



## CHINESE FILMS, TRADITIONS AND CULTURAL HERITAGE: AN IMPACT IN SIERRA LEONE

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### **Abstract:**

The researcher narrates in this paper knowledge and experience attained about China and Chinese people, and the influence of Chinese culture and traditions in Sierra Leone. In a clearer picture, the paper starts with a preview on the background of the knowledge of Chinese people in the rural setting of Sierra Leone. The researcher went on exhibiting Chinese films and actors/actresses as key element of the community. In a more connecting format, the researcher highlighted some sources and background of styles of martial arts applicable in Chinese films. Besides, the researcher views the practical demonstration of Chinese culture and tradition as public display of affection, eye contact and handshaking, colour and their symbols, and Chinese festivals.

**Keywords:** films, culture, traditions, martial arts

### **1. A preview on my knowledge about China**

#### **1.1 My Historic Background**

Life is full of experience and memories. Life can gain more experience and knowledge through exploration and exposition. The memories of some experiences are essential for the coming generation. So in reflecting on the past memory, it is very necessary to pen down important experiences as knowledge for the coming generation to benefit.

Today, I am a student in Central China Normal University specializing in curriculum and Teaching Methodology. The road leading to my being here, as a student today, bears a lot of historic moments in itself. I was opportune to have visited China three times to attend seminars before this trip for studies. The first was a seminar for "Educators from Developing Countries" that took place from August 28 to September 17 in 2013, organized by Northeast Normal University in Changchun, Jilin province.

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The second was a “Seminar for Universities Teachers from Developing Countries” organized by Northeast Normal University from June 8 to July 28, 2016 in Changchun, Jilin province. The third was a “Seminar on University Administration Capacity Building for Anglophone African Countries” organized by Zhejiang Normal University from September 11<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2016 in Xinhua. It was a wonderful experience and deeper insight in education of the benefit realized from these seminars.

In view of that, I would like to pen down my experiences about China/Chinese people in two papers. The first paper will explain what I know about China/Chinese, how I came to know them, what did I know about them and their benefit to citizens of Sierra Leone base on my observation and research.

The second paper will explain my experiences and knowledge about China/Chinese from the day I first stepped my foot in China in 2013 to date. It will explain what I learnt, my experiences, my efforts to promote China Sierra Leone cooperation and exchanges, and will engulf my scholarship to this University-Central China Normal University in Wuhan, Hubei province.

In my first paper that will talk about my experiences before coming to China, I will tell a direct experience that has to do with a primary data, I will also make some references for cases since I went through the academic lime line as a student, teacher, lecturer, and an administrator in my country, Sierra Leone. So, in my analysis I will use some references which are sourced from secondary data. You are welcome to join me in my story about China/Chinese people from my point of view and understanding.

As a son of an Arabic teacher and Islamic preacher, I had a higher ambition of becoming a medical doctor because doctors used to treat us for infective diseases, and they used to dress in white robes- I liked it so much by then. Ones, when I was in class three in my village, one of my teachers, asked me of the profession I would like to be when I grew up. I told him, “Medical man”. He then asked me, “Don’t you want to be a teacher?”, I answered “No”. The teacher laughed and took me along with him inside the classroom, and we sat together in one of the benches, he then said to me, “Why don’t you want teaching job young Bakar? I answered, “Because teachers are poor”. He went to ask me, “How do you know that teachers are poor”. I replied that, “My friends told me”. He then drew closer to me and spoke quietly, “Bakar, the profession you want to be is good, but let me tell you, teachers are not poor my child, they are richer than everybody, but their money is not immediate like others. In life, whosoever becomes somebody in this world, he or she must go through a Teacher. Like Lawyers, Engineers, Medical Doctors, Military Personnel, Ministers, Police etc. you name them. All these professionals respect their teachers highly; in fact, they provide for their teachers assistances in abundant. That is continuous till the teacher dies. So the salary given to the teacher is just an allowance, the payment lies in the hands of the students he/she prepare for society.” Since then, that philosophy was deep in my brain to love teaching. My father also reinforced my determination as he was a committed teacher.

## **1.2 My First Day to See a Chinese Person**

In 1979, my father took me to Kambia town, the District Headquarter, to buy me some school materials, and also to let me know the town because I was born and grew within the level of only the village, Kawulla in Masumballa Chiefdom. As we were coming that day, along the high way, I saw white people in big trucks transporting broken stones. My father told me they were Chinese people that were constructing bridges and roads. Really, that was amazing to me, for the first time, I saw and learnt about a Chinese. I kept watching them that day and admired white people working with blacks. In fact, I never knew that the quarry where they extracted the stones for building Kambia Bridge and construction of the road was just few miles from my village. My first visit to Kambia was memorable for the rest of my life. I explained to my friends in class about what I saw that day, and they listened attentively in admiration. Since then the thought of Chinese was a frequent thought ever since I was a small boy in the village. A year later, my father transferred me to continue my education in Kambia Town. Kambia been a more bigger town was full of life and pleasure, so, I developed the attitude of watching films as a pleasure after a day's work.

## **2. Chinese Films Exhibition**

### **2.1 A Fan of Chinese Films at Tender Age**

I loved watching Chinese films due to the martial Art. I did not like watching films that has to do with so many shooting with guns and wars. I liked the direct man to man fight of Kung Fu etc. I became a fan of Chinese films at tender age by then. I had watched so many of them in admiration and love for the morality and exhibition of good character in the films. They demonstrate a direct practicality of Chinese ethics and moralities. Though young by then, but I was conscious of moral content as a son of a religious leader. In my personal view, inquisitiveness towards knowing the truth for future benefit is an act of blessing. So I needed more knowledge for the clarity of my mind and thought

### **2.2 Moral Cultivation in Chinese Films**

Indeed the tradition of Chinese ethical behavior is centrally concerned with the question about the way to live: what goes into meaningful life, how to balance duties towards family versus duties towards strangers, whether human nature is liable to be morally good or bad, how one appeared to be in the non-human world, the level to which one should become involve in restructuring the greater social and political buildings of one's society, and how one must conduct oneself when in a position of influence or power.

Ethical issues were based on the text in Confucianism, Monism, Daoism, Localism and Chinese Buddhism. Most eminent in films is the virtue ethics cropping from Confucian ethics that shed light on the Dao, the Junzi and the ren. Examining in a nutshell, the complicated nature of the ren appears in Book 12, where Confucius is portrayed as giving different description of ren. He says that rural makes for ren in 12.1.

Further in 12.2 he went on that, ren includes comporting oneself in unrestricted as if one where receiving an important quest and the supervision of the common people performing as if one was superintending a great sacrifice (the duty to be respectful towards others). Also 12.2 associate ren with Shu or “Sympathetic understanding”. The tendency of not imposing on other what you yourself do not wish. The emphasis Confucius was constructing highlighted on the approach one did plays towards others, and on the ability one to comprehend what others want or do not want based on protrusive decision of oneself into their situation. Confucius went on to say in 12.3 that, ren people are cautious to speak (suggesting that such people take great care not having their words exceed their actions). In 12.22, Confucius analyzed ren to be to care for people.

So, Confucius teaches about:

- Respectfulness to others , either big or small, man or woman
- To have a sympathetic understanding of not imposing what you do not desire for your life.
- The attitude display to others should be geared towards peace and comfortable co-existence.
- To foster a true innate of understanding others
- Take care not to harm others by either words or action.

Confucius warned that morals, signified by certain terminologies of manners, must be the origin of civilization and that there a logical, human way of being, exhibiting inner goodness, those being representative qualities of a superior human being. (William – Vision times, [www.vissiontimes.com/2017/7/20/how...](http://www.vissiontimes.com/2017/7/20/how...))

### 3. Some Prominent Actors/Actresses and Films Titles

I watch with deeper admiration to such a humanistic and humanitarian tradition and culture that bestowed the true meaning of life to the world we live. I had great respect for the actors/actresses of Chinese films that had the time to exhibit such a magnificent and admirable tradition to the world-they became an icon of admiration to me and many others in my country- Sierra Leone.

With reference to [thanhthiftu 2](https://www.thanhthiftu.com) and the link: <http://www.imdb.com/list/is062907565>, the following are some prominent actors/actress that are commonly watched by the Sierra Leone community and beyond.

Name of Actor/ Actress	Film Title
Bruce Lee	Enter the Dragon
Jet Li	Ying Xiong
Yun-fat Chow	Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon
Donnie Yen	Yip Man
Andy Lay	Internal Affairs
Stephen Chow	Kung Fu Hustle
Tony Chou-wai	Ying Xiong
Jackie Chan	Rush Hour
Li Gong	2046

Binghing Fan	Iron Man 3
Xiaoming Huyang	IP Man 2
Yifei Liu	Shen Diao Xia Lu
Man- Tat Ng.	Shaolin Succer
Ashton Chen	IP Man 2
Athena. Chu.	Sai yau gei I Sin Lenk kei yun
Living Zhao	Hua qian gu
Wei Zhao	Shaolin soccer
Ruby Lin	The way we were....
Tao Liu	Lang ya bang
Mi Yang	Xias Shi de Zi dan
Shao- wen Hao	Na Xie Nian, Wo men yi qi Zhui de nuhai
Peter Ho	San Zhao ye de jian
Rainie yang	Ci qing
Nick Cheung	Ji Zhan
Anita Yuen	Thunderbolt
Jimmy Lin	Shao Lin Xian Zi
Wallace Huo	Love me if you Dare
Ady An	Autumn s concerto
Alec su	Qing ding ai qui hei
Shengyi Huang	Kung fu Hustle.

Just to name a few.

These Chinese Actors/Actresses and their films created a deeper impact in the lives of my fellow country people. Today various martial Arts schools are established all over the country. At times, their performances are televised in the state radio called SLBS- Sierra Leone Broadcasting Service, now called, SLBC- Sierra Leone Broadcasting Corporation. In my findings, I realized that the styles in Chinese martial Arts are like solving a mathematical problem, if you do not know the formulae and procedure; it will be difficult to arrive at the answer. The martial art has a focal training point within the human physiology. Some put premium on high- kick which focuses on legwork (kicking and acrobatics). Besides, some features low stable stances and short powerful movements that both attack and defense which focuses more on the practice of the arm and full body performances. There is also some form of structures as awareness of the spirit, mind, qi (breath, or energy flow) and the use of lessens leverage. All these involve thorough training and full concentration and commitments.

#### 4. Sources/Background of Styles of Martial Arts Used in Chinese Film

I observed in curiosity that the styles in martial art used by actors/actresses bears a correlation with Chinese tradition that emanated from various sources of the Geographic, Religious, Historic and Internal clarification. In Wikipedia, there are hundreds of dissimilar styles of Chinese martial arts each with its own set of methods and ideas. The theory of martial arts styles from around the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Previously the Ming period, martial arts were distinguished only by their family. There were common subjects among these styles which permitted them to be grouped

according to their comprehensive “families”, (Chinese Pinyin jai). There are styles that mimic arrangements from animals and others that fold inspiration from numerous Chinese academics or mythologies. Some styles put most of its focus in the belief of the harnessing of qi energy, while concentrate solely on completion or exhibition. (Ref: Lodge Peter (2012) Chinese Martial Arts from Antiquity to the twenty first century. (Cambridge University Press - ISBN 998052 7878814)

The rich variety of these classes has led to the formation of many classification schemes. Environmental site such as regional association is one renowned example. A particular Chinese martial art style can be mentioned to as either north fist or a south fist conditional on its point of foundation. Added details such as province or city can further recognize the certain style; other grouping schemes comprised the concept of External and Internal. This condition concerns the training emphasis of a particular style. Religious affiliation of the group that found the style can also be used as a classification. The three pronounced religions of Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism have associated martial arts styles. There are also many other criteria used to group Chinese martial arts, for example, imitating styles and legendary styles, historical styles and family styles. (Ref: Brian Kennedy and Elizabeth Guo (2005), Chinese Martial Arts Training manuals. A Historical survey, CA: North Atlantic Book, ISBN 1-55643-557-6) and (Duo His Fen, 1920), Chinese China Sports History Shanghai ISBN 7-80569-179-7).

As depicted by research, I learnt the bases of martial Arts classification and the various styles of origin as follows:

## 5. Culture/Tradition

Classification	Martial Style
<b>Northern</b>	Baguazhang, Chuoqiao, Bajiquan, Eagle Claw, Chaquan, Taijiquan, Northern praying mantis
<b>Southern</b>	Choy li fut, Fujian White Crane, Dog style Kungfu, Wing Chun, Five Ancestors, Hak fu mun, Southern praying mantis, Back Mei, Dragon, The five family (Choy Gar, Mok Gar, Hung Ga, Lay Gar, li (Lee))
<b>External</b>	Shoalinqun, Gigong
<b>Internal</b>	Taijiquan, Banguazhang, Xingqiquan
<b>Buddhist Styles</b>	Shaolin related styles (Hung Gar, Shaolinqun, Chou Li fut, Luohanquan, Wing Chin, Dragon style, White Crane)
<b>Taoist Styles</b>	Taijiquan, Wu dangquan, Baguazhang, Liuhebafa
<b>Islamic Style</b>	Chanquan, Tan Tui, Xingyiquan, Bajiquan, Qishiquan
<b>Historical Imitative Style</b>	White Crane, Tiger, Dog Monkey (Houquan), Mantis
<b>Legendary Family and Others</b>	Xing Yi, Tai Chi Chuan, Sh uai jiao, Eagle claw

### 5.1 A Camera Look On Chinese Tradition/Culture in Chinese Films

I observed that Chinese belief that, people are all different and they must live within the state or position they are in. A child is a child because he lacks the experiences of life. He is blind, deaf and unable to walk, so he needs to be guided, directed, and protected,

so that he would grow to a well reformed human being that will be ready to carry obligation and responsibilities in life. The Chinese belief that, people have responsibilities rather than rights, the responsibility to educate a China, is the right for the child to live a better life. (ref: The Blog 2011 by Dean Waldman on rights with no Responsibilities) "...is there such thing as a right without responsibility? Our most essential rights to life, liberty and the quest of happiness come of necessity- with the obligation not to channel someone else's rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness", This proves that right has a responsibility, it is the responsibility that gives birth to right. Dean Waldman on Twitter: [www.twitter.com//systemd-also](http://www.twitter.com//systemd-also) said, "Freedom to fly includes, freedom to all, if I have rights, certainly if I have freedom, my actions have consequences for which someone will be held responsible. If not me, then who?". In all open societies, there is a continual and unavoidable tension between rights and responsibilities. Every right has a corresponding responsibility. In my view, the authorities in any environment have the divine mandate to inject control by taking responsibility of the actions of their citizens. "It is the responsibility of the individual to guard over a community to make sure that principles are independent and beneficiary to human life". (Machan, 2001) This principle is in consonant with the principle of solidarity which is the code of people having responsibilities not only to themselves, but also to their fellow human beings and to their public, (Salamon, 1999). It is worthy to know that, communal operation is an essential element of human dignity and pride. I have the strong feelings that, there is nothing like freedom when a decent society is prepared. Man by nature needs control for an effective, efficient and constructive existence on mother earth. Any freedom given to man without stingy rules of a set road map of behavior, it will lead to misbehavior, destruction, backwardness and deeper corruption. Besides, reflecting on major problems today leading to the destruction of life and property Emanates from the center of free society-a society that has no control, everybody is free to do what he/she feels in the name human right. A society should has a moral canal, a well oriented and constructive home, a stable, developing, and prospective economy. A love society that focuses on hardworking and constructive development, train their youths to be self-dependent and self-reliance. A society that comes together and work for their common goal under one umbrella of many people, one mind and one body.

In reality and observation with much comparison with the culture and behavior of some actors of other films I watched, Chinese tradition is thick with strong and well-practiced morality and ethics. There is deeper focus in the training of humbleness, respect, submissiveness, obedient, righteousness, commitment, love and loyalty, friendliness, patience, endurance and self-satisfaction. These characteristics exhibit a true identity of cultural heritage. Kim Ann Zimmerman, 2015 said, "China is an extremely large country, and the customs and traditions of its people vary by geography and ethnicity". Culture includes religion, food, styles, languages, marriage, music, morals and many other things that make up a group acts and interacts. "Significantly, individuals, within communities create their own culture", Kim Ann coated De Rossi. Depicting and making thorough observation as a researcher, viewer of Chinese films, my mind deviated far from pleasure and amusement, but rather, seeking homage for an

admirable culture full of respect and morality. Chinese culture became the center of my admiration. In the book titled "A History of Chinese Educational Thought", by Goa Qijia, 2009, Confucius was quoted to have said that, "A young man's duty is to behave well to his parents at home and to his elders abroad, to be cautious in giving promises and to be prompt in keeping them, to have generous feeling towards everyone, but seek the intimacy of the worthy. If, all that is done, he has any energy to spare, then let him study the polite arts". (page 47) Built on such philosophy, Indeed, the tree of morality and ethics was deeply planted in the organization of China, I conclude internally within my mind. In the quotation above the actual duties of young men were clearly spelled out.

## 5.2 Public Display of Affection

Chinese people in their films portray an attitude of restraint in showing affection in public. Truly public display of affection is an act of physical intimacy in the view of others. Physical affection has been defined as "any touch intended to arouse feelings of love in the giver and/or the recipient." (Gulledge, A.K, Gulledge M.H Stalmann, R.F. (2003). Various studies have found physical affection to be associated with positive outcomes in romantic relationships. For instance, it has been related to the formation of attachment bonds and psychological intimacy. (Diamond L. M (2000) and The Michigan journal – volume 25. Issue 18 page 7-1996). Relationships that are intimate are protected in close doors to maintain respect and dignity in society. In my view I totally admire in full support my conviction that, Chinese culture maintains that principle of respect in keeping away from showing affection in public – it maintains the dignity of human being that makes them human.

In a more guiding direction as the bases for such a constructive moral culture, Confucius rationally outlined guiding principles: "...in such there is something rational in what Confucius moral advocated, which we may assimilate with discrimination, such as self-control , introspection, using reason to govern one's consciousness and initiative in moral development, being active in mental analysis, conducting consciousness mental supervision, and developing the desire to adhere to standard moral principles...", (A History of Chinese Educational Thought, page 57, 2009)

## 5.3 Eye Contact and Hand Shaking

I observed eye contact is considered, intrusive looking at an elderly right on the eye demonstrates disrespect and disregard to the elder. So the eye is lowered to some extent to offer a total respectful listening. As a matter of fact, the eyes contact and facial expressions provide important social and emotional information. People, perhaps without consciously doing so, search other's eyes and faces for constructive or negative attitude signs. In some context, the meaning of the eye arouses strong emotion. Mutual eye contact that indicates attraction begins as a brief glance, and progresses into a repeated volleying of eye contact. (Meal Mary, November, 2008). So eye contact is limited to avoid lustful look and intimate attachment. The tradition also frowns at hand shaking, in the sense it also fosters too much intimacy that may lead to negative behavior.

In a nutshell, I observed that many reactions in communication display modesty and humility. Public romance and nakedness is a real taboo and abomination. Indication of respect and appreciation is exhibited in Chinese by making a traditional gesture of cupping a clenched fist with the forehead while the head is gently bowed.

#### **5.4 Colours and Their Symbolism**

In curiosity, I observed that Chinese have different colours for different purposes. The tradition set colours for various traditional rites. In Chinese films are the following representations:

- White, used in funerals and mourning clothes.
- Black, the colour of darkness and evil. Perhaps criminals in prison wear black.
- Yellow, empirical colour, ordinary people are exempted to wear it. Even building, yellow colour is secluded for imperial roofing.
- Red, the most loved colour used for marriages, festivals, paper for gift.
- Blue, used on seal on the death of the Emperor.

#### **5.5 Chinese Festivals**

Festivals are also important traditional obligation for Chinese people. They observe different festivals in different times of the year calendar. According to origin, China's festivals mainly fall into three categories: agriculture, religion and social festivals. These festivals include: Spring festival( Chinese new year), the lantern festivals, the Qingming (Tomb sweeping) festival, Double seven festival, the winter solstice, Dragon Boat festival, Double ninth festival, Hungry Ghost festival, Chinese mid- Autumn festival, Harbin ice festival, Tibet shoton festival. Chinese festivity is seen to have a content of five kinds including: agriculture, sacrificial, commemorative, recreational and celebratory festivals. It is observed that, Chinese spring festival (Chinese New Year) and Mid- autumn festival are most important to modern Chinese people nowadays.

In comparing Chinese festivals and the west, Christmas is like the spring festival (Chinese New Year), Mid-Autumn festival looks like "the thanks giving day" in America. Double Ninth festival is for elderly citizens- Double Seven festival is like Valentine's Day (Love story).

#### **6. Conclusion**

It is important to note that, China and Chinese people have a very rich and beautiful culture and traditions. Their culture is practiced in all aspects of their lives. Their culture and tradition engulfed in their films, festivals, marriages, leadership, child bringing, fighting, greetings and so on. As Chinese people are found all over the world, they spread their culture in different localities. Besides, the wind of globalization is carrying in a high speed the tentacles of Chinese culture all over the world through technology and bilateral relationships. In Sierra Leone, Chinese culture has a deeper impact in the daily lives of people. The strongest weapons to that exposition are the Chinese films and bilateral relationship. A lot of Sierra Leoneans are fans of Chinese

films for its culturally minded actions in their exhibition. Today, there are many martial Arts schools found in various places in Sierra Leone. Sierra Leoneans have participated in various Martial Arts competitions. In Sierra Leone, there is great admiration in Chinese culture as eminent in their public display of affection, eye contact and handshaking, colour and their symbols, and other traditional rites. China and Chinese people are cultured, respectful, helpful, peaceful and peace ambassadors for the world at large. They have a deeper attitude of non-interference to other people's affairs locally and internationally. The researcher is convinced that, China and Chinese people have one of the best culture and traditions all over the world.

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