

AFRICAN KUNG-FU DREAMERS: FROM MOVIE GOERS TO KUNG-FU MOVIE STARS

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ABSTRACT

Chinese Film and TV works are among the earliest Chinese cultural products that crossed China's borders and spread all over the world. Among others, Chinese Kung-Fu movies found their ways on Africans screens since the 1970's and left African audiences with deep impressions, giving rise to generations of "Kung-Fu dreamers". Determined to make their dream become a reality, some of them set for a long journey of adventure and discovery across China. In the process, they have no choice but to readjust their cognition of the Chinese Culture and reframe their reveries. The Cameroonian DOMINIQUE M. SAATENANG, first African shaolin monk, ambassador of the shaolin temple to the world also known as the African Bruce Lee, the Gabonese Kung-Fu star LUC BENZA as well as the present article's author TALING T. RODRIGUE are outstanding examples brought about in the following lines. Their interviews and the narratives of their life experiences from Africa to China provide solid arguments to support our work. The present article suggests that, the content of Chinese Kung-Fu movies on African screens while preserving those mind-boggling fighting scenes, should not be too idealistic and fictitious so as not to overturn the ensuing "Kung-Fu Dreams" and deceive "Real-Fighting Pursuers". Furthermore, the concept of "Sino-African Kung-Fu Movies" proposed in this article is an adequate solution to content African Kung-Fu Dreamers as it takes into consideration both the Chinese and African realities and fit them into the big screen of ideas and perceptions. So, can be more practical and innovative in implementing the China-Africa Film and TV Cooperation.

Key Words: African Kung-Fu Dreamers; Sino-African Kung-Fu Movies ; Dominique Saatenang; Luc Benza; TalingTene Rodrigue.

1. INTRODUCTION

As one of the earliest cultural products going abroad, Chinese Kung-Fu films have shouldered the mission of disseminating the Chinese martial arts culture abroad and bridging its fans and followers to China. They still remained one of the Windows for foreigners to visualize China (Times of India, 2010) ^[1]. Several newly independent African countries established diplomatic relations with New China in the 1970's. That period, 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. His fierce and distinct martial arts style left unforgettable memories to the African audience

that quickly became both fans of Kung-Fu movies and fans of Chinese Kung-Fu. In this context, many African Kung-Fu moviegoers started learning and practicing Chinese Kung-Fu, some building up "Kung-Fu dreams". When some of these dreams were resolved in a simple pursuit of the virtues and values of Chinese Kung-Fu through training and practices, the most ambitious ones aimed at conquering the mighty land of Kung-Fu through a journey of adventure and discovery, with hope to become one day like those famous Kung-Fu idols. Typical case studies include *Dominique Saatenang*, a Cameroonian Shaolin martial artist, *Luc Benza*, a Gabonese martial arts film actor as well as the present article's author *Taling Tene Rodrigue*, a Chinese Kung-Fu instructor, performer, actor but most importantly lecturer and researcher of the Center for African Film & TV, Institute of African Studies, Zhejiang Normal University, China. These pioneers are among the earliest African Kung-Fu movies' fans who under the influence of Kung-Fu movies, later moved to China in order to chase and realize their Kung-Fu dreams. The narration of their adventures reflects the perception and impact of Chinese Kung-Fu films on African moviegoers and how Kung-Fu movies influence their cognition of Chinese culture.

2. THE AFRICAN BRUCE LEE DOMINIQUE SAATENANG

Dominique SAATENANG (who's Shaolin name is Shi Yanmai) is a monk of Shaolin Temple, a first-class athlete, an outstanding student of the Beijing Sport University, a stunt actor and a martial arts instructor (Afrizap, 2016)^[2]. Dominique first watched *Enter the Dragon* of Bruce Lee in his native country Cameroon, he got inspired by the movie and later became deeply involved in film and television art. He went on to make several films, including the David Lai biopic *Kung-Fu Prince of Africa*, which was produced by PBS. "It was from that film that I became known as the 'African Bruce Lee'", explained Dominique in an interview. Growing up under the influence of the Kung-Fu films, combined with the surrounding friends and drama teachers he knew in schools and training centers (he received Helene Zidi training course as actor, also took the drama course in places such as London and Los Angeles), all these put together shaped his personality and will to become a true movie star. As for the Kung-Fu movies' communication in Africa, he believes that it is difficult for African audiences to give the Chinese martial arts its practical value through Kung-Fu films. Like him, many Kung-Fu fans are disappointed in their journey from screen to real life. Under the theme "Kung-Fu Dreamers' Journey", the author interviewed the African Monk Shi Yanmai, and collected the narrative of his journey from an ordinary Kung-Fu fan to the today's African Bruce Lee and the Shaolin ambassador Shi Yanmai. In all serenity, Dominique recounted:

"One night, I was watching *Enter the Dragon*, starring Bruce Lee, all of a sudden, my worldview changed. I made the important decision to practice Chinese Kung-Fu to satisfy my curiosity and desire for martial arts. Because of my firm belief in practicing Chinese Kung-Fu and facing my uncle's opposition to that idea, we finally reached an agreement. As long as I excelled in my study, my uncle would allow me to practice martial arts. But apart from my uncle's watching eyes, another challenge was how to find a Kung-Fu club so that I could start my first lesson. After my unremitting efforts of searching a club, I finally found a club that was practicing some nunchakus. I overwhelmingly attended my first lesson. But unfortunately, I knocked myself with a nunchaku and my eye got swollen. I was 11 years old when the incident happened and had to explain at home what had happened to my face. That ended my first real

life contact with the martial arts, for my uncle couldn't swallow any of my little boy explanations. Few years later, I went to Study in Gabon. One morning I went jogging in the park, and I saw a Chinese person practicing martial arts, I couldn't believe my eyes, I walked to him excited and strike up a conversation, but he could not understand my English, he could not understand French either, I finally choose to use my own body language to express my desire to learn from him and my admiration of his martial arts practices. He understood me and wrote on the ground '5:30'. The next morning, before 5:30, I was waiting at the same place expecting my dream of learning Chinese Kung-Fu to become a reality. I studied some martial arts basics with him for less than two years, but we had to stop because he was going back to China. Before he left, he entrusted me to a traditional Chinese doctor who knew acupuncture because I had been injured while practicing martial arts. Coincidentally, the traditional Chinese doctor also knew some Chinese Kung-Fu and follow me up in my Chinese martial art training. So, I continued to learn Chinese martial arts from him and founded the Gabonese Martial Arts Association in 1996. Since that time, I started my martial arts promotion and performance activities. It caught the attention of the Chinese embassy in Gabon and led the "Chinese Embassy's Kung-Fu Cup of Gabon", one of the most popular martial arts events in the country that I took the initiative to organize with the supports of related authorities. Due to the success of these cultural events, the Chinese ambassador gave an assistance to the "Gabonese Martial Arts Association" that I created and offered me the opportunity to study martial arts in China for one month. So, I came to China. I was both happy and disappointed when I got there. Instead of going straight to my dream destination *the Shaolin Temple of Songshan*, I was sent to a martial arts school 20 minutes away from the Shaolin temple. However, I managed to meet the Abbe (highest priest) of The Shaolin Temple and was luckily beckoned by him to come forward and chat with him. I could not understand what he was saying, but he gave me his business card, which I mistook for an invitation to learn martial arts in the Shaolin Temple. The next day, I went to the Shaolin Temple to find the Abbe, hoping to start a more advanced stage of trainings. The Abbe seeing my determination, passion and devotion, accepted me as a formal shaolin disciple. From then on, I began to study martial arts in the Shaolin Temple for four years. I entered the Shaolin Temple in 1999 to learn Chinese martial arts, becoming not only the first African, but the first foreigner being officially accepted by the Shaolin Temple for long term training.



Figure 1. The shaolin monk Shi Yanmai (Dominique Satennang) on Stage performing hard Qigong

While competing in martial arts, I was selected by members of the French and Canadian martial arts associations and invited to those countries to help teach the Chinese martial arts. Meanwhile, the Beijing Sport University also invited me to pursue a doctoral degree. Faced with the multiple choices, I finally decided not only to return to Africa to make contributions to the local development of martial arts, but also choose to promote shaolin martial arts in France and other European and American countries. That was meaningful for me and for the shaolin temple where I am actually working as an ambassador to the world. So far, I have traveled to more than 70 countries, founded many martial arts associations, trained thousands of students, performed on different occasions, and even in front of the presidents of some countries. I believe that martial arts can promote cultural exchanges between Countries. For example, I used the opportunity in Shaolin Temple to introduce some traditional African martial arts and dance culture and customs. I also took martial arts friends and shaolin condisciples to Africa at several occasions so they can contact and feel the real Africa beyond the media. In the future, I hope that Chinese martial arts can communicate with various traditional African martial arts and combats traditions, to further up the internationalization and co-development of African and Chinese martial arts. Kung-Fu films also need to be closer to the daily life of African moviegoers, and even tell stories directly or indirectly related to them, so that African moviegoers can become more connected with Chinese culture.”¹

3. THE AFRICAN KUNG-FU STAR LUC BENZA

Benza is an African Kung-Fu moviegoer who since his childhood, has set up his mind on learning the “superhuman skills” displayed in certain Chinese Kung-Fu movies. The spread of Chinese Kung-Fu films in Africa made Benzato grow under the influence of Chinese Kung-Fu. As many teenage of his age, the flying plots of Chinese martial arts films soon catch the sight of Luc Benza, who wanted to become a mighty warrior with unique skills, just like that of those

Interview conducted by the author in Shanghai China¹

invincible Chinese masters in Kung-Fu films. Haunted by the idea that people can fly if well-trained in Chinese Kung-Fu, Benza resolutely decided to move to China to learn the necessary skills and realized his childhood dream (Duan Jingjing ,2016).^[3]As result, Benza set foot on Chinese soil, but did not meet the flying Chinese at the first glance as expected. With the help of his uncle, he visited some Kung-Fu film studios in Beijing. Benza was hardly struck by the reality behind the screens. The collision between reality and imagination led him to places such as shaolin temple where he was resolute to meet with monks and to learn some authentic Kung-Fu to become himself a real Kung-Fu master. In the path of pursuing his Kung-Fu dream, Benza eventually joined the film industry and has now appeared in action films such as <Karate Kid>, <Rashman>, <The girl from Taipei>, <Dragon in Shaolin>, <Fight for Chicago>, <Out of the Amazon>, <The Legend of Bruce Lee>, <Wing Chun Xiao Long>, etc. Benza has become a genuine Kung-Fu star and has played professional movies even in famous industries such as Hollywood. He summed up his Kung-Fu dream in an interview with me as followed:

“In my country Gabon (a country in central Africa), Chinese Kung-Fu movies have always been very popular. When I was a child, I was attracted by Chinese Kung-Fu movies after watching <Fist of Fury> starring Bruce Lee. I was always fascinated by the flying scenes of Chinese Kung-Fu movies. In 1983, at the age of 14, with a dream of ‘flying like the Chinese in Kung-Fu movies’, I went from Gabon to the birthplace of Chinese Kung-Fu; The Shaolin Temple in Henan Songshan Mountain. Later, I went to Beijing Sport University to study martial arts, and progressively participated in some martial arts competitions and achieved some rankings. As soon as I arrived in China, I asked my uncle, who picked me up at the airport, “*where are the Flying Chinese? Where is the 36th chamber of shaolin?*”²”. When I went to The Beijing Film Studio and saw the crew shooting the action scenes, I realized they were all fake.” (Zhang Yong, 2016)^[4]

In the ‘First China-Africa Film and Television Cooperation Forum’ held by Zhejiang Normal University on December 11-12, 2015 in Jinhua-China, Luc Benza made suggestions on the dissemination of Chinese Kung-Fu films in Africa based on his rich experience. “*African audiences are familiar with Kung-Fu films from mainland China, Hong Kong and Taiwan. They know Bruce Lee, Jackie Chan and Jet Li, but there is very little dialogue in Kung-Fu films, and dialogues are not very close to reality, so Kung-Fu films have not been able to fully display China to African audiences,*” he reiterated.

Later I met with him for an interview and he further explained the problem of Chinese Kung-Fu films in Africa: “Chinese Kung-Fu films in Africa should tell the story of China in an African

²<The 36th Chamber of Shaolin>, also known as <ShaoLin San Shi Liu Fang>, is a 1978 Chinese kung fu film directed by Lau Kar-leung and produced by Shaw Brothers, starring Gordon Liu. The film follows a highly fictionalized version of San Te, a legendary Shaolin martial arts disciple who trained under the general Chi Shan, establishes the 36th chamber, a special martial arts class for laypeople to learn kung fu. The 36th Chamber is considered the highest-level chamber, where the monks are reciting the Buddhist sutras from memory. 36th Chamber of Shaolin has received massive universal acclaim and is widely considered to be one of the greatest kung fu films ever made and a highly influential entry in the genre.

context and vice-versa. Young African people also want to be given the chance to play roles in those movies, like myself in ‘The Legend of Bruce Lee’, so that the film could be closer to the African audiences”.



Figure 2. <The Legend of Bruce Lee>³ starring Luc Benza, the international Kung-Fu star and Chan Kwok-kun, the Hong Kong Kung-Fu star.

He further explained that, like him, so many young African Kung-Fu dreamers are very disappointed once they arrived in China, because of the existing gap between the China displayed in movies and the one that exist in real life. Therefore, he recommended Chinese Kung-Fu movies to be closer to real life, thenarratives of those movies should be closer to the local audience’s daily realities as well, a sort combination of “Chinese Kung-Fu” in “African background” or vice-versa. We are living in an area where they are no lack of Chinese people on the continent of Africa. And more and more African are going to China for studying, business and tourism. Plenty of stories can come from these adventurers and reshape the narratives of Chinese Kung-Fu movies so that to imply both China and Africa. In short, African should no longer be disconnected spectators but become part of the whole journey of Kung-Fu movies.

Benza finally recognized that academic exchange space such as the “China-Africa Film and Television Forum”, was helpful and conducive to find the problems mining the China-Africa Movies Cooperation and recommending relevant solutions, starting from theory to facts. Benza therefore suggested that Chinese and African directors and film elites should strengthen

<The Legend of Bruce Lee>, a 50-episode TV series (directed by Li Wenqi) was broadcast on ³ CCTV one prime-time on October 12, 2008. The drama tells the story of Bruce Lee’s legendary life and personality charm, and has won praise from the audience after broadcast. In this drama, Bruce Lee’s daughter Shannon lee personally serves as executive producer, 20 countries jointly promote and broadcast the drama in memory of Bruce Lee.

exchanges and cooperation, and these initial efforts should be recognized and supported by the governments of both sides.



Figure 3. The author standing behind Luc Benza (in the middle of the picture) at the first China-Africa Film and Television Cooperation Forum (China, Jinhua).

4. THE AUTHOR TALING T. RODRIGUE “KUNG-FU DREAM”

4.1 General mindsets of African Kung-Fu Moviegoers

My Kung-Fu story like those of my illustrious predecessors, is not separable from the Kung-Fu films of Bruce Lee and others well-known actors of the Kung-Fu Films Industry. Movies shaped up our inner desires, and even influence our childhood fantasies. In reality, the visual and virtual realities brought over on the screen nourished our souls and spirits. As the most popular products of the Chinese Film Industry, Chinese Kung-Fu movies play a great role in foreigners' understanding of Chinese traditional culture, and at the same time, contribute to build up China's image and defined Chinese people's cultural identity in the eyes of foreigners. Therefore, it becomes obvious that preconceptions and prejudices will plug the minds of moviegoers for the simple reason of the existing gap between fictions and realities carried out by these movies. In fact, most Africans who have never been to China still assume that every Chinese must know at least one style of Chinese Kung-Fu, or must have inherited some ultimate Kung-Fu skills from his or her lineage. In Africa when a young person meets a Chinese, if they have the chance to communicate, it will not be surprising that embarrassing questions are being asked to the Chinese person such as: “How many people can you fight with your bare hands?” “Do Chinese couples fight with Kung-Fu just like the scenes in Chinese Kung-Fu movies? And “Could shaolin monks fly for real?” (Taling, 2016) ^[5] Such prejudices indirectly reflect the mindsets of African audience through the influence of Chinese Kung-Fu films.

4.2 Genesis of the Author's Kung-Fu Dream

I remember when I first watched the film <Tai-Chi Master (1993)>starring Jet Li, I came to believe that Tai-Chi could make people harmonize with nature and reach the highest level of internal peace through exercise training, and can go further than making the practitioner “*Swing in the Air like in Waters*” as asserted in the movie. So, I decided to learn the Tai-Chi, but after a year of practice, no super-skills or



superpower did manifest in me. “*Perhaps I am not patient enough to harvest the expected outcomes at the right time*”, I said to myself at that time. But to be honest with myself, my experience of Chinese martial arts was a bit disappointing compared to what were shown in movies, “*perhaps I could learn ultimate skills in China in one of those secret places where secret books are hidden and kept out of to the common people by specially trained Kung-Fu masters devoted to such causes*”, I thought. Therefore, I made up my mind travelling to China for more Kung-Fu adventures. I also learn some Bruce Lee’s created Jeet Kune Do and started some performances to promote Chinese Kung-Fu at home. I got many followers and disciples. It is worth mentioning that the “*Chinese Kung-Fu Performance*” I held in University of Yaounde 1 in Cameroon on February 12, 2011 aroused the attention and support of Confucius Institute (The Confucius Institute have been playing vital role in gathering the lovers and influencers of the Chinese culture in foreign countries and provide them with better language training as future talents for the Chinese cultural dissemination agenda (James F. Paradise ,2009) ^[6]). The performance gathered my fellow compatriots, followers and disciples who like me, were propelled by a “*Kung-Fu Dream*” from inside. After the performance, Mr. Zhao Youhua, director of the Confucius Institute at Yaounde II University, and his delegation were very satisfied. An article like the following one appeared on the Website of the Confucius Institute two weeks later:

“*The Breathtaking Martial Arts Show 2.12 (Taling, 2013)*”^[7]

On the afternoon of February 12, 2011 (Cameroon time), the teachers of the Confucius Institute in Cameroon watched a martial arts performance full of “Chinese flavor” at the invitation of master Rodrigue, a Chinese language student of Confucius Institute. Many Cameroonian martial arts fans, led by master Rodrigue, performed various Chinese martial arts styles. There are not only the Jeet Kune Do created by Bruce Lee, but more the snake boxing and

tiger boxing, Chinese Kung-Fu combats, and Qigong jaw-dropping one-handed brick splitting, brick breaking with head and body breaking stick performance! Even in China, Qigong is very difficult to perform, how far in remote Cameroon, where people spontaneously set up clubs for teaching Chinese martial arts, it is wonderful! Among these Chinese martial arts enthusiasts, there are many Chinese culture enthusiasts who want to learn Chinese Language. On behalf of Confucius Institute, President Zhao Youhua welcomed them to study Chinese language in Confucius Institute. This should inspire the martial arts fans present. The teachers of the Confucius Institute are also inspired by such sincere and persistent Chinese culture lovers and will do their best to spread the Chinese culture.” (Translated from Chinese)



Figure 4. Master Taling T. Rodrigue and Disciples Performing Chinese martial arts in a self-created martial arts club on February 12, 2011.

After I completed my bachelor degree, and after my Chinese language proficiency at the Confucius Institute, I decided to continue my studies abroad, my destination country was obviously China.

4.3 The Author’s Life Experience in China: From Dream to Reality

Once in China, it was surprising for me that Chinese people were as curious about me as I once was curious about them in my country. Whenever I talked with a Chinese friend, he or she would ask me, “*Are you all good at basketball or track and field? Do African have many wives? Can you raise a lion in your country as pet animal, just like we do here with cats and dogs?*” and so on. Some of my bolder and courageous Chinese friends would touch my skin and hair. Other less courageous would not dare approaching me. I studently realizes that, not only they couldn’t all play Kung-Fu as I expected, but they too they seem to carry out deep prejudices about me. Just as “*Chinese person = Kung-Fu master*” in my mind, “*Black person = basketball player*” in theirs. That was laughable but somehow the sad reality. If something was definitively wrong in one way, it was certainly the Chinese Kung-Fu movies that disconnected me from the Chinese realities, and in the other way, the Chinese audience too were victimized by western media and Hollywoodian movies which had set certain cliches of Africa and black people around the world. In that cross-cultural context of unremitting efforts and adaptation, I continued to cultivate

martial arts techniques and theoretical exploration when boosting my Chinese language communication ability.

My determination of deepening the theoretical and practical studies of Chinese martial arts led me to Shanghai University of Sports, College of Chinese Wushu where I was admitted to pursue a doctoral degree. I thus became the first African Scholar to carry out comparative studies of Chinese and African Martial Arts from historical and philosophical perspectives. In fact, through a consistent literature review, oral history, participant observation and other research methods I carry out a deep exploration of the Chinese martial arts' communication in Africa and its interferences with the local African martial arts. In the first part of my research, I borrowed Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1900-2002) "reader-centered theory" of Hermeneutics (Richard Palmer, 1969) [8] to pointed out the main obstacles for African audience to fully appreciate Chinese martial arts through movies. As main finding, "pre-understandings" (Cultural mindsets, prejudices and social pre-conceptions) happened to be prerequisites for the receivers (African audience) to decode the cultural message (Chinese Kung-Fu) of the transmitters (Chinese Kung-Fu filmmakers). The second part of my work through oral history, explored the local cultural elements (African martial arts and combats tradition) that shaped up the "new-understandings" of Chinese martial arts, and gave birth to a new cultural complex, a sort of "Sino-African martial arts" that is practice in streets and clubs across Africa. In the last part of my research, I made a detailed investigation on "Visual Memories" of African Kung-Fu moviegoers and "Body Memories" of given number of African martial artists that let me to the conclusion that the inter-reaction and absorption of Chinese martial arts ingredients were beneficial for the development and innovation of local martial arts cultures of African countries; and that 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. As for the internationalization of Chinese martial arts, its localization was to be promoted rather than its standardization in order to speed up its global communication and local integration. I wrapped these findings in a 212 pages' thesis in the Chinese language and graduated as the very first African Scholar to carry out advanced research on that field of study.

Apart of doing research and theoretical work, I continue training and performing under cover of my university martial arts team. I Participated in the larger scale, more international performance context. Just like the "Global Confucius Institute Conferencearts performance" in December 2015 (see Figure 5 below).



Figure 5. On December 6, 2015, the author (blue costume in the picture) participated in the performance of the Global Confucius Institute Conference in Shanghai

The performance gathered more than 2,000 spectators from over 130 countries around the world, among them where high-ranked political figures from China and foreign countries, and the show was largely broadcast by Chinese and foreign media. Such high-level Kung-Fu shows broadened my vision, enriched my personal experience, especially with regards of the team work spirit where several athletes have to synchronized efforts to achieve a common goal on the stage.

In one of my stage performances, I was notice by a movie crew who later invited me to participate in a shooting of a real Chinese Kung-Fu movie. I was about to make an important step that will get me even closer to my Kung-Fu Dream, for those movies on which we inspired ourselves have always kept a certain secret from the common public. I was very curious to figure out what really happened behind the screens and if whether or not those Chinese Kung-Fu masters can fight “hundreds at once” or how the “flying skills” are made up. The shooting of the movie <JIAO HUN>(《跤魂》)produced by the “Hebei Mars Culture media Co. LTD”literally meaning “*The Soul of the Chinese Wrestling*” brought answers to my queries. In fact, I was given a role of anti-hero, a world champion boxer who were to challenge the Chinese Kung-Fu master, just like in <IP MAN 3> where Mike Tyson has to challenge the legendary Chinese master Ip Man. That experience open my mind and I understood that movie was largely an expression of an ideal and that actors were just there to execute orders and directives from the directors. I learned a lot from those experiences and came to understand that they were very few realities in Kung-Fu movies, but mostly an artistic expression of the minds and thoughts of the Chinese moviemakers.





Figure 6. The author (in boxing gloves on the picture) participating in the shooting of a Chinese Kung-Fu movie.

In later occasions I featured in other movies and documentaries such as <40 Foreigners Watched the Reform and Opening up> (produced by Guangdong Radio and Television), <Chinese Dream Chasers> (produced by China Radio International) etc.

In short, my life journey in China not only brings me close to different aspects of the “Kung-Fu Dream”, but also enables me to understand of the status quo of Chinese society and the existing gap between fruitful imaginations of movies and hard realities of real life, so as to make a more accurate judgement on the first impression created by Kung-Fu movie and real ambitions that a young African moviegoers can create out of inspiration. These experiences drove me to elaborate a proposal that was suggested at the “Third Forum on China Africa film and Television Cooperation” held in Cameroon in July 2018, co-organized by the Confucius Institute at the University of Yaoundé II, the Institute of African Studies and the School of Communication of Zhejiang normal University. July 3th-5th of 2018 was the effective date where the forum took place at the Salemon Tandem Muna Foundation in Yaoundé, Cameroon, with the effective participation of several leaders and Scholars from China and Cameroon. I hosted, translated the forum with the help and support of my colleagues and gave speech as scholar who grew up in Africa and have studied and worked in China, so understands the realities of China and Africa. From a balanced point of view, necessary steps that could speed up the China-Africa film and TV cooperation and strengthen the people to people exchanges between China and Africa will include the setting up of co-research programs between our Chinese and African Universities in the field of Cinema and performing arts, the co-creation of Sino-African movies as well as the active participation of African movies in Chinese movies festivals. We also drafted and planned the establishment of Sino-African movie festivals where experts and moviemakers from both sides could gather and exchange experiences.

I finally suggested to revolutionize the China-Africa movie cooperation by introducing a new kind of Kung-Fu movies: “*The Sino-African Kung-Fu movies*” that will combine both the Chinese martial arts and the African fighting styles such as the various traditional war dances and combat traditions existing on the continent (Taling, Yao Jiaojiao, 2017) ^[9]. This will be coupled by creation of a China-Cameroon cultural center in Cameroon which main role will be to train professional martial artists, cinema’s professionals and needed talents to follow up

cooperation in term of coproduction, co-acting of Sino-African Kung-Fu Movies”. In this way, African people in general and young Cameroonian people in particular will have a better understanding of the Chinese society and culture, and Chinese friends will have a better understanding of Cameroon and Africa as these types of movies will be adapted to new and inclusive narratives of Chinese and Africans, providing new opportunities for cooperation while promoting cultural exchanges between China and Africa (Hong Jintao, 2016) ^[10]. That will be a golden opportunity for both the Chinese and the African movie industries where there are still untapped opportunities for business and investment(NušaTukić,2015)^[11].



Figure 7. Family photo of important guests present on the Third Forum on China Africa film and TV Cooperation held in Cameroon on July 2018 (From right to left, the author standing up and holding the microphone as official host of the forum)

5. CONCLUSION

The process of dissemination of Chinese Kung-Fu in Africa through Kung-Fu films initiated by pioneers like Bruce Lee triggered a storm of “Kung-Fu Dreamers” among African moviegoers, some setting their minds to embark on adventurous journey across China to deepen their knowledge of Kung-Fu and developed the “superhuman-like skills” displayed in Kung-Fu films, or even better, to conquer the Chinese Kung-Fu Movie Industry and get closer to their movie idols. In the long road to success, the clashes between realities of real life and fancies of movies led them to places such as Shaolin temple, martial arts colleges and other places to pursue the theoretical and practical knowledge of Chinese Kung-Fu and build the foundation of their later success. Gradually, moving from Kung-Fu training to stage performances and then to the movie industries, those Kung-Fu dreamers built up a carrier for themselves have become ambassadors of the martial arts culture in the daily life and through the big screen. The Shaolin monk Shi Yanmai (Dominique M. Saatenang), the African Kung-Fu star Luc Benza and the present article’s author Taling T. Rodrigue are case studies used to illustrate these facts. The story of their

journeys can serve as guidelines for future cultural exchanges enterprises between China and Africa. Their experience tell us that the soft-power of films and visual arts should and could not be ignored. In a friendly and mutually beneficial Film and TV Cooperation between China and Africa, the movies' contents should be audience-centered, and the ultimate goal should be cultural learning and sharing. In the case of Kung-Fu films, the contents have to maintain the mind-boggling fighting scenes without being too idealistic and fictive, so as not to disconnect the audiences to the promise of real Kung-Fu. Finally, we suggest that under the framework of Sino-African film and television cooperation, Chinese and African filmmakers should join hands to explore the new concept of "Sino-African Kung-Fu films", bringing about new narrations of China and Africa, creating new spaces for communication between Chinese and African martial arts, and so paving the way for a two-way communication between Chinese and African cultures.

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