural connotation of Chinese wushu that is extensive and profound, and therefore difficult to grasp.
- Interdisciplinary challenges: The investigation and research on the cultural image of Chinese martial arts in Africa involve different academic fields such as Cultural studies, anthropology, history, linguistics and so on. It requires to investigate the same problem from different perspectives across multiple disciplines.
- Scarcity of historical materials: This study involves African martial arts and African humanities in general. For various historical reasons, there is a lack of historical documentation for many fields of study related to the African continent.
- The scope of our survey is narrow: Africa is a huge continent with a total area of 30.2 million square kilometers, which exceeds China, Western Europe, the United States, India and Japan all put together.

It is the second largest continent in the world after Asia, accounting for 20.2% of the world’s total land area, with a total population of more than 1.4 billion. Our field investigation was mainly limited to Cameroon (even though we also contacted some martial arts practitioners from different African countries residing in China), this however cannot fully represent the actual situation in Africa.

## FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The data collected on the ground (not necessarily displayed in this paper) as well as previous studies on related topic have convinced us that:

- **Influence of Kungfu Movies**

There has been a growing influence of Kungfu Movies in Africa since the late 1970s following the emergence of Bruce Lee, and this has positively shifted African audiences’ interest toward Chinese Wushu. From the 80s, 90s up to today, Chinese Kungfu stars such as Jackie Chan, Jet Li and Donnie Yen have further popularized the Chinese wushu through movies so that their influences still remain dominant in the visual memories of the African moviegoers.

- **Visual and Body Memories**

The communication of Chinese Wushu in Africa is a process that has gone from visual memories to body memories following the respective path of communication. In fact, the Chinese Wushu communication in Africa has firstly gone through films, TV and performances; and then through physical practice of Wushu skills and routines. These two paths are on the basis of the formation of the visual and body’s memories of African audiences. As result, the Chinese Kungfu as known from films and television is an “*invincible boxing*” where practitioners with “*high moral virtue*” got “*flying skills*” and can fight “*hundreds at once*”, etc. However, through the practice and experience, the Chinese Kungfu in the body’s memory of African practitioners happened to be a “*good sport*” that helps to “*build the body, the mind and the spirit*” of the practitioner with “*uncountable health benefits*”.



Figure 4: Diagram of communication of Chinese Wushu in Africa

• **Cultural Image Symbolization**

The “Africanization” of Chinese martial arts (New-understandings) is a process in which African audiences use their local knowledge to understand the Chinese martial arts. Their understanding and re-interpretation of Chinese martial arts is based on “Combat, Dance, Spirituality” (Pre-understandings) embodied in the African martial arts. Specifically, the use of “traditional wrestling” to understand the Wushu’s “fight” has led to the fulfillment of their pursuit for “real fight” in the practice of Chinese martial arts; secondly, the use of African martial “Dances” to interpret and understand the Chinese martial arts’ routines (TAOLU), has shaped African people’s knowledge of Chinese Wushu as to be a form of “war dance” full of art and creativity; finally the use of African martial arts spirituality to understand and explain the Chinese “Qigong”, has led to their understanding of Chinese “Qigong” as a sort of “Spiritually embodied ritual practice” of the body.

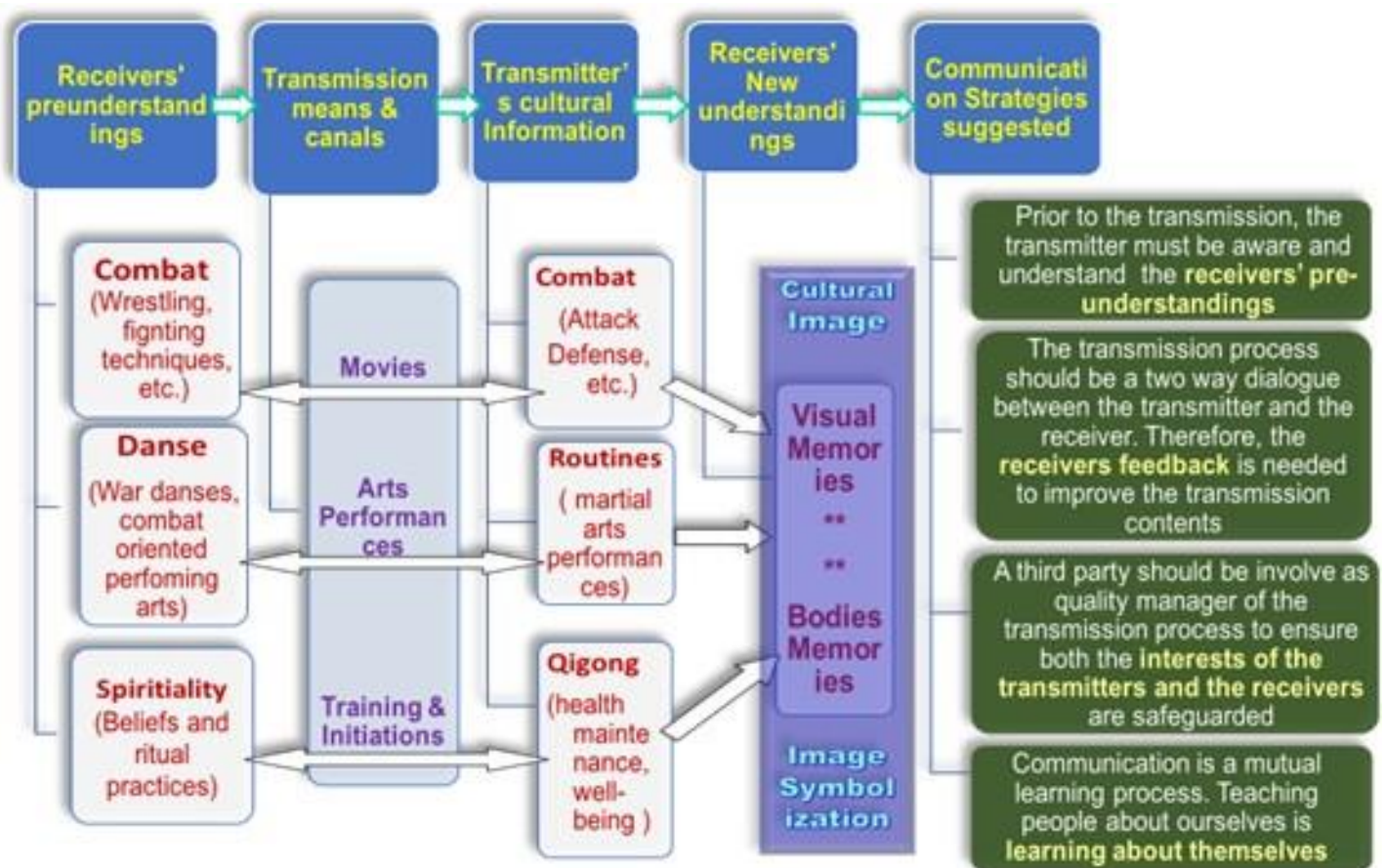


Figure 5: Image symbolization of Chinese Wushu in Africa

In short, the Hermeneutics theory holds that the African audience’s “new-understandings” of Chinese martial arts, namely “the Africanized Chinese Wushu” should be acknowledged as to be their “rightful understanding” of Chinese Wushu.

• **Cultural transmission process**

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.



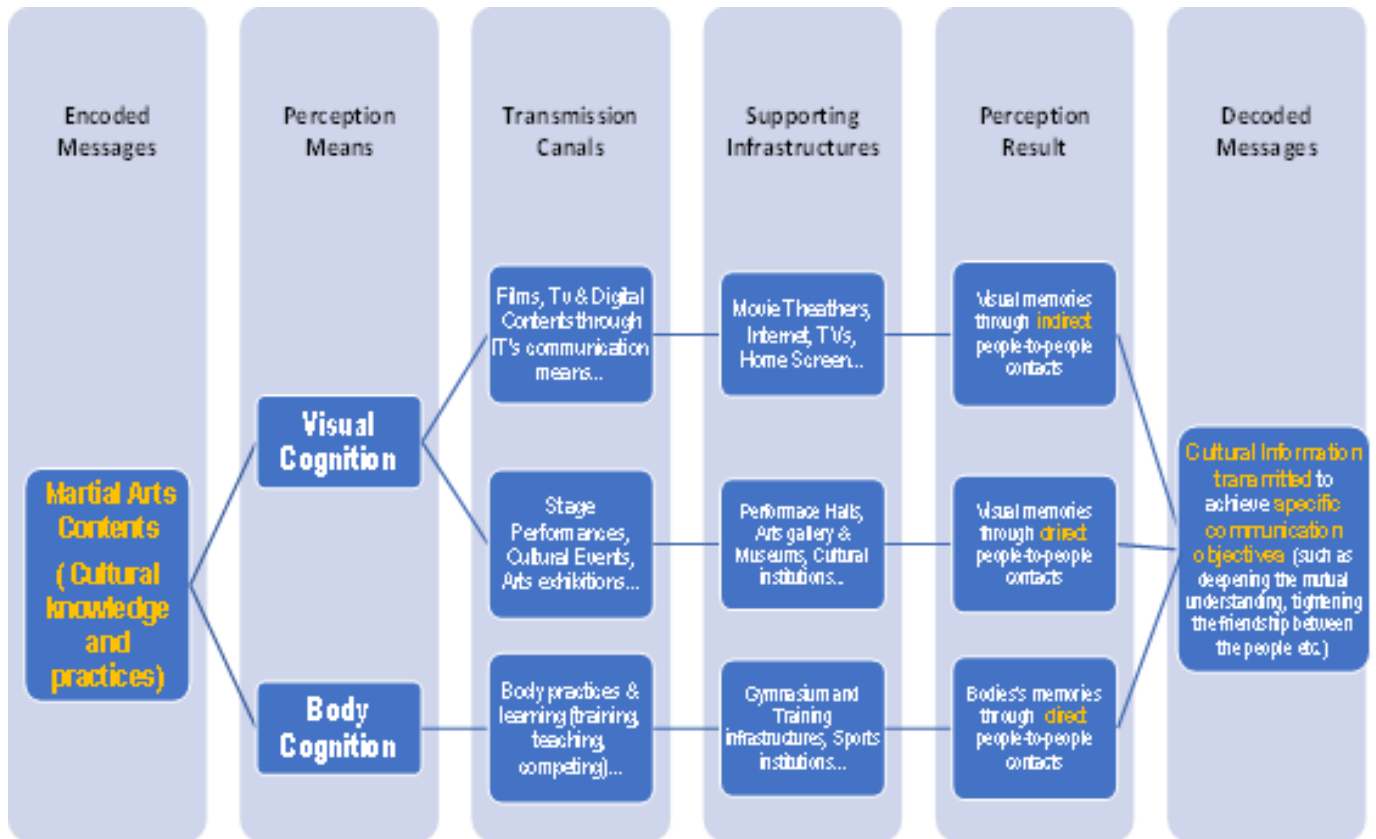


Figure 6. Diagram of Cultural transmission process of martial arts

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 peoples, 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.

• **Receiver’s centered propagation model of Chinese Martial Arts**

The *Harold D. Lasswell “5W” Propagation model* or the *Transmitter’s Centered propagation model* has been proved unbalanced in intercultural communication and should be upgraded:



Figure 7: Transmitter’s Centered propagation model

This propagation model is likely to lead to the acculturation of the receiver, creating cultural misunderstanding. As far as Chinese martial arts are concerned, some scholars have reminded that: Chinese martial arts globalization should prevent and oppose the “cultural hegemony” and the “narrow minded nationalism” tendency (Dai Guobin, 2004).

Therefore, we suggest the below propagation model that takes into account the receivers needs and feedback.





Figure 8: Receiver's centered propagation model suggested by this Study

In short, the present study suggests that, in the process of Internationalization of Chinese martial arts, more attention should be paid on local cultures, full play should be given to visual and body's memories of the receivers, the localization of Chinese martial arts should be promoted rather than its standardization, this is beyond doubt the best way to speed up the global communication and local integration of the Chinese martial arts.

## CONCLUSION

The present work shows an overview of the Chinese Wushu's influence in Africa, its communication routes, and its potential driving role on the present days' China-Africa cultural exchanges. Through literature review, interviews, surveys, oral history and Participant observation, we thoroughly investigate on the Chinese Wushu as the main cultural symbol of China in Africa and come to the following conclusions: The Chinese Kungfu films have set the footprints for the Chinese Wushu's dissemination in Africa in the 70's, followed up by the Chinese migrants on the African continent after the establishment of diplomatic relationship with China, that pathed the way for Chinese Kungfu masters to introduce the Chinese wushu in real life through training and body practices. These two-dissemination path have been the basis of the formation of visual and body's memories of African receivers, therefore shaped their image cognition of China, and so, making Chinese wushu the main cultural symbol of China in Africa. Meanwhile, the visual cognition of the Chinese Wushu has resulted to the creation of a "cultural gap", leading to some misunderstandings or misinterpretation of the Chinese culture. Moreover, the dissemination of the martial arts culture has been unilateral from China to Africa, this is a problem that should be solve so as to balance the cultural exchanges between both sides. Still, the Chinese wushu have shouldered the mission of building China's image in foreigners' eyes not only through Chinese Kungfu films, but also through education and cultural institutions such as the Confucius institute, the shaolin temple etc. and more recently through cultural mission of the Chinese government delegation and performing arts troops. And today is following the IT development trend to speed up its popularization through satellite TV and internet. This is advantageous for African countries, for, the inter-reaction and absorption of Chinese Wushu's ingredients is certainly beneficial for the development and innovation of local martial arts cultures; furthermore, the "dialogue" between Chinese and African martial arts cultures can help to promote and strengthen cultural exchanges and mutual understanding between China and African countries.

### About Author

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## FOOTNOTE

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