ABSTRACT

The racial discrimination of the Chinese in the West has a long history that dates back to the late 19th century. Under such strong anti-Chinese sentiments, it is of no surprise that the negative and stereotyped portrayals of ugly Chinese was rather prevalent in Western movies. This study, drawing from the examples of some influential transnational Chinese like Bruce Lee and Jackie Chan, depicts how the culture of Chinese martial arts has been able to achieve remarkable recognition and worldwide acceptance in such discouraging social circumstances. The penetration of Chinese martial arts into the West has created an absolute stir that was unprecedented, and the general impact was not short of being overwhelming, thus enabling a new venture ground for Chinese martial arts performers. In view of this phenomenon, I shall look into the self-identification of Chinese martial arts artists and producers and how they are affected by the dominance of Western technology.

The opening chapter will briefly touch on the historical background of the anti-Chinese acts in the West. Following that, I will be covering movies that were produced by the West to ridicule the Chinese, using stark examples like ‘Fu Manchu’ and the ‘Charlie Chan’ film series.

Chapter 2 of this thesis traces the evolution of Chinese martial arts expert Bruce Lee as a cinematic hero, both in Asia and Western countries. I will be placing the emphasis on the various reasons for his incredible rise to fame, especially in the West, which is extremely important for the dissemination of Chinese martial arts. In addition, I will also take a look at his great contributions to future Chinese martial artists.

Next, I will shift my focus to another protagonist in martial arts films, Jackie Chan. Through his years of hard work, he has not only become a
popular celebrity in Asia but also made his name as one of the A-list stars in Hollywood with his breakthrough film, "Rumble in the Bronx". The focal point of this chapter will be based solely on his appealing factors, which mesmerized the contemporary audience in the West. Following that, I will proceed on with the discussion on the changes in his production mentality and self-identification.

In the light of the previous 3 chapters, I will demonstrate how these Chinese martial arts artists have created an upsurge in interest with Kungfu in the West. This latest sensation in town is clearly indicated by Hollywood’s own engagement in Kungfu movies production. To further exemplify this ongoing trend, I shall bring in latest movies such as "The Matrix" sequels, "Daredevil" and "Kill Bill". In view of this, I will also be examining possible explanations for this trend in adequate details.

Following that, I will turn my attention to the Chinese movie scene in the 5th chapter where Chinese martial arts artists and producers are eagerly seeking solace in the arms of the international market. The recent enormous success of Lee Ang’s "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon" in the West has indeed paved the way for fellow comrades who wish to produce their own martial arts films. Movies such as "The Touch" and "Hero" will be used to illustrate the Asian martial arts productions that have climbed aboard this modest bandwagon. Contrary to the past desperate attempts to make it through to the Hollywood movie kingdom, this is indeed an uncharacteristic yet refreshing tendency that calls for a study of it.

I will conclude in chapter 6 the views and discussions presented in the previous chapters.