

Scholar Report – Sarah George

## Dancing Under the Mongkhon: How Thailand's National Sport Can Teach us a Distinctive Moral Code.

( เต็มร่างกายได้มงคล :

วิธีการกีฬาประจำชาติของไทยสามารถที่จะสอนให้เรามีชีวิตที่ดีและจริยธรรม )



### INTRODUCTION:

In this essay I hope to show that through the study of traditional Muay Thai (MT) one can also learn to live a good and moral life. In Part I, I will look at Buddhist Ethics as a branch of philosophy and then give a very brief overview of the inherent morality in Buddhism as a religion. The apparent contradiction between a 'violent, fighting sport' and the Buddhist principle of non-violence will then need to be addressed. In Part II, I will examine different aspects of MT individually (Wai Khru, breathing exercises and Yok Khru), exploring the moral lessons that can be learned by each in turn. Finally, in Part III, I will explore the idea of habituation to morality via traditional MT. At times I will cross over to see what Western philosophy has to say, in particular virtue ethics, which Buddhist Ethics most resembles.

However, before I address my argument I would like to outline the main reasons why I feel this topic is both of interest and importance. At a conference I recently attended<sup>1</sup>, Mr Vasu Gounder<sup>2</sup> discussed the need for a new paradigm to reflect the shift in power towards Asia. He argued that capitalism isn't working and that our morality has been compromised, concluding that in order to step into the new multi polar world, we need to renew our morality. As Asia becomes stronger, it makes sense that we should attempt to understand and properly value the traditions and national customs of the region. Therefore considering MT as a way to instil morality takes on a deeper and more significant meaning in this study. Traditional MT was very important to Thailand – it was believed to be integral to the happiness and security of the country – as demonstrated by the mythical tome

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<sup>1</sup> 'Strengthening Global Peace & Security for Development' 15-16 November, Madrid, Spain ([www.partners4peace.com](http://www.partners4peace.com))

<sup>2</sup> Mr Vasu Gounder, Founder and Director of the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD)

'Chupasart' - or 'Happiness of the Nation'; a collated tome of all the Muay Thai techniques, destroyed in the sack of Ayutthaya in 1767. However, the popularity of MT has seen a significant decline lately, especially among Thailand's youth. This, coupled with the rise of Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) in the west (which incorporates MT), has caused some people to fear that traditional MT may be lost entirely. The fact is millions of people come to Thailand every year, train in MT camps and feel they have experienced the 'authentic' thing – whereas actually this is very, very hard to come across, especially in this day and age. MT has become a sport and an industry now, where you are likely to turn up to a camp, sweat buckets and get fit hitting pads. Very few Westerners, or even Thai people, will be privy to the real thing – that is, of MT practiced as something more than a physical experience and with deep moral and spiritual foundations.

The Department of Cultural Promotion has been working on a study to find out how best to preserve and develop Thai culture, which is slowly being abandoned. Thai youth are looking to South Korea and the West for culture and inspiration. Many people consider MT to be something their grand parents watch on TV on the weekend – in other words antiquated. 'The Deputy Governor then stated that the image of MT is seen as an act of violence by Thai people. Moreover, they also regard MT as a sport for gambling. As a result, they do not support their children in learning MT but will send their children to practice other kinds of martial arts instead.'<sup>3</sup>

Teaching of the physical art was strongly linked to Thai and Buddhist philosophy, shown by the fact that the names of several techniques reference Buddhist and Hindu mythology. When Antonio Graceffo, a martial arts expert, was asked how important faith is to the practice of martial arts, he replied: '... You can't study the martial art without knowing the language, religion and culture. Prayer and meditation are a huge part of many martial arts. So, the religion is definitely present at all times.'<sup>4</sup>

## PART I:

If traditional MT does indeed have something to teach us about morality, it seems we need to take a deeper look at Buddhism as the Thai national religion and as a philosophy. Keown writes that 'Buddhism is a response to what is fundamentally an ethical problem – the perennial problem of the best kind of life for man to lead... Study of Buddhist ethics has been neglected not just by the tradition but also by Western scholars. The fundamental dimension of the Buddhist ethos, which is of relevance across the boundaries of sect and school, has become an academic backwater' (Keown 2001: p5). This is a relatively new discipline, which only really took hold in the 1990's, partly because in Buddhist history there never arose a branch of learning concerned with the philosophical analysis of norms. So far, attempts have been made to subsume this discipline under virtue ethics, deontology

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<sup>3</sup> *'Research proves Thai youth shows more interest in Western culture than Thai culture'*

<sup>4</sup> *'A Warriors Odyssey: Interview With Antonio Graceffo'*

or utilitarianism, though many have argued that to do so is misguided, as Buddhism by nature is different to Western schools of thought. 'Buddhism first and foremost, is a path of self-transformation that seeks the elimination of negative states (vices) and their replacement by positive or wholesome ones (virtues)' (Keown 2005: p25). The general consensus is that, for the sake of philosophical discussion, Buddhist ethics is best classified as a form of virtue ethics. The significance of this classification will become more obvious later on when I discuss habituation to morality via MT, as virtue ethics are often based on a system of habituation.

Buddhism as a religion and philosophy contains certain ethical precepts, of which I will now proceed to give an overview. The foundation of Buddhism lies in seeking refuge in the Three Jewels – the Buddha, the Dhamma (teachings) and the Sangha (community). These should be relied on and followed to ensure a practitioner's lasting happiness. The first teachings are the four noble truths:

- 1) *Dukkha* - all existence is suffering;
- 2) *Dukkha Samudaya* – suffering is caused by craving;
- 3) *Dukka Nirodha* – suffering can have an end;
- 4) *Dukkha Marga* – the way to the end of suffering is the Noble Eight-fold Path

The path can be separated into three different divisions: morality (*sīla*– right speech/right action/right livelihood), meditation (**samādhi** – right effort/right mindfulness/right meditation) and insight (*prajñā* – right view/right resolve). Keown explains the different natures of moral actions: 'Moral actions are considered to be unlike other actions in that they have both transitive and intransitive effects. The transitive effect is seen in the direct impact moral actions have on others... the intransitive effect is seen in how the moral actions affect the agent' (Keown 2005: p6). What makes an action good or bad is discerned by actor's intent, which is described as a 'root'. Good intentions must be expressed in 'right' actions which are seen as wholesome and doing no harm to oneself or others. Actions motivated by the three poisons (greed/*raga*; hatred/*dvesa*; delusion/*moha*) are said to be bad whereas actions motivated by the cardinal virtues (non-attachment/*araga*; benevolence/*advesa*; understanding/*amoha*) are good. Non-attachment means the absence of that selfish desire which taints behaviour by allocating a privileged status to one's own needs. Benevolence means an attitude of goodwill to all living creatures and understanding means knowledge of the Buddhist teachings such as the four noble truths.

To give a very basic summary, Buddhist moral teachings emphasise self-discipline, generosity, 'non-violence' and compassion. When I suggest that Buddhist ethics can be learned through the study of MT, I don't suppose that every Buddhist teaching is encompassed in MT, only the most basic tenets. However, it could be said that all the teachings are based on these tenets and thus could be derived from them. One could question whether there is any philosophical precedent in looking at sport/exercise as a way to improve moral character. In *The Republic*, Plato emphasises the importance of physical education: 'physical, as much as literary, education is aimed primarily at the

development of character' (Plato: Book III, Part III, 2). He dispels the idea that physical exercise deals purely with the body, concluding that 'the right type of exercise will produce a character that is self controlled and brave' (Plato: Book II, Part III, 2. 411a). So is there any evidence that MT is the 'right type' of exercise? The answer is 'yes' – traditional MT is completely different to the aggressive sport MT, depicted in MMA.

I will now attempt to show how MT is consistent with the Buddhist precept of 'non-violence'. *Avihimsā* is the first principle of the five precepts of morality (*pañcasīla*). Though often translated as non-harming or non-violence, it does not actually set down as a rule that one should not kill. Instead, it encourages a positive feeling of respect and love for all living beings, so that you should not wish to kill. A better translation would then be something like 'sanctity of life'. 'Abstention from taking life is therefore ideally the result of a compassionate identification with living things rather than a constraint imposed, contrary to natural inclination' (Keown 2005: p69). MT is not taught as a killing tool. It is an art form which takes on an additional role of self-defence only when absolutely necessary. 'MT is taught as a foundation for self-protection but it also teaches you how to have mercy: you don't kick a man when he's down. Use it only when you need to. It's a manner also – to behave. It's a true art form, it involves calculating how to block a punch, how to respond back to your opponent without hurting yourself, how to transfer his energy back to him' (Appendix A).

One may comment that the MT found in the stadiums in Thailand is far from the ideal presented above. Ring MT is very different to the traditional MT that I am discussing in this paper– it is primarily a sport fought for prestige and money thus motivated by greed (one of the three poisons). However even ring MT can have an unexpected spiritual side. While in Thailand, I talked to Jason Ness<sup>5</sup>, a Canadian photographer who published a photo article on the 96 Penang Gym in Bangkok's urban slum area: 'Despite the perceived violence of MT (it is very powerful and arguably the most effective system of stand-up fighting on the planet) there is another aspect to it that is internal. How the fighters approach the sport and their training offers glimpses into the personal, internal quest that could be seen as very similar to a monk's quest for enlightenment. They understand they have to endure the suffering of themselves to reach a goal (I personally believe that the goal is deeper than the promise of riches and escaping their plight - it's an internal struggle to better themselves continually)...This internal struggle of the fighter might have something to do with why many temples will host MT events (obviously it's to raise money too) but seeing the appreciation on the faces of some of the monks when the fights are on, you can tell that they're recognizing one of their own in the ring' (Appendix C). His comments echo the saying of Buddha – 'it is better to conquer yourself than to win a thousand battles. Then the victory is yours, it cannot be taken from you.'

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.jasonness.com/>

Returning to traditional MT, some will argue that Buddhist scripts do not allow violence even if it is used in self-defence. This is a question which scholars and practitioners are still unable to agree on. Some forms of Buddhism discourage what is considered to be a false belief in a self (*ātman*), as the desire to protect it from others thought to be threatening it is seen as an underlying cause of aggression. 'Buddhism holds that drawing a sharp boundary between the self and other leads to the construction of a self image that sees all that is not of 'me and mine' as alien and threatening' (Keown 2005: p70). Buddhists are then encouraged to practice patience, as killing would result in bad karma.

There are three types of counter arguments. The first argues that some proponents of the principle allow exceptions in cases of self-defence. These differences of opinion may be based on different translations of the Pali Canon. Ajarn Lek talked about the origins of MT: 'The monks taught MT to give strength and knowledge to protect yourself and your city, because back then Thailand was going through a bellicose period and monks were perceived as the holy figures - looked up to, respected and trusted (Appendix A).' However, that is not the only recorded instance of the Sangha condoning force in self-defence. 'In the 1960's, when the government became concerned about security problems in the rural areas and among tribal peoples, the government supported the creation of moral rearmament and Buddhist missionary programs' (Keyes: p137). Another example was a direct result of the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge – almost all of Cambodia's 3,600 Buddhist temples were destroyed and the number of monks was reduced from 50,000 to barely 3,000. Fearing a communist insurgency in Thailand, some monks took a militant stand: 'In the 1970's the monk Kittivuddho made a number of controversial public statements to the effect that killing the communists in defence of the Thai nation, Buddhism and the monarchy was a religious duty that justified the suspension of the ordinary rules of morality. He compared Communism to the devil Mara and spoke of the destruction of communists as an act of great merit' (Keown 2005: p73). However, Kittivuddho was on the more controversial end of the scale, surpassed only by Zen master Harada Daiun Sogaku who wrote, 'without plunging into the war arena it is totally impossible to know Buddhist Dharma' (Keown 2005: p75). Moving back to the more moderate concept of violence being condoned in self defence, something summed up in the *jus ad bellum* (just war) theory which states that self defence against an armed attack is always considered to be a just cause. The second argument follows on from the first, stating that Buddhism regards the destruction of life as morally wrong only when caused intentionally. When fighting in self-defence, you do not necessarily wish to kill your attacker, only incapacitate him to prevent him from killing you. In the final argument we can question what exactly is meant by pacifism? Does it mean you are opposed to taking life, opposed to war, opposed to all forms of violence or opposed to using any force at all? They are each very different. While violence connotes aggression, force does not – force is morally neutral. 'Pacifism does not mean passivism... Buddhist moral principles must allow for some use of force if a stable society – itself a Buddhist ideal – is to be achieved' (Keown 2005: pp 83).

Traditional MT is an art form as well a method of self-defence, which in some interpretations of the Pali canon is allowed. 'There seem to be two different modes of Dharma in the Pali canon with

respect to violence – ‘in the first the assessment of violence is context dependable and negotiable and in the second it is context independent and non negotiable’ (Keown 2005: p72). Furthermore, if there is no aggression and no intentional destruction of life, then it is not a violent art, but an art that uses force. In conclusion, MT can definitely be seen to be consistent with the Buddhist precept of *avihimsā*.

## PART II:

How then, can Thailand’s national ‘sport’ improve our moral character? The first aspect I would like to address is the idea of composure. ‘Similar to Buddhism, if we are good we make good merit, if someone tries to harm us, the good force will protect us and harm him instead (karma). The key is to remain composed and give forgiveness. If someone is a bad person, has bad intentions and throws a punch at you, if you are calm and composed you can block just by a mere raising of the elbow. The energy gets reflected back to him, he gets hit with his own punch. If you remain as composed as possible you basically have to do nothing’ (Appendix A). This idea of composure is taking the middle path, which was further expounded on by Confucius and in Aristotle’s Doctrine of the Mean: ‘The equal part is a sort of mean between excess and deficiency; and I call mean in relation to the thing whatever is equidistant from the extremes, which is one and the same for everybody; but I call mean in relation to us that which is neither excessive nor deficient and this is not one and the same for all.’ (Aristotle: 1106a28) In other words, the middle path would be different for a monk and a layperson. Aristotle’s doctrine of the mean states that the virtues of character are found at the mean. Conversely, the extremes are seen as vices. For example, with courage: ‘the man who shuns and fears everything and stands up to nothing becomes a coward; the man who is afraid of nothing at all but marches up to every danger becomes foolhardy’ (Aristotle: 1104a20). Aristotle does not argue that we should moderate our behaviour, just to find the appropriate responses. He also supports self-defence stating that if someone attacks you, you should be angry enough to defend yourself.

Composure, along with many other values can be learned in the individual aspects of traditional MT, some of which I will now explain. *Wai Kru Ram Muay* (WK) is a warm-up ceremony performed by participants of MT before training or before a competition (in the case of ring fighting). ‘*Wai*’ is the name for the gesture of respect used by Thais, ‘*kru*’ means teacher, ‘*muay*’ means boxing and ‘*ram*’ means traditional dance. The Wai Kru serves to teach and demonstrate fundamental elements of the art: footwork, technique, poise, as well as the more lethal applications. It is one of the keys to understanding the art and consequentially demonstrating that understanding to the opponent. However, the WK also has a range of other functions: ‘WK is an expression of respect to the masters, parents, the land, secondly to calm you down with the gestures and movements, especially if you are scared. Third the WK is a representation of your master and camp – your form will tell who you train with’ (Appendix A). Let us look further at the first point: respect and humbleness towards mentors and teachers is a very important part of Thai culture, something I immediately noticed, and it stands in

strong contrast to the attitudes of young people in the West towards their elders. In MT, trainers are seen as a close second to their parents, without whom the students would not have knowledge, nor the important principles that they abide by. Not only the immediate mentor is given homage in the WK but all the instructors before him as well. The second meaning of the WK is to help the participant to concentrate, focus and compose himself mentally – whether it is for a competition or even just training alone. 'In reality the effectiveness of the ceremony is to demonstrate the gentleness and graciousness in the controlling of body and mind. In Buddhism, the true quality of being gentle and gracious hides the true power of authority. And if we can use this power together with the strength of our body and the wisdom of our mind, then this is the origin of all the magical power. Boxers should perform the WK in the same way done by our ancestors in the past. It is a way to help preserve the art of MT from disappearing or losing it's authenticity<sup>6</sup>.' The WK is a dance, which shows respect and gratitude to the mentor and also moves the boxer into a position of composure. Both attributes can be seen as good morals to apply in the rest of ones life. When contemplating the path to enlightenment, Aiken compares the figurative ideas of dancing and defending: 'how do you handle challenge? You have two options. One is to defend and the other is to dance... Enlightenment is practice. And what is practice? Getting on with it. When you defend you are blocking the practice. When you dance you are getting on with it' (Aitken: p106). So if you see traditional MT as a figurative dance rather than a defensive art, it may be a way to seek enlightenment. However, WK is not the only aspect of MT that is linked to Buddhism: 'Beyond the more obvious displays of tradition, such as the Wai Kru, the tenets of Buddhism are deeply engrained within the sport of Muay Thai. Buddhist ways of thinking are present in other more subtle ways, which I think will make your project very interesting' (Appendix C).

Breathing exercises are another aspect often found within traditional MT as well as many other martial arts. They are fundamentally important, on a practical and physical level to control breathing and to create awareness of breathing. For example expelling breath when punching, kneeling and kicking and controlling ones breath when getting hit.

While these are primarily a way of improving breathing for training, they can also be a more subtle form of meditation. In Buddhist MT breathing exercises also have another aspect – *Anapanusati* or 'mindfulness of the breath'. It is a form of meditation and one of the 40 Buddhist subjects of meditation known as *kasinas* or 'objects of concentration'. So an integration of both Buddhist meditative practice and practical breathing practice as well. In the Archa Tong MT group (where I personally train) one of our breathing exercises is known as 'Eating the Sun'. One of the *kasinas* is fire, represented by the sun, *Suriya*, so this exercise combines breathing exercises, isometric movement exercises (which have been used for centuries by ancient strong men, warriors and martial

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<sup>6</sup> 'The Wai Khru - Origins and Explanation of the Ritual – Wai Khru Ram Muay'

artists and are known for their effectiveness in building connective tissue, strength and neuromuscular control) and mindfulness meditation on two *kasinas* - fire and breathing. The movement of the hands in drawing the sun develops one's peripheral vision as you focus on centre of the burning sun. This is just one of many breathing exercises that are used in traditional MT, however the *kasinas* used will differ according to the gym and the trainer.

Meditation allows your mind to become quiet and focused: 'breathing in and out, you let go of the poisons and establish the serene ground of the precepts. You release defences of the self and the mind comes forth boldly with the count of 'one, two, three'. Focused and serene, you are ready for instruction by ten thousand things' (Aitken: p158). According to Buddhist teaching, meditation is a way to open the mind to gain a better insight into other forms of teaching, in which case it makes sense to meditate before or after instruction in MT. 'The meditative path is described as the cultivation of five cardinal virtues – faith, energy, mindfulness, concentration, and finally, wisdom. What is particularly recommended is 'balancing faith with understanding, and concentration with energy' a formula that is often diagrammed as the mind's chariot being pulled by four horses' (Tambiah: pp41). It is also a formula that can easily be applied to MT – faith and understanding of Buddhism and the history behind MT; and concentration and energy while sparring. Meditation and breathing can also help one to achieve equanimity (*upekṣhā*) – one of the four immeasurables, along with benevolence, compassion and joy, which are considered to be strong antidotes to the vices. 'Equanimity is the condition where you are not thrown off balance by anything... the mind is completely steady like the depths of an ocean in a storm. Dwelling there you can take the action and make the statements that may be required to help save everyone concerned, including yourself. Equanimity is also a matter of graciously accepting minor criticism' (Tambiah: pp 68). The latter being very important when you are a student!

WK is not the only ceremonial tradition in MT – Yok Khru, or Keun Khru is when an instructor accepts a student. In the past the student had to work for the trainer for a while before the actual training began during which time the trainer would study the student to ensure he was trustworthy, honest and good. The student will offer symbols of respect to the teacher such as candles, incense and flowers and then pledge loyalty and promise to abide by the rules and regulations of the trainer. The student must commit to having consciousness of all words, actions and thoughts, holding compassion for all living beings, to live with determination so in weak moments he does not give up, to have great discipline, to be humble, honest and to find moderation. Each of these promises can be found in the basic principles of Buddhist ethics I outlined above, and it is the job of the trainer to ensure that he lives by them. Obviously not all trainers will be good, Ajarn Lek commented to me: 'if you train with a thug you become a thug; if you train with a teacher with good morals, then you become a good person' (Appendix A). An example of an oath sworn at a Keun Khru ceremony is as follows: *'I will ensure that I am clean, strong and behave with honesty and integrity. I will not bully*



*those weaker than myself. I will undertake good deeds to the benefit of others and be loyal to the nation. I will avoid causing trouble of any kind. We will be united and help one another whenever possible<sup>7</sup>.*

Once the training starts, the trainer must ensure that the student stays true to his oath and has the right disposition for each new aspect he learns. 'At first you start training with the A B C and if you cannot achieve that it will prove that you are hot-headed; it involves setting up your conscious to be calm. The teaching will not continue if you cannot adjust yourself to be composed... once you know how to use MT, you must use it well, with kindness. Like in Buddhism, you must know what is right and what is wrong. If he punches you, that is wrong: if you punch him, it is still wrong, you must try to maintain peace' (Appendix A). So we can see that in order to be a good student of MT, you must pledge to uphold certain morals.

Once the trainer has seen that the student is an experienced fighter and has learned a great deal about MT, he will allow him to wear the *mongkhon* – a traditional headpiece circlet unique to Thailand and MT, worn during the WK, before a fight. It is never to be placed close to the ground nor is the wearer allowed to touch it or it is said to lose its worth. Tradition dictates that the *mongkhon* should be brought to a temple before it is worn in a ring to be blessed by the monks. We have seen that honour and respect are very important virtues in MT and the *mongkhon* is considered to be a representation of the fighters respect for his gym and instructor. If he does not fight with honour and integrity, he will bring shame on the gym he belongs to. In a way, acceptance of the *mongkhon* and the prayers imbued within it is another promise on behalf of the student to act with virtue.

### PART III:

In the past, brief periods spent in the monk hood, either as children or older, were common among Thai men. 'Even a temporary period in the monk hood was viewed as instilling in a man a moral sense that would remain with him even after he returned to his lay life. Such moral tempering was highly valued' (Keyes: p36). However in today's modern society, there is less and less interest in joining the 'Sangha', especially among young, educated people and people based in cities. There is also the 'question as to how far it is considered possible or desirable in the Thai context for any individual to renounce society...' (Bunnag: pp 21). So what can be used to instil a lasting moral sense in society today – something so important and necessary in our world?

Taking a lesson from Aristotle and Plato I will now consider the idea of habituation to virtue via MT. A lot of foreigners see children fighting in Thailand and consider it a breach of ethics. However the '96 Penang Gym' helps children turn away from violence and crime – gives them a path out. 'The gym

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<sup>7</sup> 'Muay Thai Traditions and Ceremonies'

is a place where local children find love, self respect, confidence, and a sense of meaning in a world where drugs, violence and death are a fact of life.<sup>8</sup> I previously mentioned that Buddhist ethics are most similar to virtue ethics and Keown writes: 'According to virtue ethics... what is of primary importance in ethics are neither pre-existing obligations nor pleasant outcomes but the development of character so that a person becomes habitually and spontaneously good. Virtue ethics seeks a transformation of the personality through the development of correct habits over the course of time so that negative patterns of behaviour are gradually replaced with positive and beneficial ones' (Keown 2005: p23). Could MT then help transform a character by developing correct habits at a young age? According to Ajarn Lek, it is very important for children to learn MT: 'It is good for children to learn. Just like a language, if you are young it is easy to pick up. More difficult to learn when you are older' (Appendix A). A sentiment that was argued by Plato many centuries before: ' And the first step, as you know, is always what matters most, particularly when we are dealing with those who are young and tender. That is the time when they are easily moulded and when any impression we choose to make leaves a permanent mark' (Plato: Book II, Part III, 2. 412 b). I have shown that many of the basic precepts of Buddhism are inherent in the learning of traditional MT and even in ring MT to a certain extent. Children do not yet understand the meaning of virtue, but if they are habituated to the conduct of one who respects the precepts, then they may come a step closer to enlightenment. Aristotle says: 'In a word then, like activities produce like dispositions. Hence we must give our activities a certain quality, because it is their characteristics that determine the resulting dispositions. So it is a matter of no little importance what sort of habits we learn from the earliest age – it makes a vast difference, or rather all the difference in the world' (Aristotle: 1103b20).

In conclusion, studying MT because it is a part of Thailand's endangered cultural heritage is in itself good enough reason but when you add to that the rise of prominence of Asia, it makes the subject even more crucial. I was inspired to delve deeper into this topic by my own experiences with MT in the Archa Tong group, which follows the teachings of Abbot Phra Khru Bah, a former MT champion, turned monk, who runs an orphanage for 'lost' children of the Golden Triangle. However, by talking to MT masters and local people as well as reading what the leading philosophers have to say about Buddhist ethics I was able to find further evidence to support my theory. Contrary to common perception, MT is an art form and a method of self-defence, neither of which clash with assessments of the Buddhist principle of *ahimsa* in the Pali Canon. I hope to have shown that traditional MT contains, by nature, moral values that can be found across the board of ancient and western philosophy as well as Buddhism. I have only focused on a few aspects of MT however one could easily spend a lifetime studying the rest. Training in MT can habituate both young and old to live a good and moral life because it *does* have Aristotle's 'certain quality'.

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<sup>8</sup> 'Muay Thai Kids: 96 Penang Boxing Gym in the Klong Toei district of Bangkok, Thailand'



*Photo: Front left: Richard Weir (Archa Tong MT trainer) & on horseback: Prah Khru Bah*

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21/09/2011 - by Sarah Alexandra George and Chattarin Hongladarom  
(English language transcript, translated by Chattarin Hongladarom (Appendix A) & Thai language  
video (Appendix B) attached)

Interview with Jason Ness, (email) 19/08/2010 (Appendix C attached)