

MUAY THAI BORAN

The Martial Art of Kings

Secret techniques

Marco De Cesaris



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MUAY THAI BORAN - The Martial Art of Kings - Secret Techniques

By Marco De Cesaris

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Dedication

This book is dedicated

to my father Enzo De Cesaris,

the first Master who, by means his sensivity

and profound sense of culture,

illuminated my journey along the path of learning.

Dedication written by the Minister Counsellor of the Royal Thai Embassy in Italy.

Mr. Marco De Cesaris is an Italian Master, exceptionally impassioned and competent in Thai traditional martial arts. Thanks to his research, he has been able to conduct an in-depth investigation into the Thai Fighting Arts, achieving for himself a respected and well-known reputation both in Thailand and in Italy, as well as in other European and American countries.

For many years, he has been an appreciated collaborator of the Royal Thai Embassy in Italy and currently also of our Thai Trade Center of Rome.

By means of his books Arjarn Marco is bringing to light, in Italy and elsewhere, recognition of Muay Thai Boran, which plays a significant part in our precious cultural heritage. Without the support and efforts of Master Marco, Muay Thai Boran would not be as appreciated as it is nowadays and could even have been lost.

I am sure that in this, his most recent work on Look Mai Muay Thai techniques, he will receive great appreciation from his readers all over the world and will provide precious information to all who believe and practice

the authentic tradition of Muay, one of Thailand's precious cultural heritages.

Thanks

Mrs Suchana Chucherd

Minister Counselor Commercial

Office of Commercial Affairs

Royal Thai Embassy, Rome



Preface

In 1976 as a young “novice” boxer, I came into possession of a book written and compiled by the journalist Hardy Stockmann, edited by O’Hara publications with the title of Thai Boxing Muay Thai.

Stockmann, both passionate and an expert on Thailand and its traditions and culture, for the first time, presented, in a systematic manner, the theme of a type of fighting whose origins came from Siam and was little known about in the West. An important part of this book was dedicated to the analysis of Muay Thai at the end of the 70s written by Master Khetr Sriyabhaya, defined by Stockmann as “the most influential figure” in the world of modern Thai style fighting arts. Master Khetr, albeit in a refined manner, was extremely critical about the state of degradation in which Muay Thai was on his times and defined the technical level of the fighters and the trainers of that time as a pale reflection of what had once been a real Martial Art that could boast of

traditions both older and more glorious than many of those Martial Arts that were in vogue. His words were as follows: “Muay Thai is an art of self-defense that uses various parts of the body. It is based on the principle of doing no more than what is needed to teach a lesson and can be used as a competitive sport or as a fight to the death. Muay Thai has now become a popular sport, appreciated both by Thai people and foreigners. It is however a real tragedy that one of Thailand’s National heritages, which should be conserved in all its traditional aspects, has deteriorated into a commercial sport. Only if Muay in its pure form is brought back to life, by the teachers following the ancient rules and traditions, the teachings only imparted by those who have the correct cultural knowledge, only then can the students obtain the long lasting benefits which would go beyond what they would expect. Discipline, competence and perfect health, of both body and mind are the guaranteed results. These words should be remembered by everyone, notwithstanding the opinions of many so-called experts, ignorant about the real Art; these people who, observing water, see only dry sticks floating on the surface moved along by the wind, and are unable to see the pearl that lies on the river-bed”.

All this affected me profoundly and without further thought, as though pulled by an invisible force, I decided that my destiny should cross paths with the Science of the Nine Natural Weapons, the Martial Art of ancient Siam. As fate would have it, I managed two years later to try and put my project into practice, in Bangkok, where I hoped to come directly into contact with experts of this Art and possibly even with the Master whose words had had such an effect on me. I learned that unfortunately, Khetr Sriyabhaya had just died. Destiny or chance, it’s true to say that since then 34 years have gone by and my love for the Art of Muay has not diminished. On the contrary, in the 90s a meeting with another person who was a point of reference for me, Master Chinawooth Sirisompan, opened the doors to the wonderful world of traditional styles of Muay (those styles that Master Khetr spoke of with such emphasis) which have been rebaptised as Muay Boran and have finally helped me to grasp Master Sriyabhaya’s message. He, who all those years ago raised his voice loud against “sport business” and wished to see the

return of the art to its origins as a martial discipline.

Today I continue my journey passionately, that journey which started so many years ago continues onwards without interruption. I have studied, learned and spread the news of my findings, in a way paying back that debt of conscience that I owe to those great teachers, who have guided my journey towards the discovery of the original principles of Muay. Thanks to the publication of books, articles, videos and practical demonstrations of Muay Boran principles I continue to give my contribution to the process of transmitting the message of a great exponent of Thai traditions, someone, whom I have never had the honor of meeting but whose words deeply marked the path my life was to take.

Marco De Cesaris

About the author, signed by the Thai Grand Masters

Khru Dtuey

Not only can Khru Marco write about Muay Thai but he can also demonstrate with examples what he has learned. I have followed his work for many years and I am very pleased with the level that he has reached. I have always pushed my best pupil Sane Tubtimton to follow the path of Muay Boran because he has been a diligent student of ancient Thai traditions; now that he and Marco have met and have worked well together to preserve that which had been once forgotten, the ancient path of Muay, that I indicated to my student and has now been passed on to Marco whose job it is to present it to the world. There is a line of kinship similar to that of father to son, that goes from me to Sane, and from Sane to Marco and now I feel serene knowing that our ancient traditions will not become lost. Khru Marco is part of my Muay line and for everyone from now on he shall be called Marco Sytyodthong and along with his students can become part of our one big family.



Grand Master Yodthong Senanan Sriwaraluk

Khan 19 Khru Muay Association Gold Mongkon

Year 2000 best Muay Thai Teacher

by Ministry of Education

Khru Pho

Arjarn Marco is a foreigner who through diligence, patience, study and effort has learned this ancient art of boxing. Furthermore he has practised this art for a long time studying from ancient texts, with my help, learning from documents, and by observing and questioning the experts. He has travelled to Thailand many times to practise with Khru di Muay Boran, like me, in many ancient places of great importance such as Ayutthaya, Sukhothai, Nakhon Rat-chasima (Korat), Ban-gkok and Chaiya. It is no surprise that he is an appreciated Muay Bo-ran teacher due to his worth and the way he makes himself useful to others. It is my privilege to pay homage to him and to make known his great qualities in Thai Martial Arts, not only to everyone in Thailand and Europe but the rest of the world also. I wish to encourage him to always do his best to conserve, promote and spread the practise of Muay Boran throughout the world.



Khru Pho

Phosawat Saengsawang

Gold Mongkon Khan 19 Khru Muay Association

Professor Rajabat Maha Sarakham University

Master Sane

Ajarn Marco's heart has brought him to Thailand many times, in order to learn Muay Thai and Muay Boran, from different Masters and in different places. Howe-ver, I believe that it was destiny that lead him to the fulfilment of his fate; that is to be an instrument for uniting and reaching all Muay Thai Boran warriors. He has learned and understands many techniques and is able to apply and innovate new techniques as a result of the traditional styles that he learned. Ajarn Marco is an intelligent student and has maintained the willingness and curiosity to learn, allowing him now to become a complete Master. I first met Ajarn Marco way back, many years ago, and from that conversation I had with him I already knew that he had a deep knowledge and passion for the Art of Muay Boran. He can tell stories about Muay Boran that not a lot of Thais know about. He possesses the quality of a true master, the spirit of humility, respect, and wisdom. He has never showed arrogance in spite of his superiority to other masters, he displays serenity in all places and to all people, and the intelligence or wisdom to choose; indeed he is a principled man of good values.



Grand Master Sane Tubtimtong

Gold Mongkon, Khan 16 Khru Muay Association

Member of Lumpini Stadium Board of Directors

Master Woody

My friend Marco, what a long way you have come since I first met you and started teaching you the old way of Thai fighting; your wisdom and understanding of Muay Boran has now reached the highest level. You have come to this point through dedication and practise but, most of all, thanks to the deep respect you always showed for the Art of Muay Thai Boran and for the great teachers who gave you knowledge and advice. Your insatiable desire for learning has



made you proud but humble and I believe you will inspire people to better understand the ways of Muay Boran.

Grand Master Chinawooth Sirisompan

Gold Mongkon Khan 17 Khru Muay Association

President of Khru Muay Association (KMA)

Honorary President of International Muay Boran Academy (IMBA)

Vice President of Association Institute of Thai Martial Arts (AITMA)

PART ONE



Chapter 1 - The ancient Art of Kings

MUAY THAI BORAN

Muay Thai Boran (traditional Thai fighting) is the mother Martial Art that has recently developed, from 1929, into a combat sport which is appreciated world wide and known as Thai Boxing or Muay Thai. Originally “Muay” was

the art and science of fighting, as it was visualized and developed by the ancient Siamese Masters. Traditional Muay owes its origins to ancestral fighting methods of the people of Siam, elaborated and refined thanks to a continuous process of trial and correction. Pichaiyuth, Dti Muay, Pahuyuth, Sillapha Muay, Mai Muay Thai and Muay Kard Chiek: under these and other labels the murderous Siamese bare handed techniques have been practised for centuries, united today with the common name of Muay Boran.



Consecutive developments of Thai Martial Arts have followed distinct phases and have been subdivided according to the varying techniques imposed upon the fighters during the “sporting” matches fought in times of peace. That is to say what is generally labelled Muay Boran is actually a masterly melange of elements characteristic of different technical settings defined by scholars as the Regional Styles (for example; Muay Chaiya, Muay Korat, Muay Lopburi and also Muay Luang, Muay Uttaraditt or Muay Ta Sao) and fighting principles that follow a common logic (like the White

Monkey techniques or those of a purely military battlefield style such as Muay Ler Dritt) actualized and made usable by modern western disciples thanks to a well structured teaching system. In this sense it is correct to say that present-day Muay Boran is at the same time both an ancient and modern discipline: ancient because of its strategies and traditional techniques which date back to ancient times and modern due to the contemporary codification of a diverse and diffuse technical background made by Muay Thai experts and scholars of Siamese martial traditions immersed in the reality of today and directed towards future development.



MUAY AND THE THAI PEOPLE

Originating from the Yunnan plains in China the people known as Yuan progressively advanced southwards, joining another group of nomads, the Ai Lao, giving birth to the Tai Yai (the Great Thai to distinguish them from the Tai Yuan, a minority group that settled down in the area around Chiang Rai, giving rise to the Kingdom of Lanna). From then on, these people with the blood of warriors running through their veins were accused of being barbarians by the then more culturally evolved Khmer and Mon. They

managed to conquer for themselves a fertile home which they defended for centuries against invaders, consistently winning and managing to remain independent; the Kingdom of Siam influenced the history of the whole of South East Asia, until 1939. This was the year in which the name Thailand was officially adopted, meaning “Land of the Free”, wishing to memorize their glorious tradition of independence of which they were all so proud.

The origins and the history of Muay are enmeshed in the history of the Thai people who created this invincible fighting technique.

Various versions of the origin of Siamese fighting principles have been passed down through the centuries. The reality is, contrary to other fighting styles of Far East, that Muay did not spring from one single founder but rather from Thailand's cultural heritage as a whole, that is to say, from Thai people themselves.

One can certainly talk about technical and cultural influences that have been of some importance in the actual methods of approaching warfare and military tactics and strategies, and as a consequence bare hands or armed fighting. The ancient Indian culture has notably influenced the Thai way of life and also Indian Martial Arts have acted as a role-model for Muay techniques both directly and indirectly through other cultures which have an important role in the history of South East Asia, such as those of the Mon and, above all, the Khmer.



Eastern Martial Arts historians are still debating the relationship between Siamese warrior traditions and Khmer fighting techniques (called “Muay Khmer” by Thai people), that according to one theory would form the origins of Muay Boran. In fact according to some, Pradal Serey or the more military style named Bokkator which developed in Ancient Cambodia from the 10th century onwards, and whose existence is demonstrated in the still visible bas-reliefs at Angkor Wat, the historic imperial capital, were imported into Siam. Here, these techniques would have been processed and elaborated upon becoming the technical basis of archaic Muay.



According to another theory, both Muay Khmer and Muay Thai have their origins in the fighting style used by the populations in northern Thailand, around the Province of Nakhon Ratchasima. The fighting style of Muay Khorat, which originated in that area, after going through numerous transformations and implementations, would be the missing link between the Cambodian and the Thai disciplines.

Also Southern China, from which the ancestors of Thai people originated, almost certainly had contacts with these disciplines, influencing the creation of the Siamese fighting system. It is also proved, (for instance by the Chinese troopers statues still visible at Samut Songkran [fig. I]) how the Chinese were for some time allies of the Siamese Kingdom of Ayutthaya. During their stay here with the role of “consultants”, their influence was transmitted to the ancient siamese fighters by means of technical exchanges between warriors.

In a different, but just as important way Indonesian and Malaysian styles of self-defense have been studied, and in some instances integrated into Muay styles, particularly in the southern part of Thailand. However, apart from these albeit strong influences, the determining force over time behind the

categorization of this deadly style of fighting has been the spirit of the Thai people, their desire for independence and their cohesion. The very kings of Thailand have worked as catalysts of these energies, incenting the study and practise of Muay Thai; such practice has functioned as a national bonding during times of peace, and in times of war like an instrument of death to prevail over enemies.

Siamese militaries have always widely used Muay techniques, when the combat was body to body and the kicks typical of their style (Tiip and Tae) proved to be so useful for controlling their adversaries to then finish them off with the sword.

The king's guards were selected from the most proficient Muay fighters and their style, perfectioned over time (called Muay Luang or Royal Muay) is the result of the best fighting principles expressed by the most prominent exponents of different regional styles.

With regards to the development of this Siamese Art through time, our study focuses predominantly on the analysis of the secular traditions of Muay Boran, that is to say Muay in its original version. Thai Boxing, which derived from the ancient Martial Art and has evolved, to the most part since 1929, during the so-called Bangkok (or Khrung Thep, City of Angels) period. The latter has, in turn been sub-divided into periods covering the years between the late 18th century up to present day.



With regards to this, the year 1929 which is conventionally referred to as the starting point of the modern era of Muay Thai with the abandonment of bound-hand fighting (Muay Kaad Chuek) and the introduction of rules similar to those used in western boxing (Marquess of Queensbury rules) corresponded with a tragic event that caused the end of an era. In a dramatic bout Prae Liang Prasirt, a noted practitioner of Muay Ta Sao, brutally beat up and caused the death of Jia Pratabong, a noted practitioner of Muay Khmer. Muay Sao Tao (also known as Muay Uttaradit) fighters had always been distinguished by their aggressiveness and ferocity whilst fighting and a fight ending with severe impairments being inflicted upon an opponent was rather common. However, after this particular bout ending for the umpteenth time in a fatal manner and probably also due to the natural cultural evolution of the country and the desire to modernize, Kaad Chuek fights (fig. II) were banned and gloves became mandatory.



Progressively the more martial aspects of Muay Boran were gradually eliminated (with the introduction of the boxing ring, rounds, the prohibition of those techniques considered too dangerous – such as bone dislocations and throws). However, the change was not immediate. During the 70s, for the first time the author had direct experience of what was happening. Thai Boxing was still suspended between the desire for change and modernity at all costs and its unwillingness to abandon traditional techniques. In Bangkok stadiums (above all in its oldest one, the Rajadamnern which had been going since December 23rd, 1945 but also in the, Lumpinee Stadium, which was new at the time) traditional techniques were still in use during fighting, even if the use of gloves and the restrictive rules modelled on those of Boxing made these techniques more difficult to perform. For example, one of the special punches still employed at that time was the mysterious “fisherman punch”, which actually derived from the ancient use of striking with the outer edge of the hand, common to many styles of Muay Boran. Gradually these

usances, which were not considered adequate in order to allow a fully international development of the discipline were abandoned altogether in modern Muay Thai, and along with them a huge chunk of cultural heritage disappeared and remained in oblivion for many decades.

Looking back in time to when Muay Boran was still in vogue, we can see that its evolution went through distinct phases. The oldest records we can refer to date back to a period between the 13th and 15th centuries when Sukhothai was the capital of the Kingdom. The technical development's peak of the Art from a martial perspective, occurred during the era of Ayutthaya, city founded by King U-Thong (Ramathibodi I), between 1350 and 1767, year of the downfall of the capital.



During this period of great cultural, political and commercial ferment there were many personages who had a fundamental role in the development of Siamese Martial Arts. The one that stands out primarily was the famous warrior Nai Khanom Thom (fig. III) who distinguished himself in battle by defeating ten Burmese gladiators in an epic bare-hand fight. He gained not only his own freedom but that of his comrades from the King of Burma of whom they were prisoners (this historic event is still remembered and celebrated every year on March 17th).

The names of many Siamese kings and warriors are inextricably linked to Muay Boran traditions that for centuries have been a concrete heritage of the Thai people. King Naresuan (known as the Black Prince of Siam) (fig. IV) who reigned from 1569 was held hostage from the age of nine by the Burmese. He learned from his enemies their fighting techniques that dated back to those warrior traditions of Khmer empire and was capable of using them against his very prison guards. Once he was released he personally fought in 27 different battles and survived. On January 25th, 1592 during the final battle of Burma's fifth invasion of his country, King Naresuan, whose battle position was on the top of an elephant, saw and was able to recognize (from his youth spent in prison) the King of Burma. He succeeded in killing him with his deadly Ngaaw spear. From then on this date has been celebrated as the Thai Army Day.

King Naresuan was also a convinced advocate of martial training, or Pahuyuth that was incorporated into the different units of the army; he separated for the first time unarmed techniques from those using weapons. The names of Phra Chao Sua (also known as Tiger King) a fervent practitioner, resear-cher and promoter of Muay, and Phra Chao Taksin (fig. V), who was said to have learned the secrets of fighting in the mo-nastery of Kosa, are also inextricably linked to Muay Thai history.

Finally, we would also like to cite another warrior, who although not of royal extract, managed to gain the respect of King Taksin and his nobles. Due to this he was even appointed Chao Muang (Governor).

He left his mark on the development of Siamese Martial Arts due to his exceptional combat skills. This indomitable warrior, named Praya Pichai Daab Hak, faithful soldier and invincible in battle, was able to fight even with a broken-sword hence his nickname Daab Haak (in Thai language daab means short sword and hak means broken). Daab Hak, even unarmed, was capable of wreaking havoc on the enemy and in fact in unarmed combat he managed to kill the general of the Burmese army. Daab Hak's ferocious fighting style was characterized by incredible flying techniques that have been passed down into Muay Ta Sao, a style he helped make famous.

From royalty to country-siders, from north to south of the nation everyone in Thailand has loved and practised the National Martial Art, probably like nowhere else in the world. However, during these glorious eras 3 cities stand out due to the valour of their Nak Muay, Muay fighters, to the point that the cities were renamed as Muay Thai cities: Chaiya, Khorat and Lopburi have become part of the history of Siamese fighting. The best representatives of the three cities gained honor and glory, thanks to their competitive achievements, in the presence of King Rama V during a large funeral which took place in Bangkok in honor of Prince U-Ru-Pong Ratchasompotch near the Temple of the Emerald Buddha (fig. VI).



The three best fighters were honored with the title of Official: they were Plong Chumnontong from Chaiya, Kling from Lopburi and Darng Thaiprasert from Korat. The three styles are still regarded as the most effective fighting systems developed in the history of Muay and are a motivating topic to study, in technical terms, for the practitioners of Muay Boran today as it has been for centuries.

From a technical point of view Muay Boran is based and founded upon the scientific use of the 9 NATURAL WEAPONS of the body: 2 fists (Mahd), 2 elbows (Sok), 2 knees (Kao), 2 feet (Thao) and shins and head (Hua). The combined use of these elements in a rational and systematic way allows an infinite variety of extremely efficient attack and defense moves. The main actions are based on striking techniques, but an expert in Muay Boran is capable of combining strikes with wrestling holds, throws, twisting and joint dislocations, and choke holds.

Teaching during the time of the Kingdom of Ayutthaya was initially based

on the study of various guard positions and, later, on the proper use of the above cited natural weapons (fig. VII).

A Nak Muay had to simultaneously refine the principles of control of the opponent's attacks with defensive strategies and sophisticated movements that were based upon Yang Saam Khum, the starting point of Thai style footwork. Each Khru Muay (Master) had his own teaching style, however once the basic elements had been integrated, every student would begin to learn the real fighting strategies, the Mae Mai and Look Mai Muay Thai techniques. The former, Mae Mai which means fundamental techniques, are the founding principles of the Thai fighting style. They can also be defined as Mai Khru or Master techniques.



Look Mai or Mai Kred are more advanced and sophisticated rationales of Muay and were only revealed to students who were already advanced enough in their art, and those which their Khru Muay felt could be trusted. Such a complex baggage of combat techniques and fighting principles have only been partially transmitted to contemporary Thai Boxing, for the most part

teaching is limited to a simplified version of what had been for centuries a lethal weapon once passed into the hands of a fully trained and highly motivated warrior. However, thanks to a small group of passionate teachers, who dedicated a great part of their lives collecting and transmitting all of the information that they managed to obtain, Muay Boran has come back to life even if it has passed through the filter of modernity.

THE BIGGEST NAMES IN MUAY BORAN TODAY

The Grand Masters with whom this author has had the honour of working and from whom has learned the secrets of traditional Muay are today recognized in the mother land of this Art as figures of reference and highly respected.



GM Todthong Senanan: the dean of all the Muay Thai masters, has allowed this author to use his name, Sit Yodhtong, as a sign of the continuity of the bloodline of his teaching. He has been a Muay Thai Master since 1960, as well as being committed to keeping alive the traditions of Muay Kard Chiek in the modern era of Muay Thai. Khru Dtuey (as he is known in Muay Thai circles) has “produced” during his many years of optimum teaching unequalled champions such as Kongtoranee, Chardchai and Samart, just to name a few.

GM Prof. Phosawath Saeng-sawan: : Professor GM Phosawath Saengsawan, the main expert of the periods of development of Siamese martial traditions, who codified Mae Mai and Look Mai, has passed on, over the years, his knowledge to the author with the scope of presenting such knowledge to Western practitioners. Professor GM Phosawath Saeng-sawan is the custodian of the most authentic Siamese traditions of unarmed combat. Thanks to his incessant research this knowledge has now come to us. His keen interest, his passionate desire to experiment and his great skills as a performer have made him a reference point for all those wishing to fully comprehend the spirit of Mai Muay Thai techniques.



*In alto: GM Prof. Phosawath Saeng-sawan
A destra: GM Sane Tubtimtong*

GM Sane Tubtimtong: famous expert in traditional forms and Chern Muay techniques, fellow scholar and teacher of the author and top student of Grand Master Yodthong in the field of the traditions of bound-hands combat. Thanks to his experience as a fighter, promoter, referee and Thai boxing trainer, Master Sane has been able to create a bridge between ancestral principles of Siamese fighting and their modern applications for competition, self-defense and fitness purposes.

GM Chinawooth Sirisompan: : the person responsible for bringing back

Muay Boran to life, mentor of the author and the first person to proliferate the idea of Muay as being a martial art rather than just a sport. At the beginning of his work of reorganizing this Siamese martial heritage, the practice of Muay was seen solely as a form of Thai fighting similar to Kick Boxing. GM Chinawooth Sirisompan, known to most as Master Woody, has brought traditional Muay back to the point where it can now be offered to students around the world.



Colonel Nophakao Sriboonruang: expert in special armed forces fighting techniques, has for years trained officers of the Thai Army, in unarmed combat techniques and knife fighting at the Military Academy of Chulachomk-lao. After having tested, on numerous occasions the efficacy of combat principles he teaches, the Co-lonel has developed a system of Muay Lert Rit, the military techniques of Muay Boran, that integrates the foundations of Mae Mai and Look Mai along with devastating traits taken

from other Martial Arts that he has studied during his career (mainly Judo Kodokan). Thanks to his help and his teaching it has been possible for the author to open a sector in his Muay Boran Academy that deals with the issues relative to Lert Rit.

Colonel Amnat Pooksri-suk: his knowledge of traditional Muay Thai styles is indisputable. From the latter half of the 90s his ongoing research has frequently crossed paths with those of the author. At the same time mutual respect has flowered and led to collaboration between the two teachers. For many years Colonel Amnat has written “explosive” articles on Muay Thai magazines, which placed emphasis on the martial array of techniques currently used in Muay Thai sport. His deep understanding of the principles of both ancient and modern military combat allowed him to develop a system of fighting which is extremely efficient and appropriate for the needs of Western self-defence practitioners.



National Culture Commission. Apart from the famous names celebrated for their essential contribution to the development of what is now Muay Thai, we have the duty to recognize an institution which over time has always supported and followed the work of those eminent teachers that have been mentioned. In Thailand, exists a National Office of Culture Commission, one of the fourteen departments of the Ministry of Education. The Culture Commission is a body whose function is to support the study and development of National traditions such as traditional Dance, Music and Traditional Martial Arts – in all their aspects (cultural forms, self-defense, rituals). The author has had the privilege of working side-by-side with the executives of this office who in the last 20 years have taken turns at the helm. Without their valuable assistance it would not have been possible to accumulate the vast quantities of detailed information about the history of

Muay Thai from its origins until today.





Chapter 2.1 - The fundamentals

TRADITIONAL STYLES



Muay Thai, the science of the rational use of the 9 main weapons of the human body: 2 hands; 2 elbows; 2 legs (shins and feet) and the head. A real Thai Bo-ker, thanks to years of physical training is able to transform his body into a weapon. He is capable of using his anatomical parts both in attack and defense, using his various body parts like clubs, axes, spears, rocks and shields. Actually, even though that idea of a Nak Muay (Thai Boxer), corresponds to what for centuries has been the goal for all students of Muay, in the Siamese tradition there are always two well-defined stylistic branches that emphasise two ways of reaching the same objective: the absolute efficiency of unarmed combat.

The first way is that of Muay Lak which, using a term dear to scholars of Chinese Martial Arts, can be defined as belonging to the “hard” styles. Regional styles such as Muay Korat, Muay Lopburi and Muay Pranakorn belong to this group, the techniques of these three styles can be considered as the basis of Modern Thai Boxing which is still now practised in Thailand and the rest of the world.

However, Muay Thai Boran is not only represented by “hard” styles; Siamese unarmed combat is also made up of “soft” styles, known as Muay Kiao. The most obvious of this type is without doubt Muay Chaiya, made famous in the 70s by Grand Master Keat Sriyabhaya, but neither should we forget the techniques of Hanuman the mythical King of the Monkeys or those of Luesee the ascetic which also belong to this group.

A real expert of Muay Boran cannot leave aside any of the two, they are as complementary as day and night – Yin and Yang, a lack of one of the two approaches would cause serious gaps in a Thai Boxer’s personal technical baggage. From **Muay Lak** one should acquire the devastating power of leg and arm attacks and the experimented training methods which for years have made shins, knees and arms as hard as iron. From **Muay Kiao** one should learn how to avoid the power of one’s opponent by becoming part of that very attack and retaliating with fast, “poisonous” and unpredictable actions that will cause problems to even larger and more powerful opponents.

If we take a look at the following sections, we can observe the compared characteristics of the two most important styles, Muay Korat and Muay Chaiya, representing both technical branches, hard and soft. The technical clarifications that we are able to show here are the result of several meetings between the author and two Masters, both scholars and experts of the two traditional styles mentioned; Khru Chao Wathyotha (fig. I), well-known expert of Korat and Khru Mud (Puwasak Suksiri-aree) (fig. II) well-known expert of Muay Chaiya, both eminent academics, have provided detailed data and precise technical analysis of these styles, rich with historical knowledge and still today an important source of priceless knowledge for strategies and techniques of fighting.



MUAY KORAT STYLE

Geographical origins

Nakhon Ratchasima, often abbreviated to Korat or Khorat, is one of the north-eastern provinces of Thailand. It borders with Chaiyaphum, Khon Kaen, Buriram, Sa Kaeo, Prachinburi, Nakhon Nayok, Saraburi, and Lopburi. The capital city, Nakhon Ratchasima is situated in the district of Mueang Nakhon Ratchasima. This large province occupies most of the north-eastern plains of the country and is situated 259 kms from Bangkok. It covers an area of about 20,000 km², which makes it the largest province in Thailand. It is rich in the Khmer culture and has a long history. The area around Korat was already an important centre during the Khmer Empire of the 11th century, which is evidenced by the ruins of the Phimai Temple, now an historic park.

Nakhon Ratchasima, a walled city, was built in the 17th century by order of the King Narai of Ayutthaya. It is the easternmost “command-post” to guard the borders of the Kingdom and to keep watch over its vassals, the Kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia. At later times Nakhon Ratchasima has continued to be the most important political and economic centre of the north-eastern regions.

Technical Origins

The first patriarch of Muay Korat was Phra Hensamahan, he encrypted the most articulate and coherent form of the style the story of which goes back to ancestral traditions of South East Asia. It's told that the source of his style came from martial techniques developed in ancient Cambodia during the Khmer's reign: according to our studies the origin of Muay Khorat would be the mythical Martial Arts of Angkor Wat, seat of the ancient capital of the Khmer Empire, whose culture strongly influenced the inhabitants of the Khorat area.

The development of this style occurred in four periods: the first going from the reign of Rama I until the reign of Rama IV. Recent historical documentation recounts that during the reign of Rama V, a student of Phra Hensamahan named Deng Thaiprasert who was from the province of Nakhon Ratchasima distinguished himself at a tournament being held in the Royal Palace on the occasion of the cremation of Prince U-Ru-Pong Ratchasom-potch. Deng, in the presence of the king, beat opponents from various parts of the country provoking admiration amongst the Royalty. To reward him, he was appointed a knight of the Royal Guard and was nicknamed Meun Changat Cherng Chok (Knight of Excellent Combat Tactics). The name referred to the mastery of his use of one of the "trademark" moves of the Korat style, the deadly round punch called Wiang Kwai or buffalo swing. Together with circular kicks, Tae Ken Kor, which aim for the side of the neck, the buffalo punch has contributed to create the legend of the unbeatability of this style, which after successive transformations happening over decades, has constituted the technical base of modern Thai Boxing.

In Muay Korat (fig. III) the initial concern for students was for them to learn the proper stance and to study the rhythm of the steps, both offensive and defensive. These movements, still now executed in Ram Muay (warrior dances), are used to teach the student right from the beginning how to relate with space around him, reducing to a minimum the possibilities of the adversary to manoeuvre whilst at the same time defending one's own

vulnerable areas. In order to do this the Korat Boxer, just like practitioners of other styles, must spend hours working on fighting postures, put into effect by combining the movement of arms and legs, these latter moves always involving changes of rhythm with the aim of surprising one's opponent.

With reference to the rhythm of steps of a traditional fighter, one should note the great difference with that of a modern Thai Boxer. In ancient times fights did not have any time limit, so fighters had a tendency to maintain a slow rhythm with sinuous, rhythmic movements to then explode suddenly into rapid actions seeking to put their opponents out of action.

Obviously, not knowing the outcome of one's attack (the adversaries may well have good defense moves) the fighters go back to a slow rhythm to preserve energy in order for the bout to continue. A correct on-guard position is important at all times, necessary to guarantee efficient defense moves and rapid counter-attacks: with this in mind the characteristic steps particular to the style are continuously repeated and are combined with guard positions, which compared to those of modern-day Thai Boxing athlete can appear quite abnormal.



The typical guard position of Muay Korat, called **Lub Jod** was designed to put the fighter into a position that allowed him to strike with maximum power at any moment using circular kicks or punches made by the rear leg or arm. Thus the heel of the back leg was kept well off the ground, with the weight of the body becoming deliberately unbalanced forwards and the arms being kept relatively low with the shoulders relaxed allowing Wiang Kwai to be executed at greater speed. Defense is built around the Yang Yok position, whereby the front leg keeps aim on the opponent and blocks every offensive movement. These movements are reminiscent of the graceful yet powerful movements of a tiger. In fact the basic steps made for approaching an adversary are called Seua Yang or step of the tiger.



Typical techniques

The first characteristic was hand-binding: in this style raw cotton ropes wrapped the fists and the arms up to the elbows; the latter were not in fact body weapons in which Korat boxers were specialized. The wrapping also worked as protection for the forearms in case they were struck by the powerful circular kicks typical of this style. The wide circular punches were feared for their devastating power, from which their name Mahd Wiang Kwai or Swing Punch of the Buffalo comes. The perfect complement to the wide

swing are straight punches which in the Korat are performed, to the contrary of other Muay styles and unlike Modern Western Boxing, with the fist held vertically, mainly using the lead arm which acts like a piston (exactly the same methodology used by Western Bare Knuckle Boxers). The straight punch thrown with a vertical fist offers more solidity at the level of the wrist and a better alignment of the forearm bones which can be used to crush or upraise the opponent's punches creating a sort of bridge which can be used as a lever on the attacking arm.

The corresponding straight kick starting with the legs in the Yang Yok position was the Yotha Sin Thop, a front snap kick suddenly brought to the adversary's face, often in preparation for the next round kick. This last technique was another characteristic of the style: roundhouse kicks (whose training involves striking banana tree trunks over a long period of time) reach the target with exceptional force using, like circular punches, the complete rotation of the hips to generate an enormous impact upon the adversary like a door violently slamming shut (called in Thai, Long Dan Pratoo). It is said that this way of kicking was probably inspired by the relaxed yet powerful movement of an elephant's trunk. Another action typical of this style is the neck hold which works like a vise to suffocate and hold the opponent, whilst rapid knee strikes hit the body and face of the unfortunate adversary (Chap Ko Ti Kao technique, made famous in modern times by the famous champion Diesel Noi).

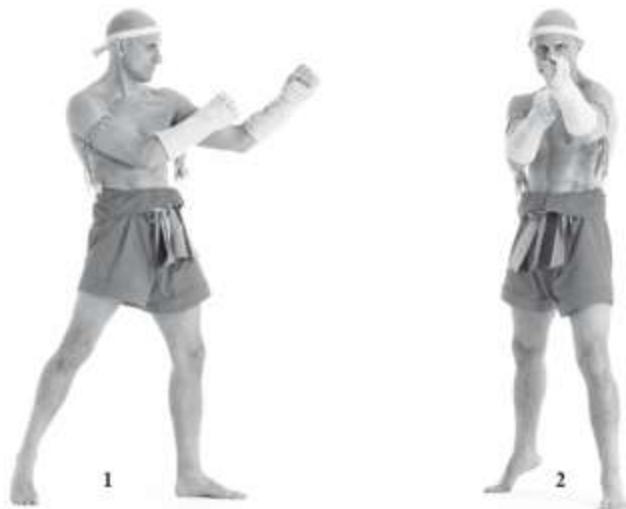
Strong points: the use of hands, shins and knees is highly developed both for offense and for erecting an impenetrable barrier against the adversary's attacks, the blows have a devastating power, they are efficient from any distance, they can be learned in a relatively short time compared to soft techniques.

Weak points: the blows are quite predictable, there is greater energy loss during the strikes, a high level of bone conditioning is necessary, and they are based on having good physical shape in order to be efficient.

Technical images

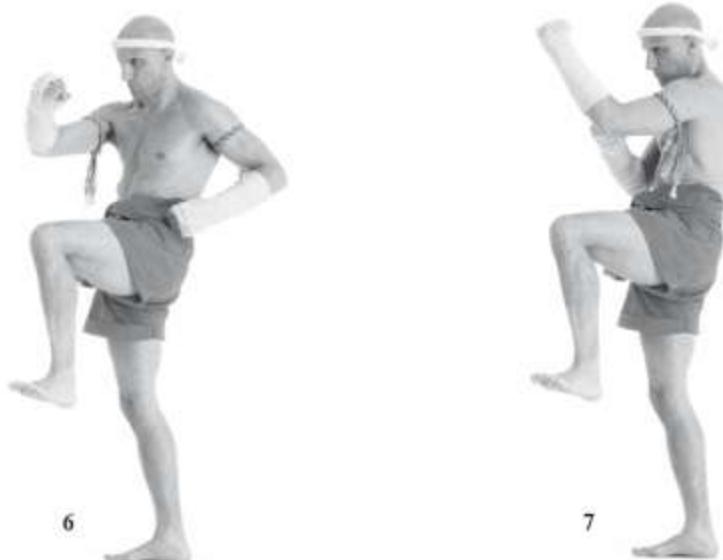
Basic techniques: Basic guard (Lub Jod) and footwork (fig. 1, 2, 3)

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan

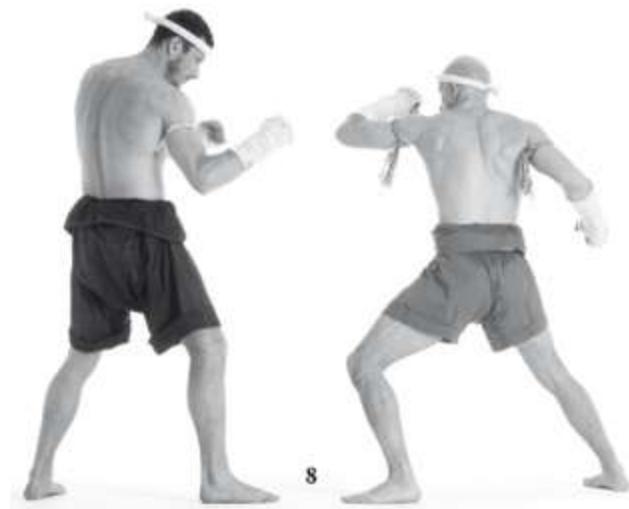


Yang Yok (fig. 4, 5, 6, 7)





Buffalo punch (Mahd Wiang Kwai) (fig. 8, 9)



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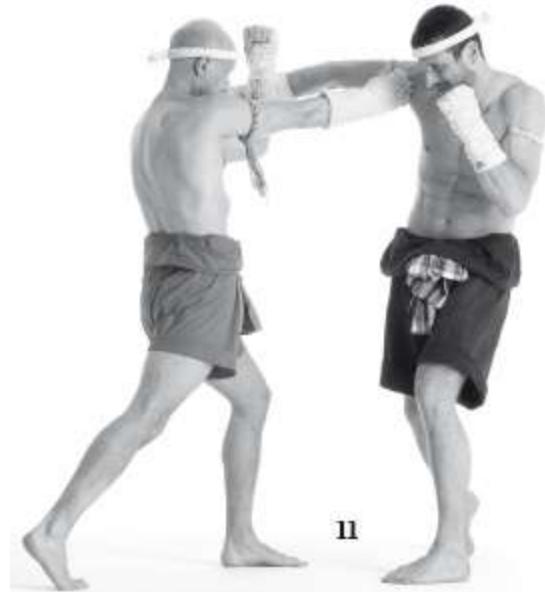


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Kon Mahd Wiang Kwai (difesa) – A. Arm only (fig. 10)



B. B. Arm and vertical punch (fig. 11)



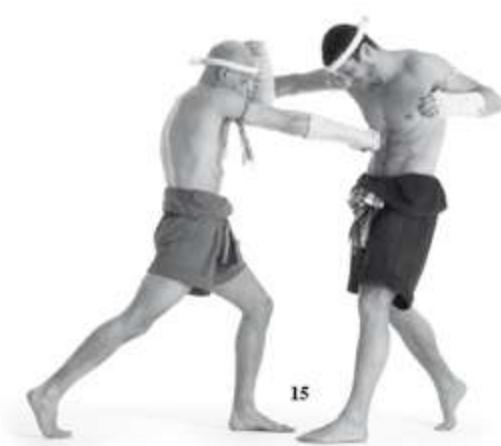
Middle kick block (Kon Tae Glan) with palm on chest and

elbow on leg (fig. 12,13)

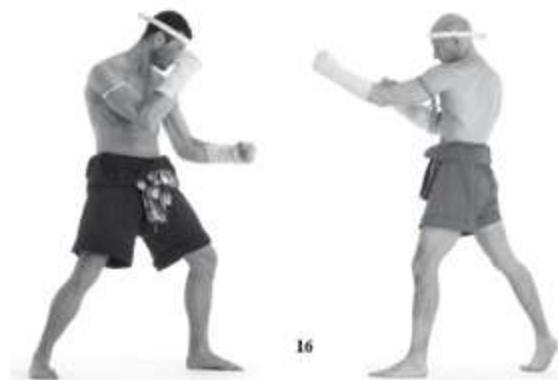


Straight punch block (Kon Mahd Trong) and straight horizontal punch to solar plexus

(fig. 14, 15)



Diagonal roundhouse kick (Long Dan Pratoo) (fig. 16, 17)

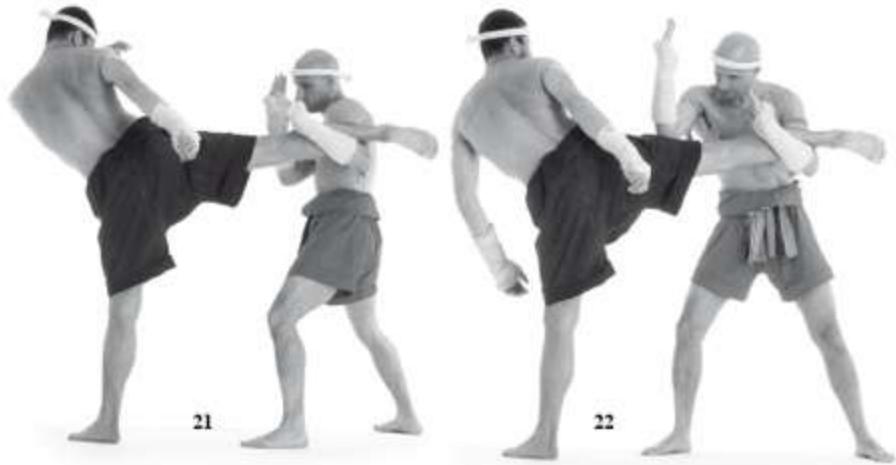


Straight whip kick (Yotha Sinthop) (fig. 18, 19, 20)

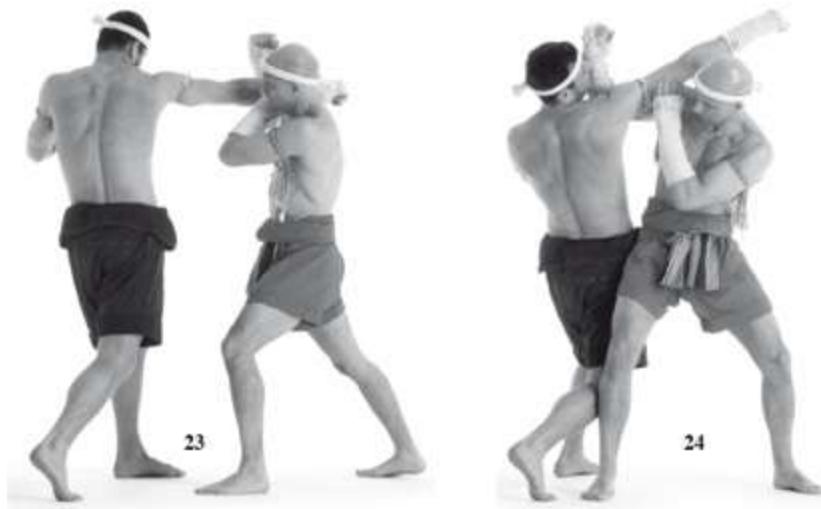


Mae Mai / Look Mai

Hak Nguang Aiyara (fig. 21, 22)



Khun Yak Panang (fig. 23, 24)



Kon Rukka Mun (fig. 25, 26, 27)



Hak Kor Erawan (fig. 28, 29, 30)

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan





Chapter 2.2 - The fundamentals

MUAY CHAIYA STYLE

Geographical origins

Chaiya is both a district and a city in the south of Thailand in the province of Surat Thani. The bordering districts are Tha Chang, Kapoe, Phato and Tha Chana. To the east is the Gulf of Thailand. The eastern part of the district prevalently consists of low, flat coastal areas, whilst to the west are the mountains and forests of the Khao Sok National Park. Chaiya is one of the most ancient Thai cities. The name could be derived from the original historical Malay name “Cahaya” (to shine or light). Some scholars have linked Chai-ya with Srivi-ja-ya, meaning the city would have been a regional capital of the Srivijaya Kingdom from the 5th to the 13th centuries. One of the major monuments in that area is the Wat Phra Borom temple which is based on a Srivijaya style pagoda.

Technical origins

The best known traditional style from the south of Thailand, Muay Chaiya,

is renowned for its combat strategy which is mainly based on unpredictable evasion tactics and ferocious leg attacks, kicks or knee strikes, against the lower body parts of the adversary or sudden series of elbow strikes executed whilst quickly advancing towards the opponent, or, literally jumping over the opponent's defense.

Muay Chaiya, story has it, was created by a Chinese monk who during the course of his journeying came to stay in the village of Pum Rieng (in the district of Chaya). It is said that he helped to tame a wild elephant that was damaging farms in the area. A temple was built to celebrate his success, the Wat Thung Chap Chang ("The Temple of the Elephant Captured in the Field". "Chap Chang" is the term used when an elephant is captured). Than Mar became the abbot of this temple.

The style developed therefore in the southern part of Thailand and was represented for decades by small-bodied Masters, to the contrary of Muay Korat which had always been more suitable for taller people.

On the occasion of the competition bouts held at the Royal Palace at the funeral ceremony we described above, in the presence of King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), one of the fighters who distinguished himself was a practitioner of Muay Chaiya; Plong Chumnongtong showed himself as being extremely smart and technical along with Deng of Korat and Kling of Muay Lopburi. They were all awarded the title of Knight and Plong was honored with the name of Muen Muay Mee Chue (Knight of the Famous Muay).

This elegant style, from a martial point of view, has always placed great emphasis on low level kicks, with short, precise trajectories, along with fluid

defense movements and counter-attacks carried out by the arms (punches, elbow strikes and fore-arm strikes) towards a high target, the neck or head of the opponent.

Moreover, the more impetuous the adversary and therefore less shrewd, the easier is to avoid the power of his attacks; by placing him in a position where he can't harm you, you will be able to attack him with poisonous strikes aimed at exposed areas of his body; this is the creed of the Chaiya Boxer and it was with such a self confidence that the fighters of this style, characteristic of Muay Boran, fought against representatives of other styles.

Muay Chaiya techniques date back to an era in which fights were ferocious and boxers were proud to represent their own style of fighting in encounters with representatives of other styles: sprouting above them all with its elegance, rich with spectacular techniques was Muay Chaiya. The Chaiya Boxer based his very movements on positions that appeared "vulnerable", but which actually concealed fast and explosive reactions, performed by twisting and bending his body to best exploit its flexibility, even when space was tight.



The more aggressive the adversary the more the Chaiya Boxer managed to turn his opponent's energy against him; this was the foundation for fighters of the southern style. Muay Chaiya guard is very different from what generally could be called a "boxing guard" (adopted by Thai Boxers only in recent times with the introduction of the use of gloves and with a fixed number of rounds); the traditional basic guard position, Jot Muay (fig. IV), rotated 45 degrees and with parallel feet, places the fighter in a seemingly inefficient position but actually conceals a multitude of possible actions, designed to rapidly "eliminate" the opponent with attacks to his vital points.

Even the guard on one leg (Tah Khru) looks unstable but due to specific training in the Mae Mai and Look Mai which are typical of Chaiya, it allows for striking while advancing, backing up or even jumping, avoiding at the same time the most common types of arm or leg attacks. This also goes for the low position assumed with the technique known as Suea Lag Hang in which the Chaya Boxer voluntarily places himself in a seemingly vulnerable

position inviting the opponent to strike, ready to react with a violent counter throw.

It is said that the Muay Chaiya guard should resemble the Durian, King of Fruits, whose surface is covered with hard sharp thorns. For an aggressor, this would be painful only to touch it: knees, shins, forearms and elbows, if well placed, perform as protection and were considered “passive weapons” by experts of the style.

Elbow slashes, forearm strikes, hammer punches and strikes with the back of the fist form part of the arsenal of a Chaiya Boxer in his fights to death. In order to use these weapons to the maximum, hand-binding (with raw-cotton ropes) covered the hands of the boxer only to the wrist, to the contrary of those Muay Korat fighters who bound their hands up to the elbow.

Another theory suggests that different techniques and principles of the Malaysian Ber Silat and the Indonesian Penchak Silat styles would have been absorbed into Chaiya mostly thanks to Muslim Masters.



Typical techniques

The hand-binding, before a fight, is an important part of the preparation of fighters. Some Khru Muay Chaiya kept the secrets of this binding in order to make Kard Chiek weapons to all intents and purposes, similar to the claws of a wild beast (the Seua Lab Leb technique uses bound hands in order to injure the opponent's face, mimicking the movements of a tiger's claws when

attacking its prey). Having to make best use of the elbows and the forearms as weapons, binding was limited to the hands and stopped at the wrists.

The first technical approach of a fight in this style was based on avoiding the attacking power of the opponent, using a sophisticated system of moves, torsions, changes of level and jumps which make the practitioner of Muay Kiao a very much elusive target.

The jumping techniques, especially kicks, knee strikes and elbow strikes (Gradot Tae/Kao/Sok) were studied in order to strengthen each strike, even if the mass of the person executing the action was much less than that of the adversary.

Elbow strikes were developed to exceptional levels, making Ti Sok the best weapon for the Muay “soft” stylists, an efficient blade in any situation, at any distance and in whatever position the fighters would find themselves in with respect to their chosen target.

The holds, throws and joint breaking (called Tum Tap Chap Hak in Thai) were also very developed in this style and were often used to “finish-off” a skillful opponent during the exchange of blows.

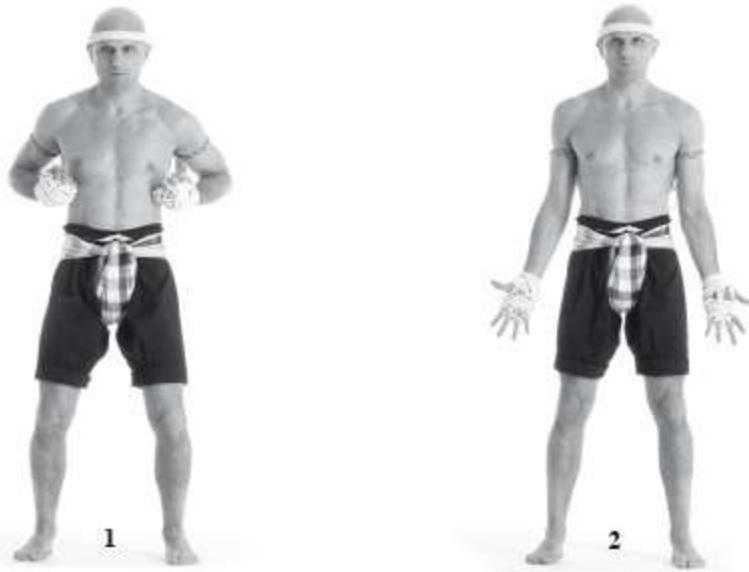
Strong points: the techniques were useful against heavier opponents, they don't require a long bone conditioning in order to be efficient, using little force the techniques can be applied even when you're not in great physical shape, the evasive style avoids impact thereby guaranteeing less harm to even the more mature practitioner.

Weak points: the attacks don't always reach a conclusion, it's necessary to carry out more counter-attacks to insure victory against heavier adversaries and a lengthy training period is required to become skilled in using Muay Kiao.

Technical images

A. Preparatory exercises

Pan Mahd (fig. 1, 2)



Pan Mahd, Plik Liem (fig. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7)

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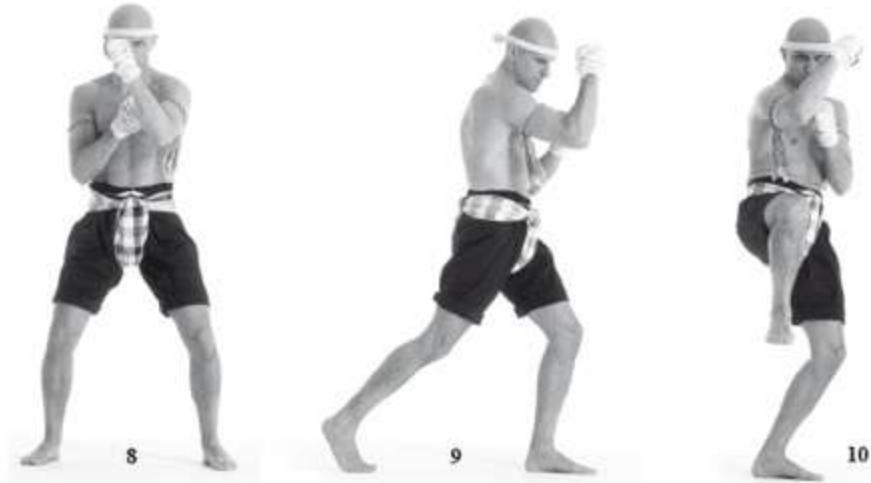


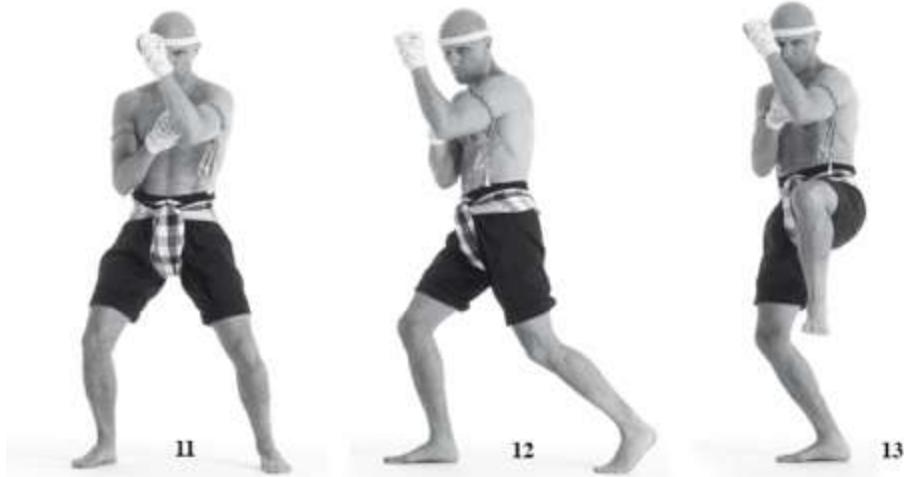
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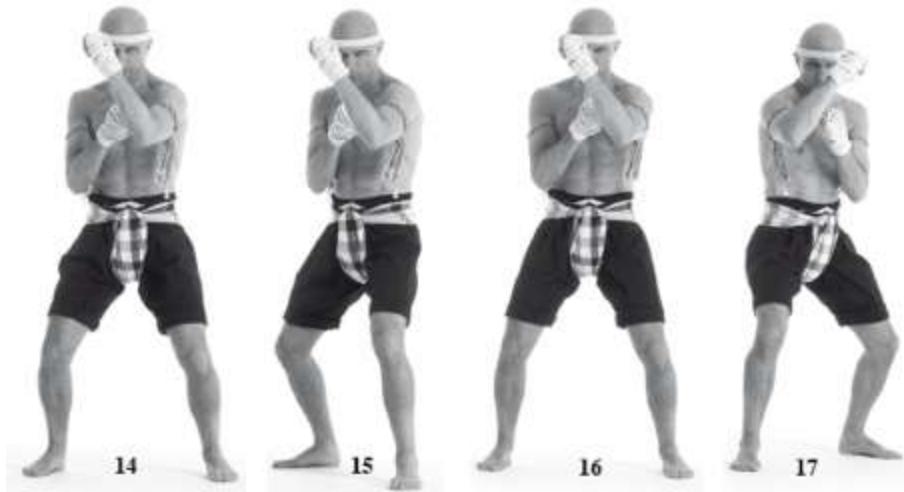
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Pan Mahd, Plik Liem, Yok Kao (fig. 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13)

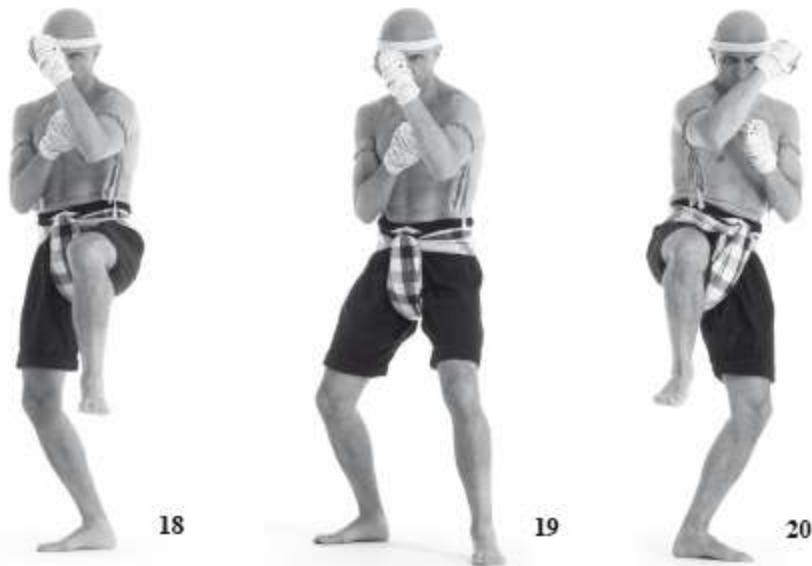




Jot Muay (fig. 14, 15, 16, 17)



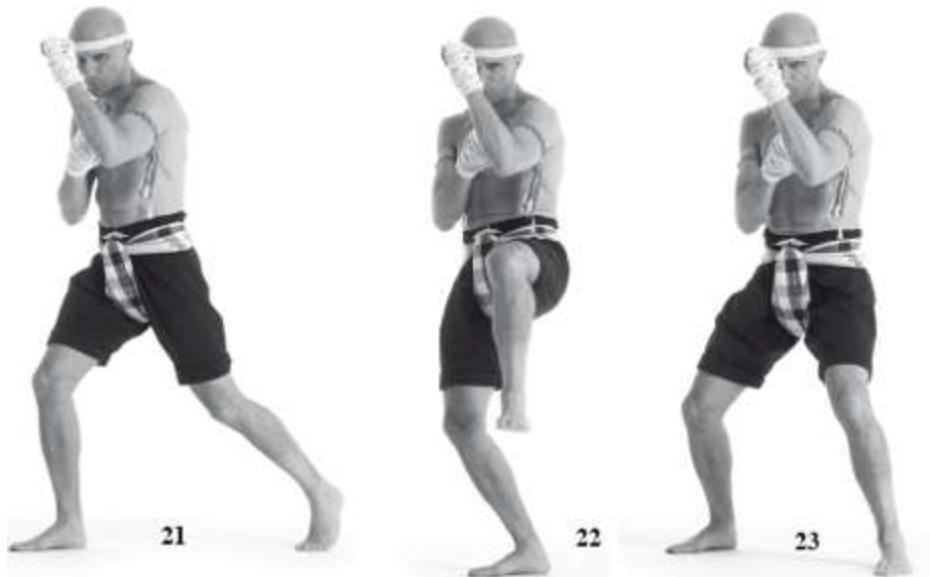
Yang Sam Khum (fig. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23)



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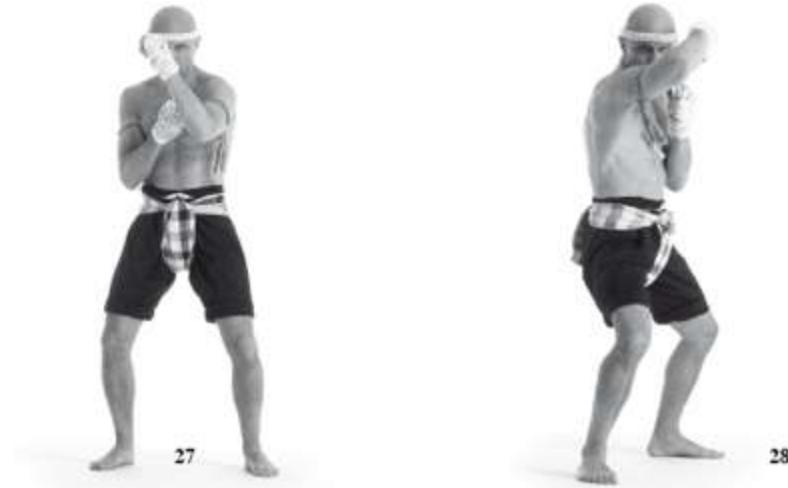


Basic techniques

Tad Mala (fig. 24, 25, 26)



Joob Sok (fig. 27, 28, 29, 30)



Chad (Morn Yan Lak) (fig. 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36)





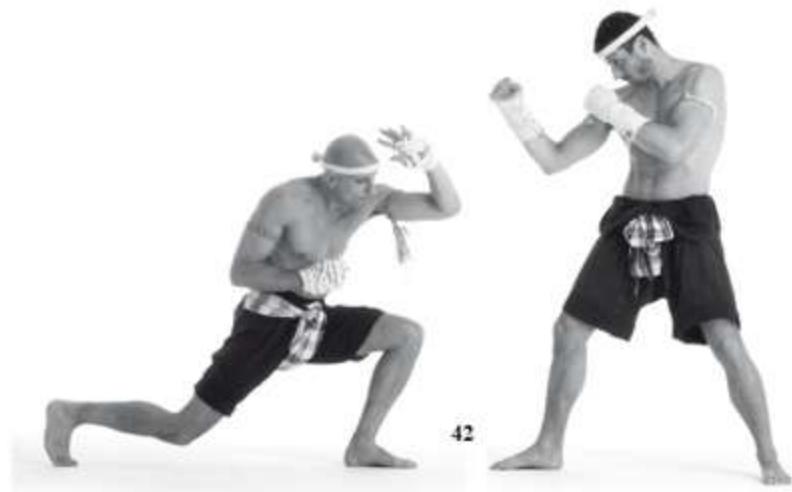
Mae Mai / Look Mai

Hak Nguang Aiyara (fig. 37, 38, 39, 40)



Suea Lag Hang (fig. 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46)





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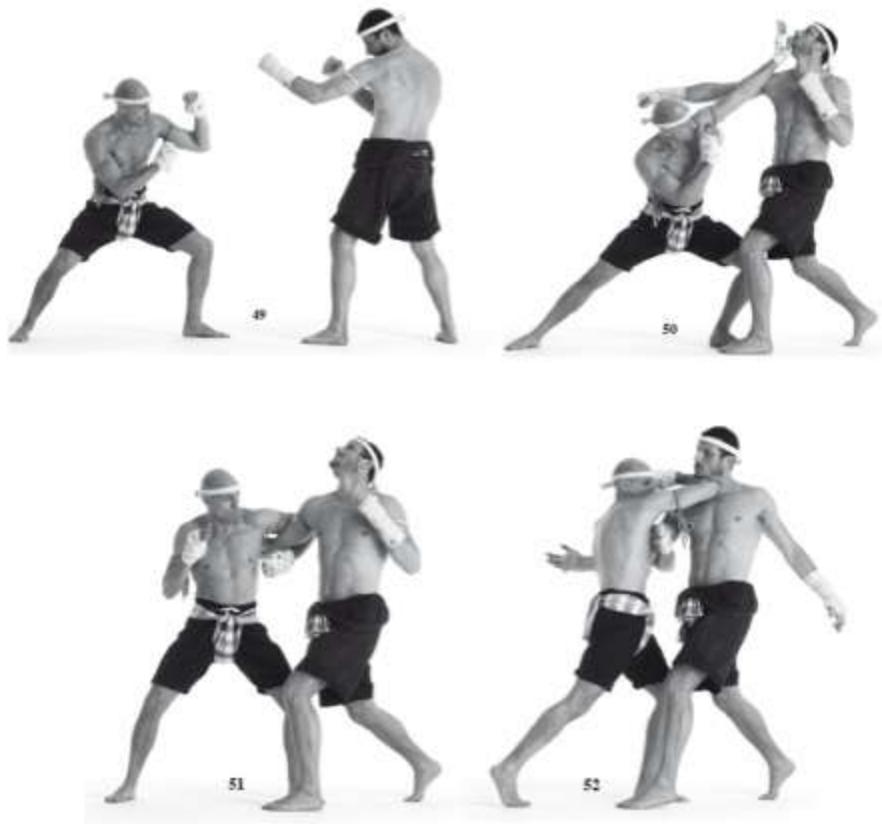


Hern Sahb Hua (fig. 47, 48)



Kamae Kham Sao / Rakkrae Hak Kaen (fig. 49, 50, 51, 52)

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan



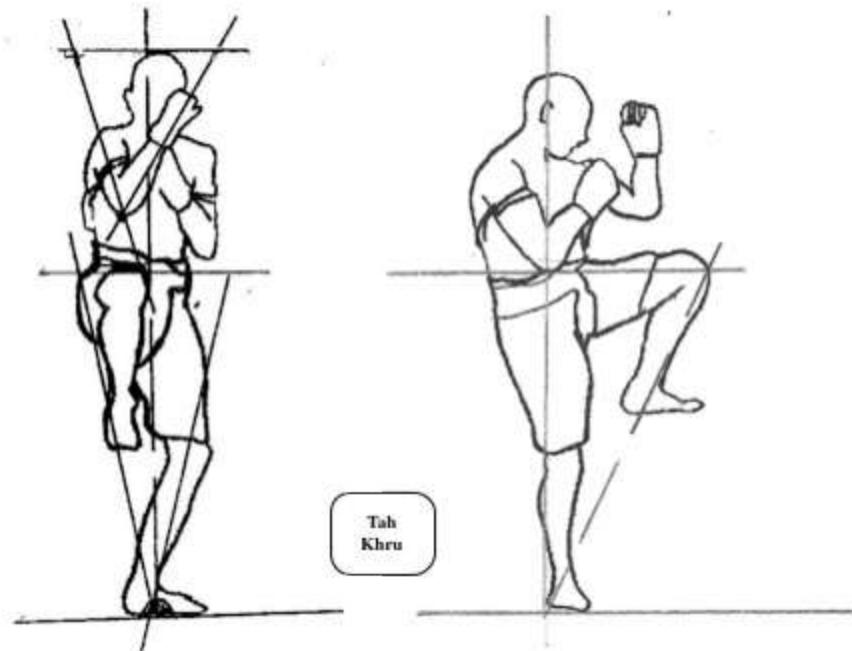
JOT MUAY, GUARD POSITION



THE TRIANGLE THEORY

The theoretical bases of the two Muay style settings (Muay Lak or hard boxing and Muay Kiao or soft boxing) are founded upon mathematical and geometrical principles which have been applied to the Art of fighting. A Nak Muay's feet position is the foundation on which the entire system of Siamese fighting is built. In traditional combat situations it is generally considered that the fighter will stand in one of the following 3 ways. These being a 1-point support position (Yeun Neung Khum), a 2-point support position (Yeun Som Khum or square position) or a 3-point support position (Yeun Saam Khum) the latter called "The Triangle Stance", the feet being placed on the vertices of an imaginary triangle on the ground. Progressively from the first to the third situation, proportionally increases the stability of the executor with respect to external stressors.

A typical example of the 1-point support position (geometrically identified as a dot) can be demonstrated by the guard called **Tah Khru** or Master guard, the real hallmark of traditional Muay Thai.



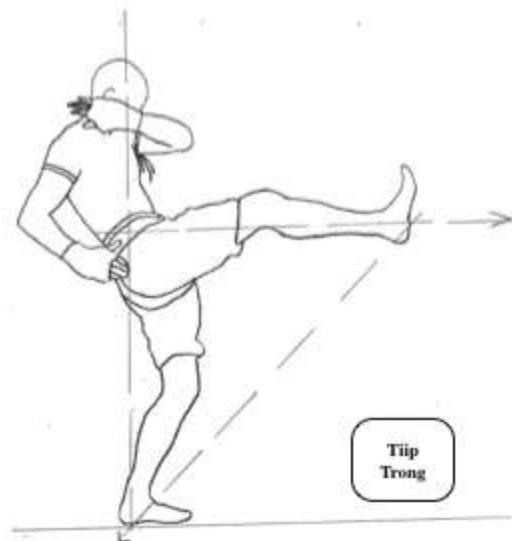
It is in this position that during traditional practice the student will go through a long training in order to build a solid foundation of equilibrium, muscular resistance and mental strength necessary for further, more advanced, training.

The apparent unstable position in which the adept finds himself when practising with 1-point stance, in reality hides many possibilities of defense and attack moves based on the sophisticated geometric theory of the triangle, that can easily surprise an opponent who is less aware of the subtle strategies of Muay Boran.

The 2-point frontal position (called square stance) is used exclusively during training (similar to what happens in other styles using the position called the horserman stance) and in close combat. Strengthening the leg muscles is an important benefit associated with the practice of techniques made in this position. The third position is the standard fighting position of Muay Boran, it is said that this 3-point support position is the “mother” of all the traditional techniques of Muay, and its learning is the true foundation from which a traditional Siamese fighter can be formed. Yeun Saam Khum as mentioned, is based on the use of three points, in turn they represent the vertices of a triangle, the most important geometric figure in the entire theory of Muay.

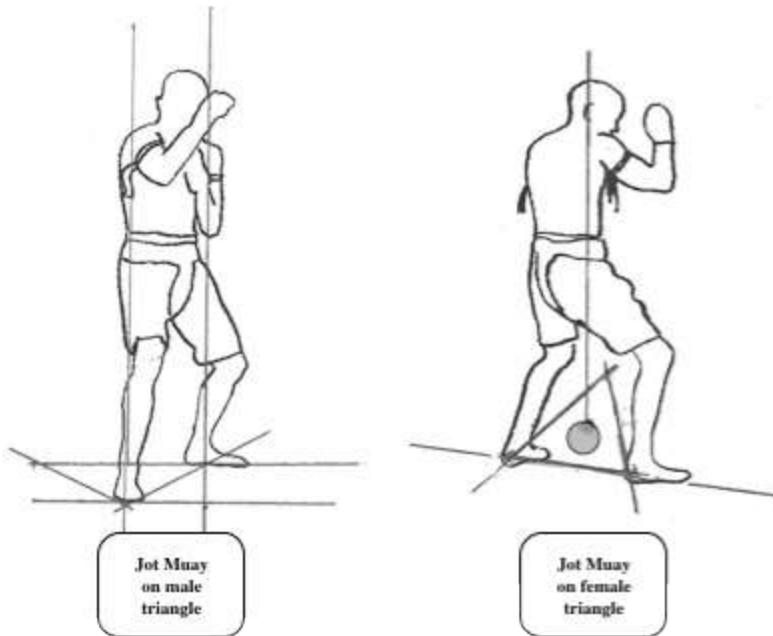
The triangle is one of the best symbols that can be used to show the rules and the force of nature of which we can all feel the influence. According to Hindu doctrine, linear geometric shapes like the triangle are called Yantra, or symbolic diagrams, and the whole of the culture of South East Asia is permeated with this same idea. The triangle is a recurring element in protective tattoos in both of its two versions, one with the apex upwards (male cosmic, fire) and downwards (female, liquid) and in various combinations such as the star, hourglass, and diamond.

For millennia, in terms of martial technique, the triangle has been seen as one of the strongest structures existing in nature and it's not by chance that it is at the base of the guard positions, the basic movements of Muay Boran and the execution of many of the major attack of this art (for example, in the correct performance of the front kick **Tiip Trong**, the triangular structure ensures an excellent capacity to absorb the return energy produced at the moment of impact with a target).



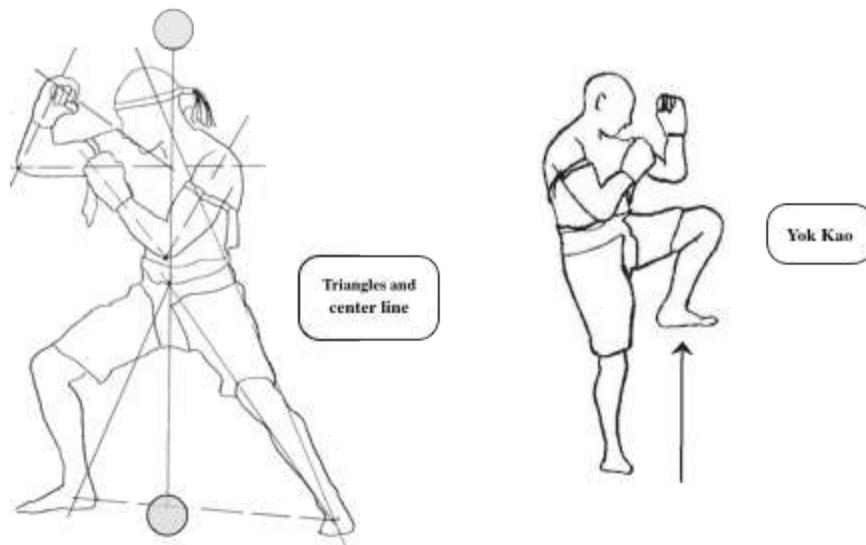
In the basic guard position (**Jot Muay**) the Nak Muay must place the feet on the vertices of an immaginary triangle; the forward foot (Tao Nam) and the back foot (Tao Lang or Tao Tam) alternate continuously going from one vertex to the next of the imaginary geometric shape that he will have been trained to imagine as being drawn on the ground. Even in the case of rapid

guard changes the position of the triangle should always be respected, otherwise a dangerous loss of stability will occur. The position of the arms is based in turn, on a series of superimposed triangles and they too change position continuously. This swapping of the forward arm with the back arm in a sinuous way is defined Pan Mahd or circle of hands. The rhythm of alternating positions has an almost hypnotic effect on the opponent who, if he falls into the trap of following the hands, will be easily surprised by a change of rhythm followed by an immediate attack. It's important to note that while performing Pan Mahd, as in all movements where forward and backward arm alternate, one should never remain with the center line undefended. The latter being an imaginary separation between right and left sides of the body which runs through an area rich of vital points and for this reason should always be protected. With the aim of protecting those vital points situated on the head, the forward arm, kept in an oblique position should cut the center line at about a 45 degrees angle. This way both the left and right side can be protected in a fast efficient manner. To protect the lower half of the body, from the waist down with special regard to the genital triangle, the knee is raised by means of a movement called Yok Kao which represents the basic technique for neutralizing front kicks, round kicks and knee blows against extremely sensitive areas. The guard position with parallel arms (and legs) often shown as a typical pose of a Thai Boxer, has no connection with Muay Boran; in fact it leaves the above mentioned center line too exposed. This stance is not recommended and should actually never be used due to the risk of being struck by straight hits (either by arms or legs). With reference to the position and the footwork of the legs, the movement "par excellence" in Muay the Yang Saam Khum (the 3-point step) (fig. V) which we will analyse shortly, is the manifestation of the abstract concept of a triangle applied to combat. The two stylistic approaches mentioned above, hard and soft boxing, exploit the idea of the triangle, primarily to construct a solid stance. This is followed by studying the angular movements that will enable the practitioner to strike without being struck in return and absorb the energy of the adversary's attacks without suffering damage (this latter approach is typical of the Muay Chaiya style).



Al fine di proteggere i punti della linea situati nella testa, il braccio avanzato, tenuto in diagonale, taglia secondo un angolo di 45° la linea centrale, predisponendosi per bloccare attacchi su entrambi i lati nella maniera più rapida e quindi più efficiente; per coprire la linea centrale nel

quadrante basso, dalla vita in giù, con particolare attenzione al triangolo genitale, si utilizza invece il sollevamento del ginocchio, mediante il movimento detto **Yok Kao**, che rappresenta The technique di base per neutralizzare i calci diretti, circolari e le ginocchiate contro quella zona estremamente sensibile.



The athlete's body is seen as a group of several triangles, whose pointed vertices represent further natural weapons or shields, which can be used, to attack or to defend whilst simultaneously damaging the limbs of the enemy. A correct guard position will also allow the athlete to have perfect posture, and thus be able to carry out rapid actions with a minimum energy loss (applying the so-called "economy of movement" principle).



fig. V

THE FOOTWORK TECHNIQUE

The ancient Siamese experts in the Art of Fighting have always emphasised the importance of foot work in order to obtain maximum results during combat. From positioning for the simplest movements through to more complex angular ones, every element was studied to express explosive power during attacks and rapid fluid movements during defence. The first rule was that every action should spring from the basic Muay Boran position and should finish in that position, following a rhythm of movement determined by a melody that was played during every bout called Chao Sen (the rhythm speeding up as the fight reaches its peak, to the contrary of

Sarama which is slower and accompanies the pre-combat ritual called Wai Khru).

Generally, two kinds of footwork can be found depending on the outcome that the practitioner is looking for in that moment. In particular we have: an “aggressive” type of footwork (in which the action coincides with an attack and is preceded, or not, by feints and draws); and one defined “evasive” (with simultaneous counter-attacks or two-steps defence and counter actions). As in many Martial Arts, even Muay Boran’s theory of combat places great emphasis on the development of circular and angular steps, both for attack and for defence (above all in the execution of traditional techniques of Hanuman, the White Monkey); such movements were combined into continuous actions that created a kind of spiral around the adversary. This would then be abruptly interrupted with an explosive attack able to penetrate even the best defences.

In the various periods in which Muay Boran developed, there have been different ways of setting up combats due to the greater or the lesser influences of the regional styles, or in more recent times, of the audience liking a particular technique or style. In time we have gone from one kind of style called “pla gut” (in that it reminds of Thai fighting fish’s strategy) in which every attack was followed by long lunges forward followed by rapid steps backwards to avoid counterattacks, to periods of clashes called “buffaloes style” in which movements were reduced to a minimum and defence moves were carried out by using hardened bones (shins, knees, forearms and elbows) against the opponents’ attacks.

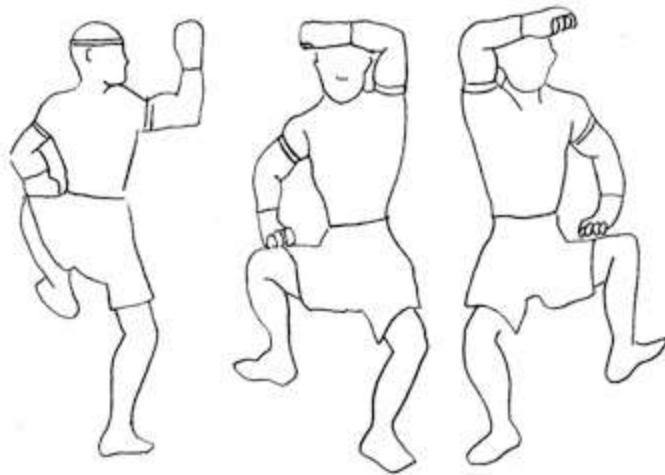
At present in sport Muay Thai, footwork is standardized, for the most part, following the lines commonly used in Western boxing. However, when studying a martial art in all its depth and length it is necessary to examine

carefully all the methodologies that were in use in different Muay Boran's eras long before it became a sport discipline. What should also be taken into account is that not all practitioners have the same physical or psychological characteristics (or even the same motivation) and it is highly improbable that opponents will be morphologically similar either.

With this in mind it is important to explore all the possibilities there are, regarding various methods of footwork in order to find the most suitable footwork style for each person. Even though it may seem of little use in sport fighting, according to traditional methods that have been consolidated for centuries, the first element which is essential in properly setting up the student and allowing him/her to get a good grasp of the footwork and a really sound foundation on which strong technical knowledge can be built, is the study of Yang Saam Khum movements or 3-point footwork (using the geometrical qualities of the triangle as mentioned earlier).

Constant practice of these movements in which the knee is lifted at every step as though to parry an attack is structured into two phases: the first being a long and sinuous version like the one employed during Ram Muay (the traditional combat dance), studied to hypnotize the adversary and enforce the use of one's own rhythm; the other more syncopated version, still in use today, is employed to close the distance to the opponent whilst still protecting one's vital points. It is actually very interesting, from a martial point of view, to study the various offensive and defensive movements in which "feints" and the so-called "draws" (such strategy is called Lo Loh and will be analyzed at great length later on) are combined. The practitioner by means of the appropriate use of **Yang Saam Khum** conducts the adversary into believing there is a gap in his own defences, in reality hiding a trap ready for the attacker. This sophisticated footwork also gives the practitioner a solid structure of body support and develops an excellent "rooted-to-the-ground" stance, which is essential in real combat, above all on uneven or slippery surfaces. It also allows a basis from which both circular and straight

movements can be effected.



In ancient times the construction of solid bases, that is the mastery of stances and the correct learning of fundamental movements, was the “sine qua non” to start the practise of any Martial Art that deserved that name. Today the speed at which one is required to learn to defend oneself, or, in general to fight, imposes upon many teachers, both in the East and the West, to water-down the techniques in order for their students to enthusiastically accept them. In actuality, there are no “short-cuts” and rushing through the initial stages, the most important phase of learning, does nothing but produce low quality students, compromising both the general development of the art and that of one’s school.

1. Basic Footwork: basic footwork can be learned and practised by tracing both a male and a female triangle on the ground, marking the vertices in

the old way with either circles of rope or coconut shells cut in half.

- Seub (basic sliding step keeping the same guard; to perform it correctly you have to imagine keeping your feet on the vertices of a “male” triangle that moves forward or backward like the point of an arrow),
- Seua Yang (Tiger’s Step, a fundamental step executed by constantly changing guard position from left to right and right to left; the back foot takes the position of the front foot (and vice versa if going backwards) moving alternately between the vertices of a “male” and a “female” triangle),
- Salab Fan Pla (fundamental step based on an evasive strategy of fighting, the number 1 Mae Mai technique, performed by zig zag movements with respect to our center line),
- Gao Chark (also called “pivot step”, performed by rotating one foot around the other kept in place on the vertex of the triangle),
- Gradot (movement performed by jumping forwards, backwards and diagonally),

– And obviously Yang Saam Khum.

All these movements can be learned and improved upon thanks to a correct understanding of the triangle system; then Nak Muay will reproduce the triangular structure by visualizing a series of geometric figures both on the ground and in space.

2. Angular Movements: as well as the fundamental movements set out above, that in themselves are enough to guarantee a vast potential for application in combat, the expert Thai Boxer (who will have mastered the technical concepts inherent in Look Mai Muay Thai techniques, that we will examine later) will refine a complex series of movements that are actually very efficient combinations of basic movements. The main idea being that in order to penetrate the defenses of an expert adversary it may well not be enough to have basic technical knowledge but also to have an arsenal of angular movements or jumping steps that get around the obstacle thus placing you always in condition of “attacking the attacks” of your opponent. In other words, thanks to shifts, rotations, jumps, leg and trunk movements, and combinations of all these elements, we should always strive to defend ourselves whilst at the same time attacking, thereby obtaining the double task of not being injured and always striking the undefended zones of our opponents.

NAWARTHAWUTH, THE NINE WEAPONS

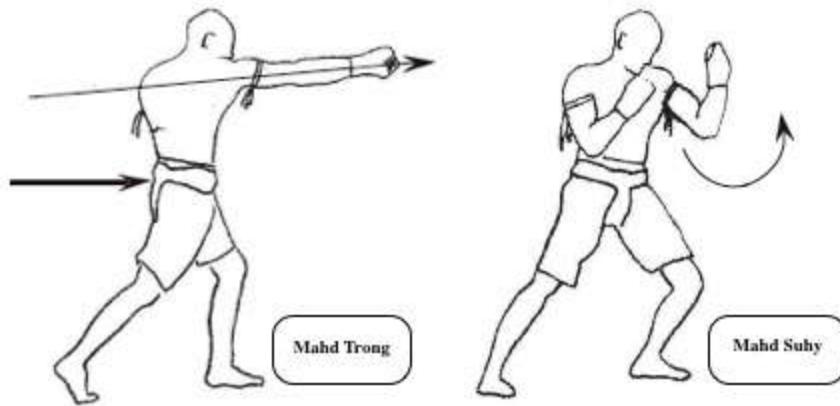
Muay Thai, is the Siamese Martial Art of the nine natural weapons, Nawarthawuth: hands, elbows, legs, knees and head are trained and prepared to being used as offensive weapons equal to axes, daggers, spears and clubs. These same body parts are also smartly used as protective shields to neutralize offences from opponents in efficient, and often decisive ways when facing a real attack.

In Siamese tradition, similar to what happens in many Eastern-fighting arts, the first element which is learned to develop offensive actions, is the hand. The foundation of attacks of this kind are represented by the clenched fist (fist in Thai is called Mahd whilst the attack by the fist is called Chok). It is used in many ways, with the front part, the back part, the outside edge of the end (little finger side) and with the inner part.

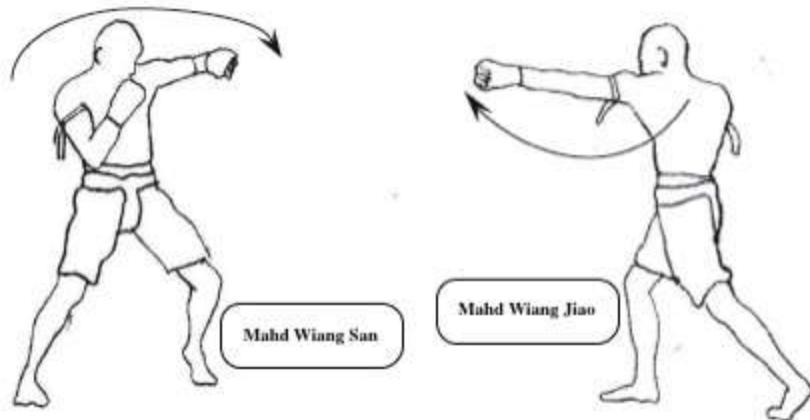
To correctly clench the fist and avoid injuries whilst using it (always considering that gloves are not being worn), it's important to take some precautions. The fingers must be kept tight together at the moment of impact with the target and the wrist kept rigid and in line with the forearm, carefully avoiding bending it, not to suffer serious injuries and the end of the fight.

The trajectories of the punches could be varied, but usually fist attacks can be straight (Mahd Trong) or circular; the latter can be carried out upwards (Mahd Suhy), horizontally (Mahd Wiang), downwards (Mahd Kohk) and spinning around (Mahd Glab). All punches can also be carried out while jumping (Gradot Chok).

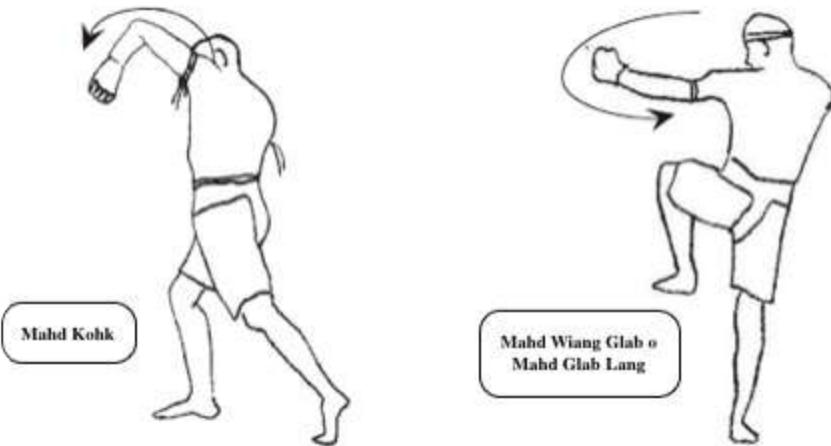
We shall therefore distinguish the following techniques:



Mahd Trong (straight punch, in the vertical fist version typical of the Khorat style, horizontal fist, in use in Chaiya, twisted or corkscrew, performed to lacerate the skin of the face, to the body, upwards to face), **Mahd Suhy** (short or long upright, to the face or to the body, single or double, typical of Lopburi), **Mahd Wiang San** (short hook hitting with the knuckles, with the hand held horizontally or twisted, or even striking with the inside of the fist like in the Wanorn or Monkey Technique); **Mahd Wiang Jiao** (wide hook, carried out with the back of the fist, with the knuckles, with the inner forearm, with the wrist), **Mahd Kohk** (downwards hook, short or long, strikes with the knuckles or with the inner fist), **Mahd Wiang Glab** or **Mahd Glab Lang** (backfist, straight forward or spinning, executed by the knuckles, the outside edge of the hand, the forearm); **Gradot Mahd Trong** (straight punch carried out whilst jumping).

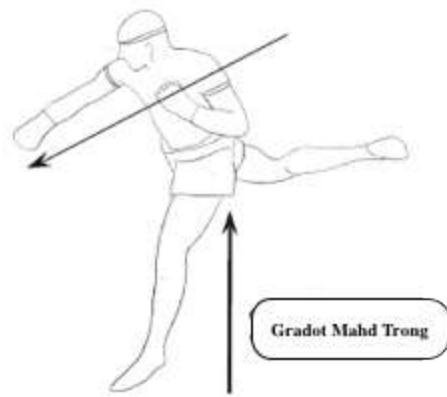


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Mahd Kohk

Mahd Wiang Glah o
Mahd Glah Lang



Gradot Mahd Trong

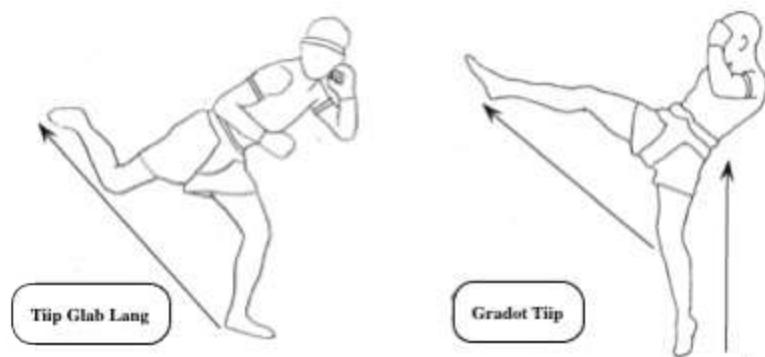
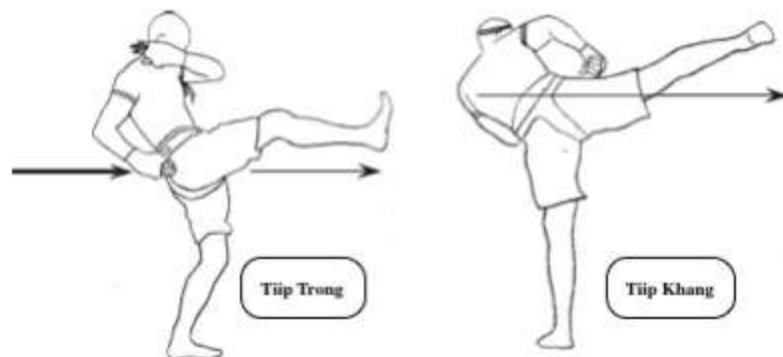
Thao in Thai language means feet; in the actual meaning the natural weapons to which the word refers are the legs. The legs are naturally more powerful than the arms and traditionally the use of the legs as a means for offense and defence has always been very common for Thai people.

In Muay Thai, in general, two areas can be singled out for attacks from the legs, feet and shins. The first are used, above all, in straight kicks (called **Tiip**) striking with the toes, the forefoot, the sole, or the heel. Actually, even in the execution of some circular kicks certain parts of the foot, such as the back of the foot and the ankle (as well as the heel, the outside edge of the foot and the sole) can be of excellent use as impact surfaces.

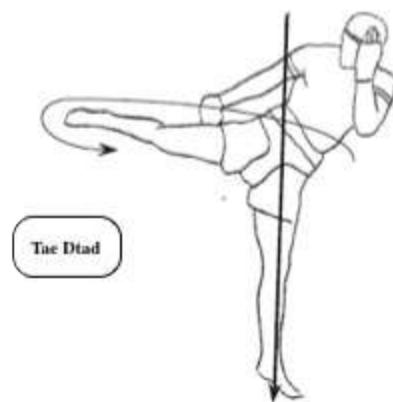
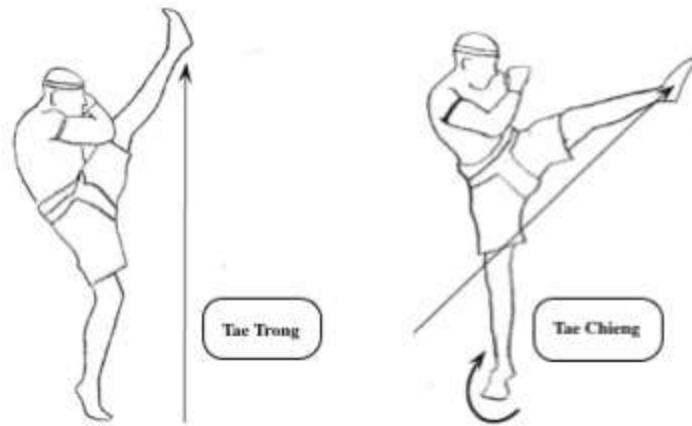
The other primary zone of impact for kicks, the shin, can be employed in the majority of roundhouse kicks (the famous **Tae**, typical of Siamese tradition which were inspired, as stories would have it, by the powerful but relaxed movements of an elephant's trunk) and for defensive moves. The shin is one of the most resistant bones, working on the premise that it has been suitably prepared, if not, the sensitivity of the shin could prove to be counterproductive to the person carrying out the attack. With regards to the trajectories of leg attacks, whilst carrying out straight kicks, three types of blows can be distinguished according to the position of the hips; frontal, lateral, or backwards (**Tiip Trong**, **Tiip Khang**, **Tiip Glab Lang**). All three kinds of straight kicks can also be performed whilst jumping (**Gradot Tiip**). In Muay Thai these trajectories can be defined in the following ways:

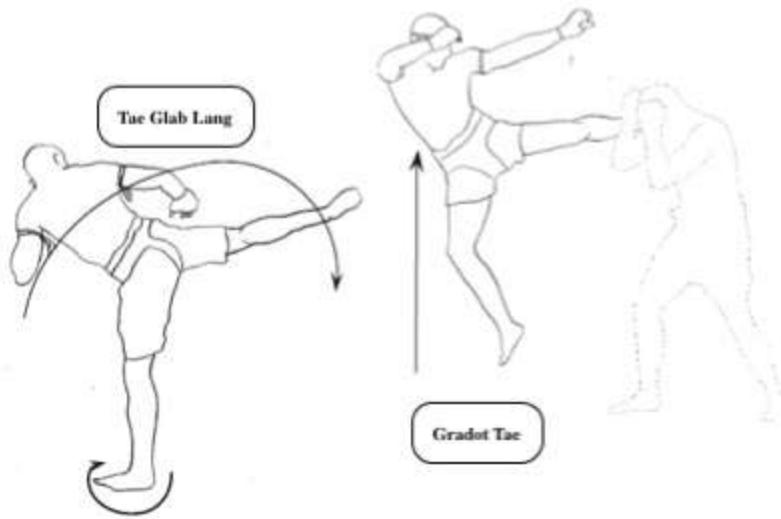
Instead, roundhouse kicks are listed based on the angle formed by the leg and the ground; by doing so, we will have vertical, diagonal, horizontal and whipping (up and down) kicks (**Tae Trong**, **Tae Chieng**, **Tae Dtad**, **Tae Dtwad**). Furthermore, these strikes can be performed while jumping (**Gradot Tae**) or spinning (**Tae Glab Lang**).

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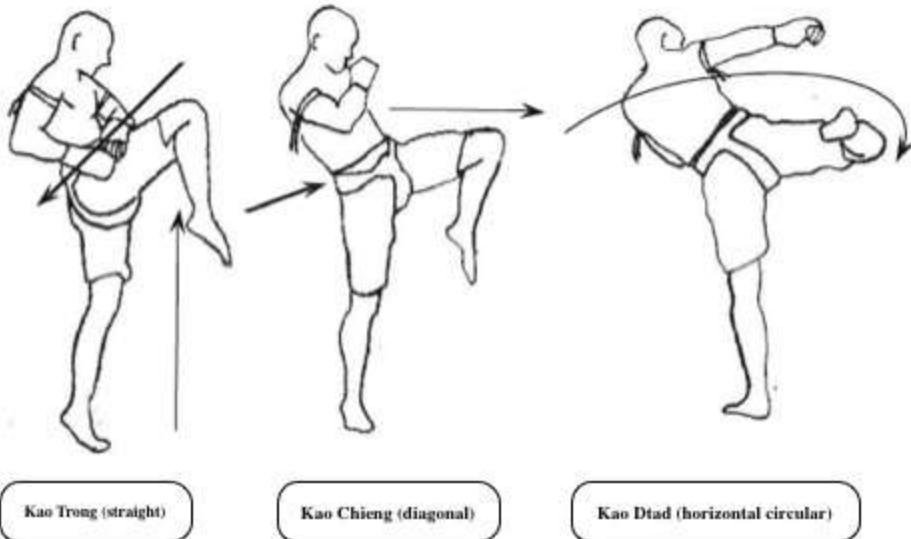


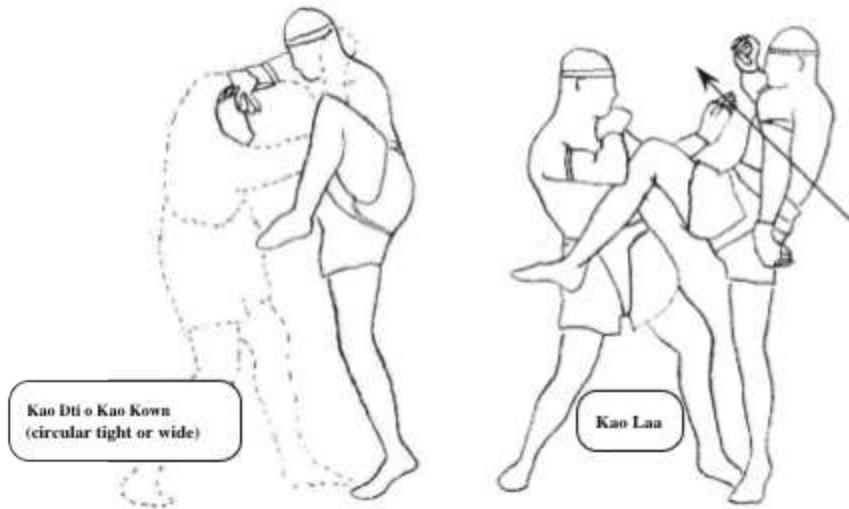


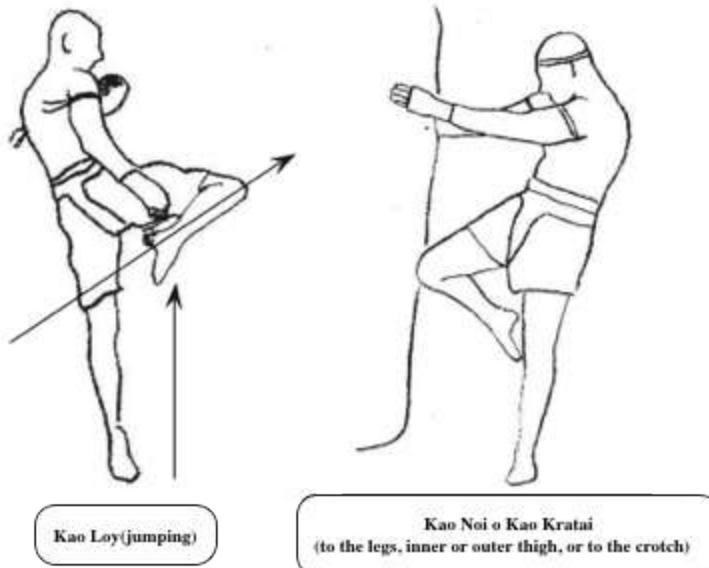
Knees (**Kao**) are without any doubt the natural weapons most thoroughly studied during the centuries by Thai Khru; in no other martial art have blows by the knee been more developed than in Muay Thai. As far as the best position for the leg in order to carry out knee strikes (Ti Kao in Thai), we can generally say that the knee should be kept close to the thigh in order to allow the harder frontal part to be pushed outwards, creating a compact surface capable of causing notable damage to any part of the opponent's body. As well as the frontal part of the knee (patella), the inner knee can be used in certain types of circular blows. The main trajectories (even if not unique) of use for knee blows are straight upwards, diagonally forwards, horizontally round, pushing straight forward, circular "slamming door" tight or wide, low

straight, and jumping. If these are combined with specific holds, these blows can easily reach all sensitive parts of the body, from the legs to the head.

Depending on the angles formed by the various paths we have:







Kao Loy(jumping)

Kao Noi o Kao Kratai
(to the legs, inner or outer thigh, or to the crotch)

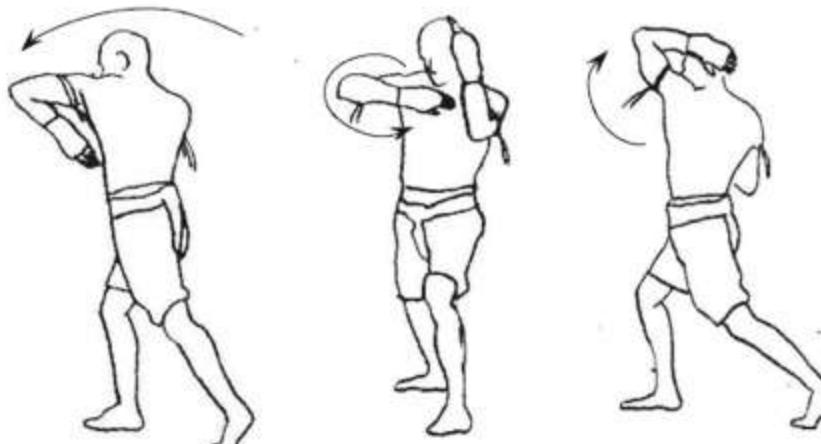
The elbow (**Sok** is the ana-tomical part and **Ti Sok** is the striking action) is considered one of the hardest parts of the body and, if suitably positioned and used with skill, can be the ace in the sleeve for any expert Thai Boxer.

The first thing to consider, for its most efficient use, is learning how to correctly transform the elbow into a weapon. The arm and forearm must be tightly linked so that the tip of the elbow “emerges” like an awl thereby causing maximum possible damage during the action of attack.

Trajectories of elbow strikes are many and diverse, the shoulder joint being able to rotate 360 degree with relative ease. According to Siamese traditions we can distinguish up to 9 basic trajectories for elbow strikes, which are in turn subdivided into 3 to 5 levels of height, all of which can be carried out from the right or the left side. You can execute elbow blows from above, from below, diagonally, horizontally, in rotation and whilst jumping. These terrible blows can reach virtually every part of the opponent’s body, from a variety of angles, causing serious damage to any target.

It's also important to consider that, apart from the more obvious movements of the shoulders, even the proper motions of the trunk and the legs contribute in an effective way to the efficient execution of elbow blows. The most used trajectories are the following, according to Thai dictate:

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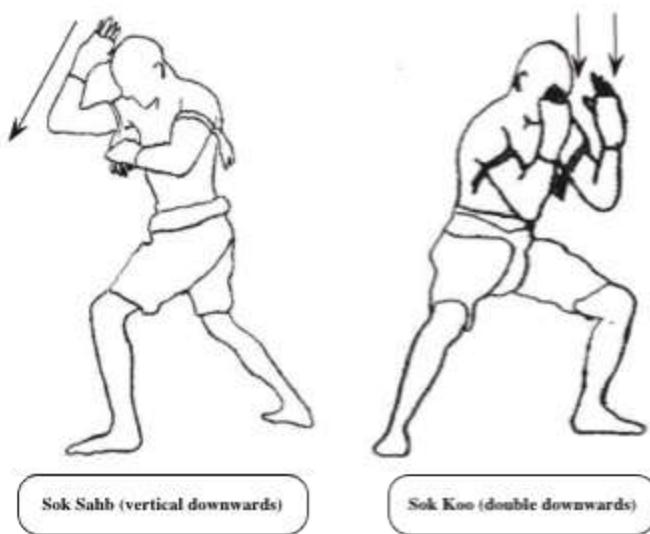
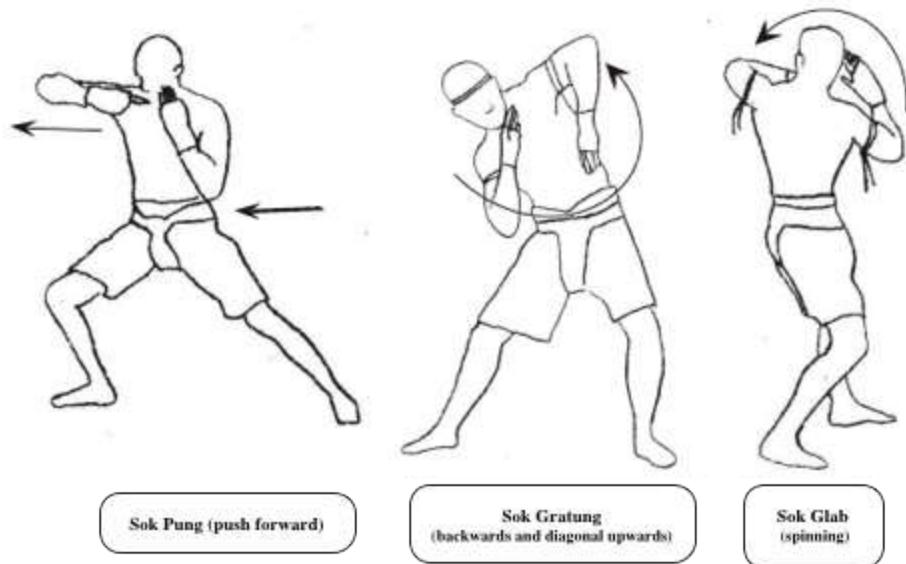


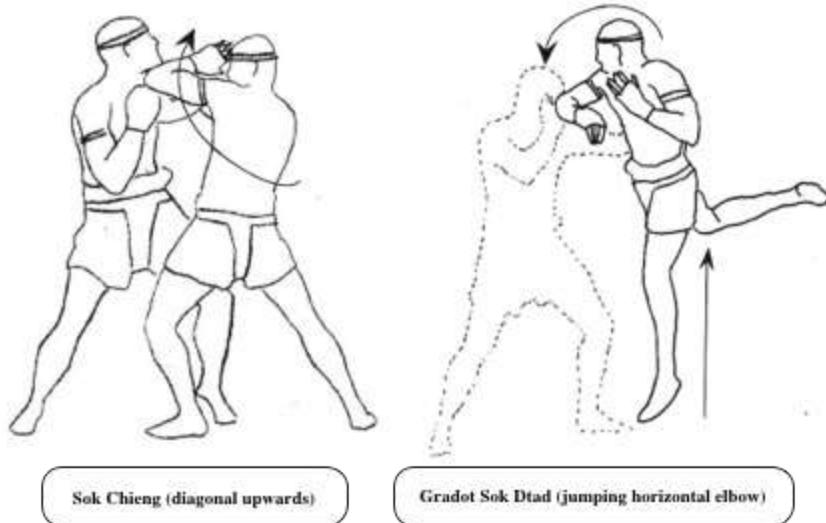
Sok Dtī (diagonal downwards)

Sok Dtad (horizontal)

Sok Gnad (vertical upwards)

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The ninth weapon is the head (**Hua**), often intended as a clear mind which functions as a command centre to best coordinate the use of the other eight basic weapons available to the Nak Muay or Thai Boxer. In reality even the anatomical part (the cranium) is of great importance in the arsenal of Muay Thai, above all during the hard phases of close combat, justly considered the most dangerous fighting situations in which one can find himself. The front and the back of the head can be used skilfully, often combining headbutting with holds and grabs, just like we do with elbow and knee strikes, to impact violently against the face or body of the enemy, frequently resulting in a quick stoppage of the opponent. Once the elementary functions of the 9 weapons have been learned, the second stage of training consists in combining offensive actions with body shifting. The kind of basic training used in Muay Boran, with this in mind is called Nawarthawuth Saam Khum and consists of Shadow Boxing performed executing combinations of blows with the same or combined body weapons whilst marching. This basic exercise, with respective distinctions, represents in embryo what a Nak Muay will learn once a good level of experience has been reached and that is usually defined as the practice of Martial Forms or Ram Muay.



The Cycle of the Natural Weapons

The order in which we have presented the various natural weapons is not casual. In fact, traditionally every Khru must be aware of the so-called “Cycle of Weapons” in which each element (Mahd, Thao, Kao and Sok) is likely to overwhelm the following one but is equally prone to defeat by that preceding it. In other words to prevail over an experienced kicker it is necessary to use the best punches, cutting the distance between you and the kicker, pursuing him with boxing combinations and overwhelming him with hand strikes. In

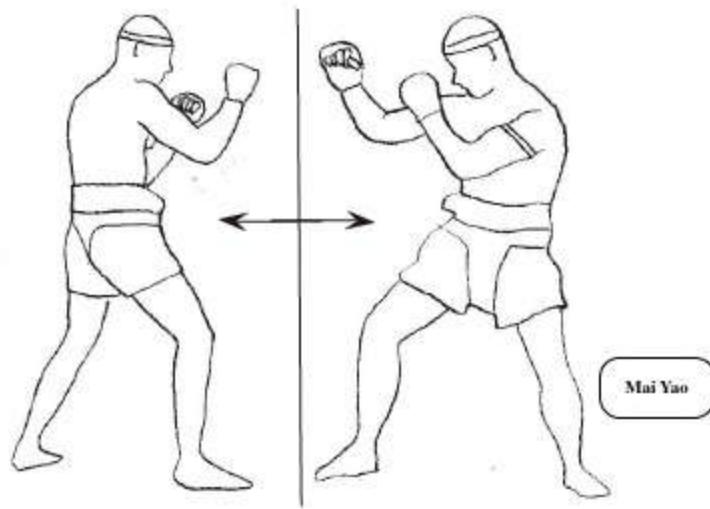
the same way an expert in boxing techniques should fear the so-called “spoiler”, a fighter specialised in the use of elbow blows and trapping techniques (entrapment with the arms). And so on for the grappler who loves to wrestle and use knee strikes. From a military perspective the Nak Muay, like a respected General should suitably prepare his troupes both at the front (the weapons that he is more likely to use in order to eliminate the opponent) and the rear, fine-tuning strategies to cope with an expert in the use of weapons that could defeat him.

THE THEORY OF THE 4 RANGES AND THE 5 LEVELS

According to some, it is a relatively simple task to learn to identify the location and potential of the various natural weapons of the body, even without help from a qualified Master. In Muay Boran, however, the guidance of a high level Khru is essential right from the beginning of the learning process. One of the first elements in which the Nak Muay must be correctly guided concerns the so-called theory of the 4 distances and the 5 levels. The various natural weapons must be used at optimal distances in order to function best. A Tiip Trong can not be perfectly applied if one is too close to the adversary, in the same way as an elbow strike cannot be performed from

too far away (without an efficient Gradot movement) and would result as ineffective or even dangerous to the executor, due to the loss of balance that would ensue.

Every weapon is ideally linked to one of the four fundamental ranges and learning to use the right blow from the right distance is the foundation stone of becoming an expert in the art of Muay.



In this respect fighting ranges were originally considered as being either long, **Mai Yao** or short, **Mai San**. In turn, short range can be subdivided into trapping range and a body to body contact range, the latter corresponding to grappling situations. Instead, long range is fundamentally that in which kicks could best be used. If we advance half a step towards the opponent we reach the range that is typical of western boxing, commonly called medium range. We should take note that fighting in this latter distance is transitory and

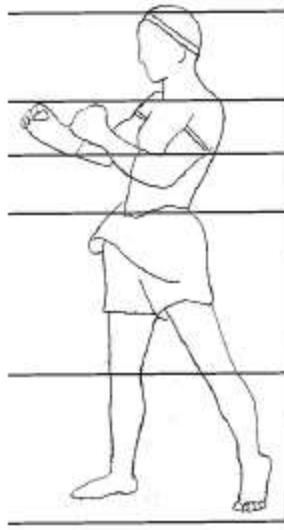
extremely difficult to maintain, to the point that traditionally this situation was not considered per se due to the difficulty of keeping it up in a real, no-holds barred fight. In Kard Chiek fights (above all during the so-called Pla Gut era, in which the fighting fish method was used, where fighters move and strike continuously) considering the lack of bounds for the conformation of the area of combat (the absence or ropes), Siamese boxers could hardly perform prolonged actions at intermediate ranges. In the majority of situations where blows were exchanged, fights quickly went from long range (where the tendency was to use kicks, the supreme weapon of Thai Boxers, together with wide circular punches or rapid flying techniques) to short range (where the blows are shorter like knee or elbow strikes and often a combination of the two weapons was used). At this point, either one of the athletes managed to get hold of the opponent, following by a joint dislocation or a throw, or both created space, going back to a longer distance by rapidly retreating.

The second factor to keep in mind is the so-called 5 level theory; actually the levels are generally limited to 3 but historically the Muay Khru were more sophisticated in their detailed technical definitions.

We will distinguish a high level or **Boon** (that goes from the shoulder to the top of the head) a medium one or **Glan** (which in turn is subdivided into 2 levels, from the shoulder to the solar plexus and from there to the waist) and a low level or **Laan** (subdivided into 2 areas, from the waist to the knee and from the knee to the foot).

The last step consists in combining the various weapons. The natural weapons used in offensive modality are called Mai Rook. In Mai Rook normally the attacks can be performed using one, two, three or at most 4 linked techniques. In the first instance we speak of Mai Rook Neun Chawa,

in the second Mai Rook Som Chawa, in the third Mai Rook Saam Chawa and in the case of 4 linked attacks Mai Rook Si Chawa. Usually in the combinations of 2 or more blows only the last attack is definitive and employs all the energy and body mass of the fighter. The first blows are light and may even be feints, performed in order to confuse the opponent and blind him to the real danger of the last lunge.

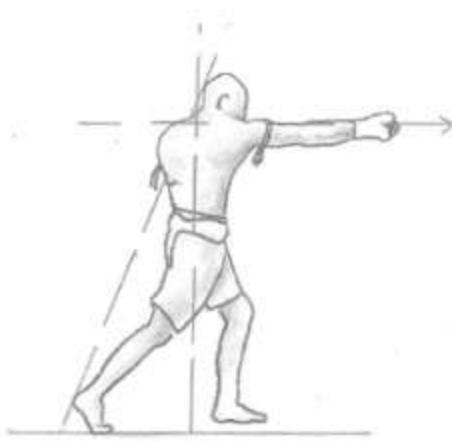


THE LAWS OF PHYSICS: THE SECRET TO EFFECTIVENESS



The devastating power of Muay Thai blows is legend by now. However, if this martial discipline is Art, it is at the same time also a sophisticated fighting science and as such is based upon principles of physics which can be studied at length and therefore reproduced to infinity, given the same conditions. The guiding principle behind all offensive and defensive movements of Muay Thai is the best use of the whole kinetic chain. If, for

example we need to perform a straight punch, it's of vital importance that the arm moves only after the heel of the supporting foot has started to rise, that the ankle has started to turn, that the knee is straightened pushing the body forwards, that the hips have transmitted their impulse (with a strong rotation around the body axis) to the trunk and that the shoulders are projected forwards. Only at this point can the elbow start to stretch and the wrist to turn. If these passages are respected in every action, that is, if the kinetic chain is used best, the effect of every offensive or defensive movement will be optimal, which is the fundamental secret of the effectiveness of the Muay Thai system of combat. Wishing to then break down each single phase of the various steps through which we must pass in order for the action to be correct, we find ourselves having to individuate and define some obvious elements, which often aren't properly understood.



With this in mind, we will analyse, in detail, the laws of physics on which the effectiveness of the actions of a trained Nak Muay are based. We will identify the most important physical qualities that come into play during the execution of a technical act, clarifying the dynamics of cause and effect

inherent in the action, which may help us understand, at greater depth, the reasons for the success of Muay.

Albeit within the limitations of a non-exhaustive treatise, we can say that the variables that come into play more frequently, from a technical point of view, are as follows: momentum, mass, speed, inertia, impulse, force, pressure, kinetic energy, torque, torsion and friction force.

Point 1: to a major extent the effect of a blow is determined by the **momentum** that one is able to impress to the target, remembering the formula $Q = mv$ where m equals the mass involved in the action and v is the speed at which the mass is moving. In physics **mass** is an intrinsic property of the object, the quantity of matter that it is made up of, whilst weight comes into play when the object is exposed to gravity.

Velocity (or speed) indicates the distance travelled over time. In the above formula the universal law that by virtue of the conservation of momentum, being equal the speed of the person carrying out the action, the momentum developed will be greater if a greater mass is used in the action, is clearly expressed. For this reason during the execution of all offensive techniques in Muay Thai there is a tendency to move quickly toward your opponent transferring into the blow as much body mass as possible that can be impacted onto the target, in doing so greater momentum will be impressed to the target and more force will be manifested through the attacking action.

Point 2: one of the distinguishing aspects of a body, with regards to dynamics, is the **inertia** of the body's mass. Inertia is defined as a property of matter by which it continues in its existing state of rest or motion, unless an external force changes that state. Therefore, a body with more mass is

harder to start moving than one with less mass and will have greater difficulty in changing direction. Even though, greater mass means greater momentum at equal speed and therefore more power being manifested. That is to say, the heavier the athlete the greater the effect of his blows, if he manages to effectively overcome inertia. On the other hand, a lighter athlete, even though handicapped by the minor amount of mass available in his strikes, can compensate with more agility and quick movements that are more varied both in terms of quantity and direction (for example, he could use a combination of blows to targets of varying heights).

Point 3: **impulse** is the product obtained by multiplying force by the time interval. The impulse equals the change in momentum produced by the collision of an object with another object. That represents the force impressed upon a body in an instant dynamic action. The formula for Force ($F = ma$), links Force to the acceleration (which is defined as the variation of speed in time) impressed upon a body, according to cause and effect connection, through the mass of the body under consideration. Which means that, being equal the amount of force applied to a body, that body will bear greater acceleration, the smaller its mass. In the case of an attack using striking techniques (be they an elbow strike, a kick, a punch or a knee blow) in order to obtain maximum effect, with respect to physical damage caused to the target, it is necessary that power transferred at the instant of impact (impulse) is maximum with the goal of absolute transfer of force. A blow that ‘stays on the surface’ of the target for too long changes a percussive action into a push, transforming in motion the force impressed on a body by a blow; the result being a minor physical damage to the recipient.

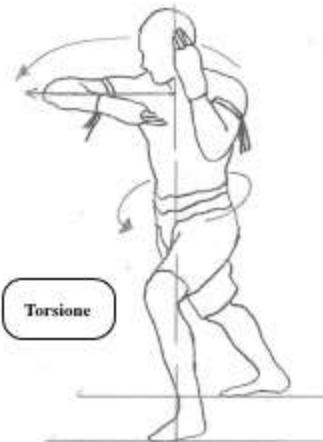
Point 4: **pressure** can be defined as the application of force exerted on or against an object by something in contact with it. The formula for pressure is $P = F/A$. In this equation, P stands for pressure while F stands for force and A stands for the area upon which the force is exerted. It can clearly be

seen from this equation that for the same amount of force applied, greater pressure is incurred if the surface area is smaller. This principle is at the base of the same concept of Nawarthawuth or the Nine Weapons of Muay Thai. Siamese Masters from the past have founded their system of combat on the identification of natural weapons that were already part of the human frame, but in order to become such, they had to be placed or developed in a certain way. The elbow in an extended arm is a vulnerable point, but, if the elbow is flexed a deadly bone point immediately becomes evident. The reduced surface area of the point of the elbow when driven by the whole mass of the body is able to exert enormous pressure on the target with traumatic effect well known to all Nak Muay. In a similar way, a punch thrown with a boxing glove, expands its impact over a larger surface area than the bare hand does, the different effects in terms of the damage inflicted being obvious.

Point 5: saying that one body moves faster than another means that it possesses greater **kinetic energy**. The latter is the energy that a body possesses by virtue of being in motion and is greater if velocity is greater (being constant the mass of the body). Kinetic energy depends on motion through space, and for a rigid body of constant mass is equal to the product of half the mass times the square of speed ($E = 1/2 mv^2$). Therefore a correctly performed striking technique, imparts great speed to a limb and as a consequence develops much kinetic energy (quickness influences in a predominant way, as we can understand from the formula in which v is raised to the second power). This means that the quicker we hit, even if our mass is inferior to our opponent's, the greater will be the energy that we produce. The influence that speed has on the development of energy through motion is obvious if we think about the efficiency of an arrow shot at great speed; it can still have lethal results even if it has a small mass (also for the reduced surface area of impact where all the pressure is concentrated).

Point 6: the vast majority of Muay Thai techniques are based on strong hip rotations; the energy that is taken from the ground is transferred by the movement of the legs to the hips from where it is then routed through the trunk and the limbs, through which it is manifested. Depending on the distance between the axis that goes through the body's center of gravity and the target, the torque varies: if the distance increases, so does the torque, instead, if the distance decreases so will the **torque (momentum)**. Torque is a physical quantity represented by the product between Force and the Lever Arm (the distance from the point of application of force and the axis of rotation); the effect of application of this force is the creation of a kind of energy called torsion. The energy of torsion can be expressed either directly (in torsion) or indirectly (in counter torsion) by reversing the motion. The speed at which the pelvis or shoulders rotate influence the effective kinetic energy (the power) of the blow.

Point 7: obviously rotation of the body is affected by the **force of friction** which is produced for example during rotation in the execution of a round kick, between the supporting foot and the surface on which it rests. Friction is generated when two surfaces touch each other; the lesser the friction the easier it is to move. Therefore friction is reduced if contact area is reduced, for example between the foot and the floor. This is the main reason for the typical heel raise that every good Thai Boxer puts in place when performing Tae roundhouse kicks, the real hallmark of Muay Thai. The heel raise as well as powerfully initiating the kinetic chain on which the kick is based, renders friction to a minimum between the foot and the floor, helping to a major extent the rotating movement of the body.





Chapter 2.3 - The fundamentals

MENTAL STRENGTH: THE WARRIOR SPIRIT OF MUAY THAI



We have seen how a Nak Muay is an athlete always prepared for combat, laying faith in his arsenal made of elbows, knees, shins and hands that have been forged to become real weapons that he knows how to use with mastery, using the technical and scientific principles of a Martial Art that has proved its worth in all conditions. In reality an integral part of his arsenal, and probably the most important one, which makes the Thai Boxer a real fighting machine is his warrior spirit. He never gives up, never retreats from an enemy, doesn't show any pain or exhaustion during combat and remains imperturbable in defeat as well as victory; this is how his martial attitude is expressed.

Learning to stand the pain

Like all the other physical attributes (resistance, power, speed, reflexes) even the strongest will power needs to be progressively trained in order to overcome any obstacles. An expert master starts with a workload that is not excessive and gradually increases training in terms of both intensity and length in order to build resistance to extreme fatigue and increasing levels of pain.

Moreover, while Muay Thai is by definition an individual activity, during training in a Kai Muay, the “team” element plays a fundamental role. Thai Masters express this concept with the saying “Khru Puk Luk Chum” which literally means learning through observation of others. According to many scholars of boxing techniques this part of learning shows itself to be just as important as supervision and advice given directly by the Master. Observing seniors who suffer without demonstrating obvious signs of fatigue, or who absorb body blows and remain impassive (even knowing that this is a mask they wear so as not to reveal to the enemy any clue about their physical or emotional state) is for young fighters a priceless school of life.

Continuous contact with expert fighters teaches new students how to totally focus their concentration during the various stages of training. Nothing should distract the attention of the Thai Boxer from his one objective, being trained to eliminate all the adversaries that he meets. Any negative thought that could in some way breach his armour, has to be kept far away.

Training technique

From a technical perspective, the first of the exercises used by Khru Muay to teach their students to bear suffering is road work: all Thai Boxers begin to forge a fighting spirit by wearing running shoes and jogging for kilometres at faster and slower speeds.

The next step is profound mental training in which the fighters undergo long sessions of impact training which represent a large part of the Nak Muay's daily practice routine. Hitting heavy bags to condition the bones and to increase the heaviness of blows, striking focus gloves to train the explosiveness and the precision of punches and elbow strikes. However most of a Thai Boxer's workouts are devoted to train with a coach who is holding the tool par excellence of Muay Thai, the Pao (or Thai pads). During the many rounds spent hitting the pads, the Thai Boxer is guided on the road to imperturbability; even under conditions of extreme-physical stress he must never show signs of surrender, he must smile in the face of pain and extreme fatigue rendering his opponent ever more uncertain about his actual physical and psychological state.

The third fundamental element used in the psychophysical preparation of the Nak Muay is represented by exercises carried out in pairs: free or pre arranged sparring (which in Thai is called Len Chern or "playing with the technique") but above all with Muay Pram, Thai Grappling. The latter is a

type of training where the capacity to take blows, of increasing violence, all over the body is literally forged. It is in this phase where it can be observed whether or not a recruit has got “what it takes”. Knee blows to the body, the legs, the arms, neck twists and chest squeezes, hard throws to the ground, bare-knuckle punches to the stomach and ribs, all those techniques are used to train a Nak Muay to absorb any kind of impact without showing any sign of pain and resisting attacks from partners or varying heights and weights for hours.

THE POWERFUL WEAPON OF MEDITATION

Even though there are many tools available to a practitioner of Muay Thai, a strong will power that has been forged under the supervision of an expert Muay Master often reveals itself as being the supreme weapon capable of defeating any adversary.



As well as working out with other Nak Muay and the counsel of a good Khru Muay, to cultivate mental power and superior inner “energy” that will allow the adept to elevate himself above the average fighter, a very powerful system is represented by the ancestral techniques of meditation. The author’s guide during this arduous path to understanding the methodology of spiritual strengthening, just as important as the physical one, was his mentor the Grand Master Chinawooth Sirisompan.

In times when the es-sence of preparation for a Thai Boxer was seen as a set of exercises that by training the body, as a fringe benefit also trained the mind and the spirit, Master Sirisompan, heedless of the doubtful comments from many of his colleagues, nurtured and taught with conviction traditional Thai meditation techniques. According to what grand Master Chinawooth has always affirmed the techniques used by ancient Siamese warriors in order to prepare themselves for battle (and later for bare knuckle fighting), apart from the provision of magical tattoos, blessed amulets, reciting of prayers (mantras), the use of herbs, would always include the use of meditation techniques. They were used either by staying still in a specific position for a specific time, or by moving within a determined area (which still happens

today with Ram Muay, considered by many to be a meditation in movement). The author was able to personally verify the efficiency of such exercises, over time, which allows one to achieve a state of relaxation, self confidence and often to clearly feel a superior level of being. We will now try to illustrate the principles of meditation as we have been taught by Master Sirisompan.

Origins and structure

Through meditation the practitioner tries to go beyond the thinking mind to reach a deeper state of relaxation and consciousness. Meditation is a fundamental element of many religions and has been practised since ancient times in the religions of Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and in Taoism. Even outside religious contexts, various disciplines use meditation with the goal of achieving higher states of mind and enlightenment. Meditation is also used to gain better levels of concentration, for creating a greater awareness of self or simply with the aim of cultivating spiritual peace and mental and physical relaxation. In martial arts, meditation is a proven system that develops an awareness of the “here and now”, this latter being the one most important frame of mind for those who are in battle or combat. In meditative concentration usually the subject fixes his attention on a particular object while minimizing distractions; in case of loss of concentration, thought must be directed back to the object. In some systems

the person meditating sits in a comfortable position, silently concentrating his attention on his breathing or repeating a mantra. Meditation was also done while moving, for example walking or performing simple repetitive actions. The practise of Muay Boran Forms is often associated with an elaborate system of meditation in movement, taken as given the perfect knowledge of the sequence of techniques by the performer; in such instances, the movements are a direct emanation of the body expressing itself, movement and breath are integrated into a rhythmic motion which bypasses any conscious process.

Meditation Positions

Different spiritual traditions and different teachers use, and suggest, various positions of the body (Asana), which are ideal for meditating. The ones most generally used are cross-legged; of these the most famous is the “Lotus position” or Padmasana (Padma or lotus flower symbolizes, amongst other things, spiritual awakening).

The spine

The person who meditates should sit in an upright relaxed position with a

straight back. By practising with this posture one is able to maintain the position for prolonged periods of time with relative ease. The body should feel rooted and aligned, in harmony with gravity. One way of correctly aligning the spine is done by imagining that our head hangs from an imaginary thread and thus the vertebrae naturally fall into place from the head to the pelvis, following the three physiological curves, cervical, thoracic and lumbar. This position is recommended as a way of favouring the vital energy flow that the Thai call Lom Pran.

The hands – Mudra

The hand position plays an important role in the practice of meditation. The various hand gestures or mudras are mentioned in detail in every form of meditation. In Buddhism, many of the positions are associated to Buddha's gestures and are believed to further facilitate the flow of vital energy during exercise.

The eyes and the gaze

In most static meditation techniques the eyes are kept closed: in some specific exercises the eyes are kept open and focussed on a fixed point, which

can correspond to a physical object (such as the flame of a candle) or a mental one.

Prayers – Mantras

Usually meditation is done in silence, in a quiet secluded place: sometimes however, the repetition of verbal formulas, mantras, helps to reach deeper states of meditation. The repetition of these formulas or prayers can, effectively help to clear the mind, overburdened with the accumulation of everyday information, and helps reaching an appropriate mental state.

CHERN MUAY STRATEGIES

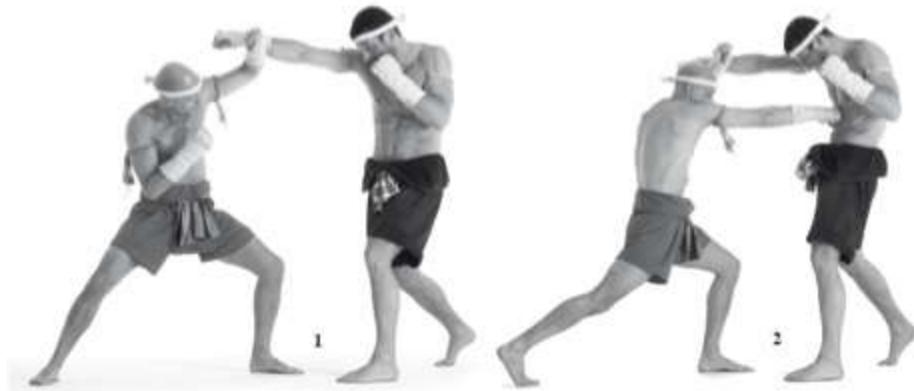


Traditionally Chern Muay or Mai Rook were representative of an optimal system for learning and rationally using the body's natural weapons to attack. According to the ancient Muay Boran methods of teaching, once the basic movements are understood and learned, the Nak Muay should be taught how to apply the basic movements relative to the 8 principal weapons in more advanced techniques. In addition to the individual and the multiple techniques that combine the use of the same weapon or various weapons in series of strikes, there are specific modes of attack in which the same action is simultaneously carried out with more than one weapon. Examples of the latter can be found in those Chern Muay which use double punches, double elbow strikes or a combination of punch and elbow strike, or kick and punch. The idea being that one of the two blows will be impossible to block (defending against an elbow strike inexorably leaves an opening for knee blows) but nevertheless this bonus has its price; infact, both actions will lose some of their power, which would be devastating if they are performed separately and with total body mass behind them.

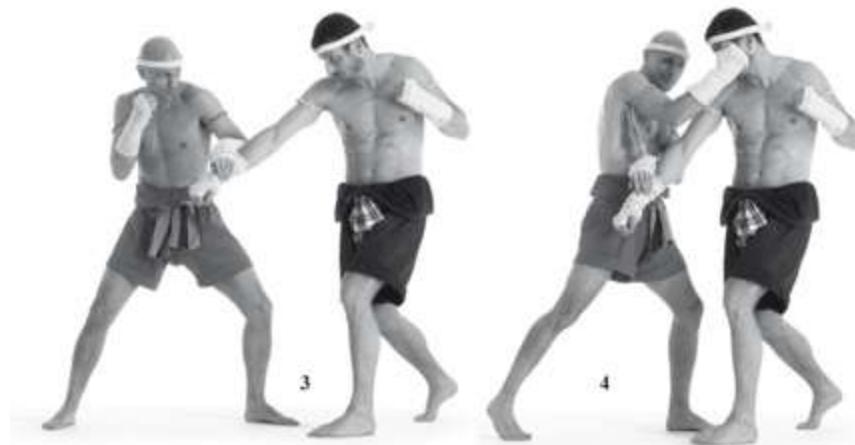
Let's look at some examples of Chern Muay techniques.

Chern Mahd

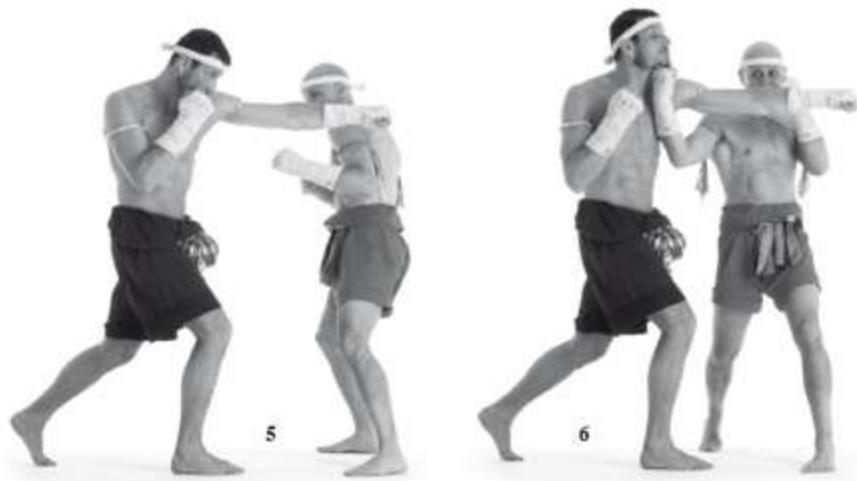
Prapai Lom Singkorn (fig. 1, 2)



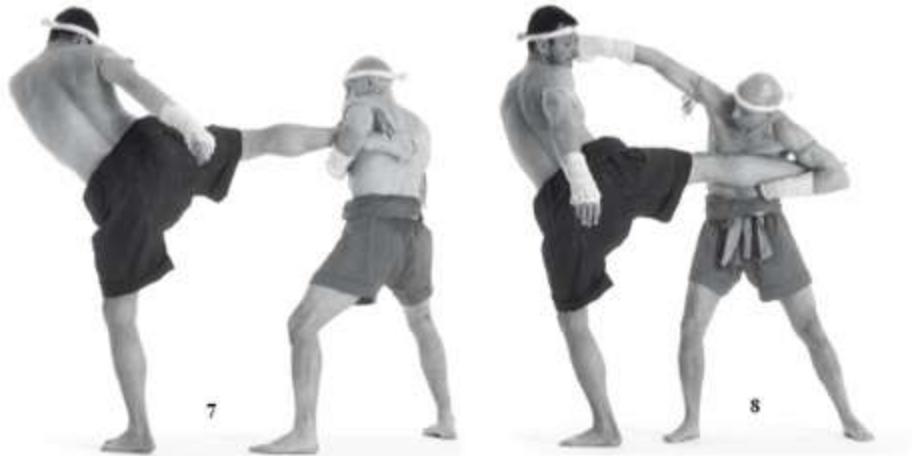
Wanorn Hak Dan (fig. 3, 4)



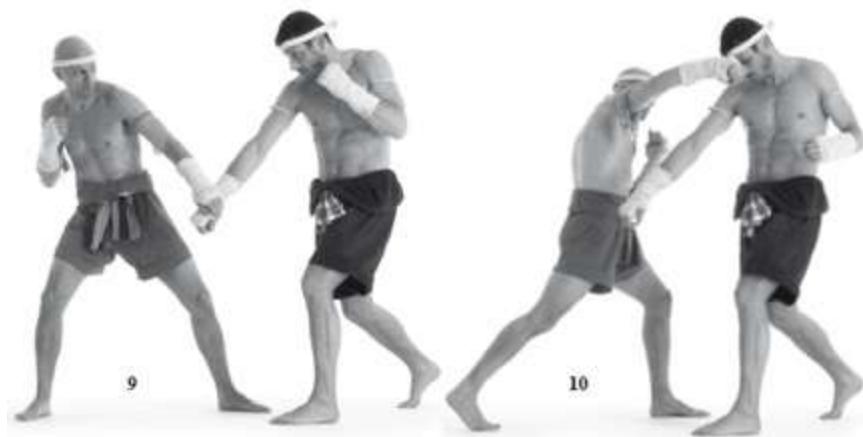
Prakarn Perd Lok (fig. 5, 6)



Kohk Nasa (fig. 7, 8)



Intra Kwang Jak (fig. 9, 10)



Kwang Jak Narai (fig. 11, 12)

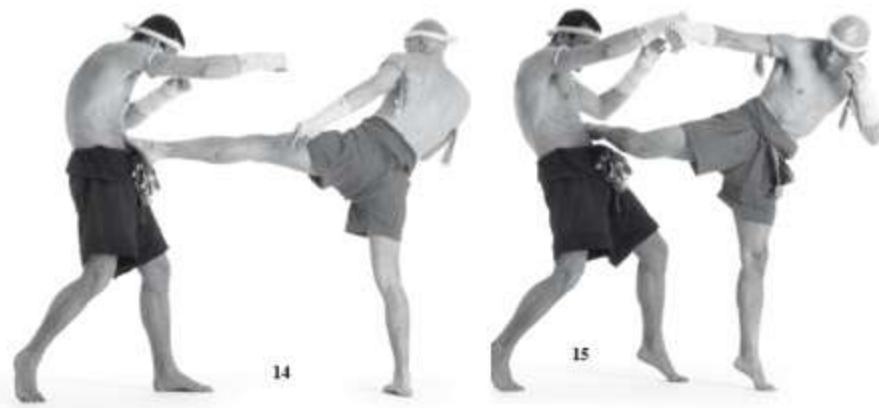


Chern Thao

Kratu Khuata (fig. 13)



Narong Payuhabath (fig. 14, 15)



Kwad Toranee (fig. 16)



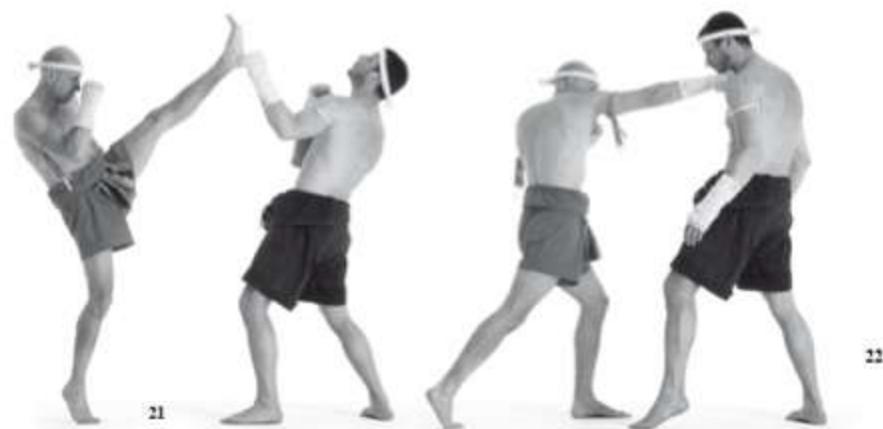
Manop Lenkha (fig. 17)



Jarake Fad Hang (fig. 18, 19, 20)

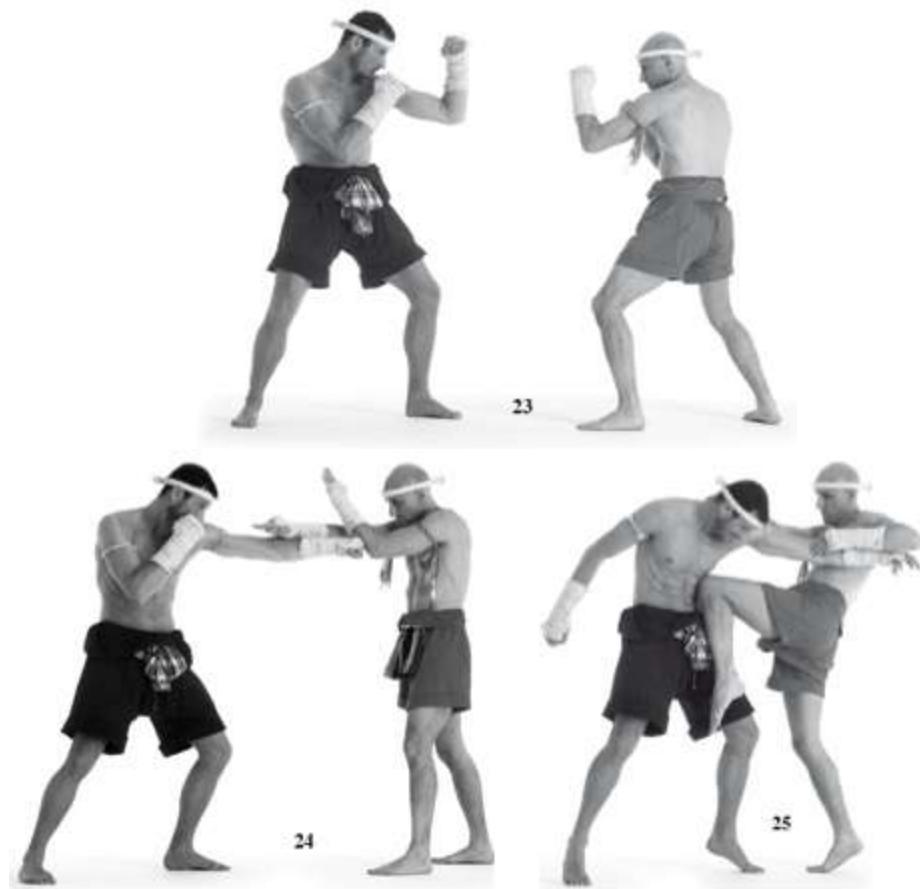


Tae Purd Tawan (fig. 21, 22)



Chern Kao

Kumpan Pung Hok (fig. 23, 24, 25)



Yok Nang (fig. 26)



Kao Kan Prang Sattru (fig. 27)



Ngu Lai Tokke (fig. 28, 29)

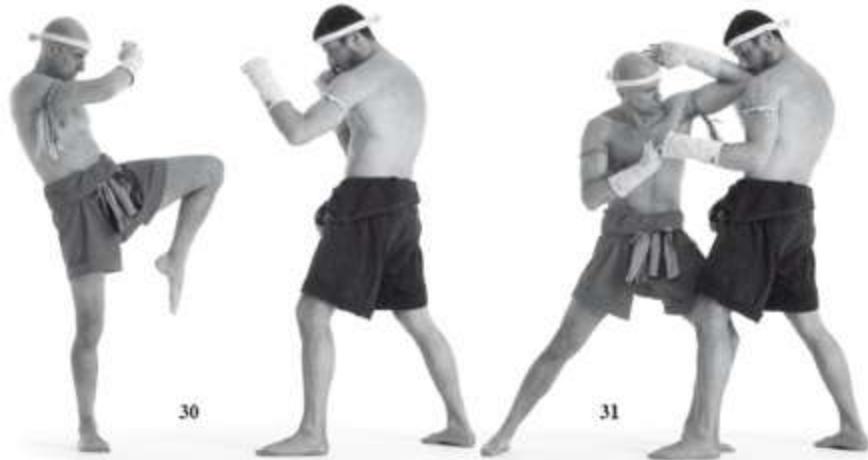




Chapter 2.4 - The fundamentals

Chern Sok

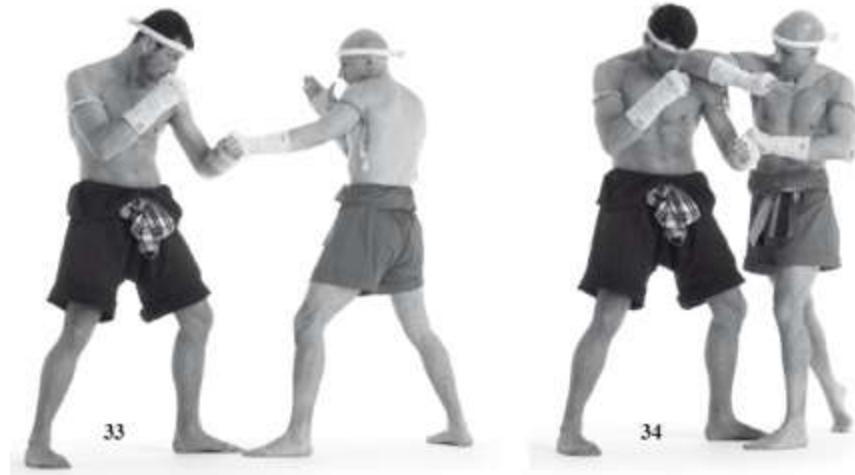
Pung Hok Sok Nam (fig. 30, 31)



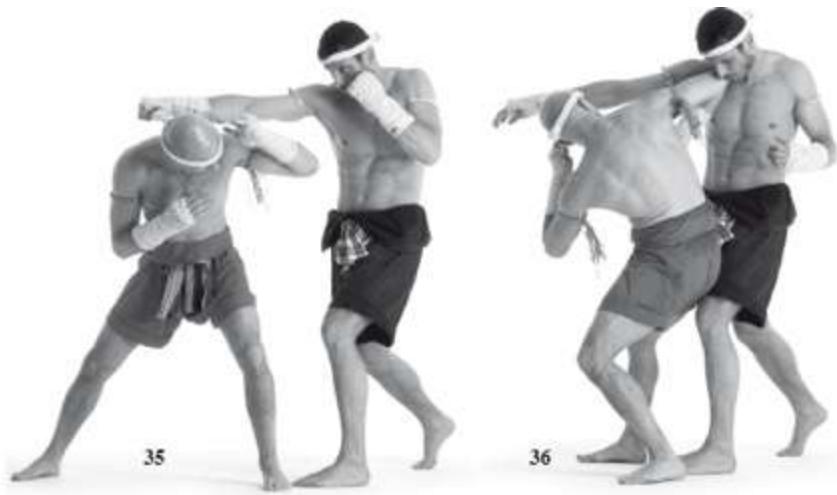
Kwang Thang Pa (fig. 32)



Pra Yaike (fig. 33, 34)



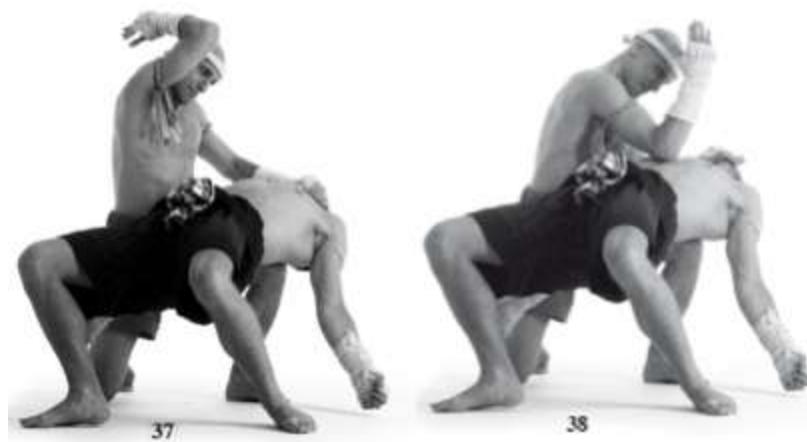
Kleun Kratong Fang (fig. 35, 36)



35

36

Kon Ti Thang (fig. 37, 38)



37

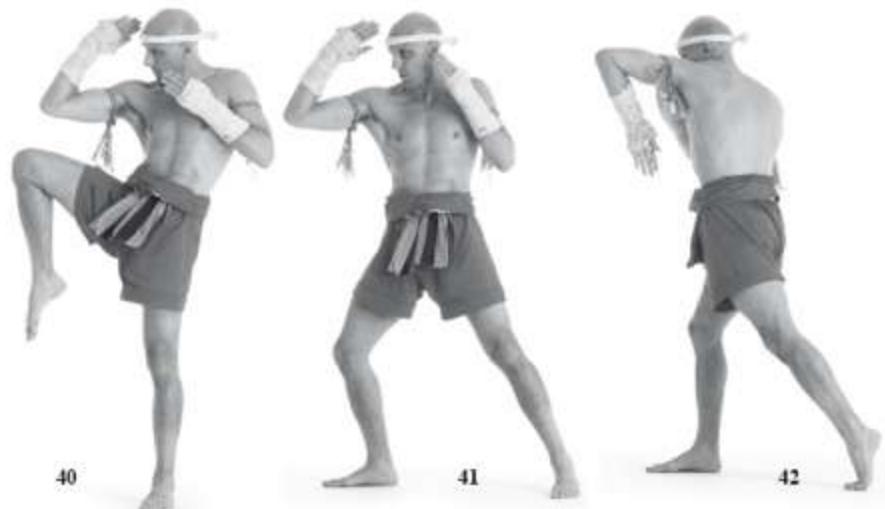
38

Ngae Look Kang (fig. 39)



Phansom Muay (Sol/Kao, Kao/Mahd, Mahd/Thao)

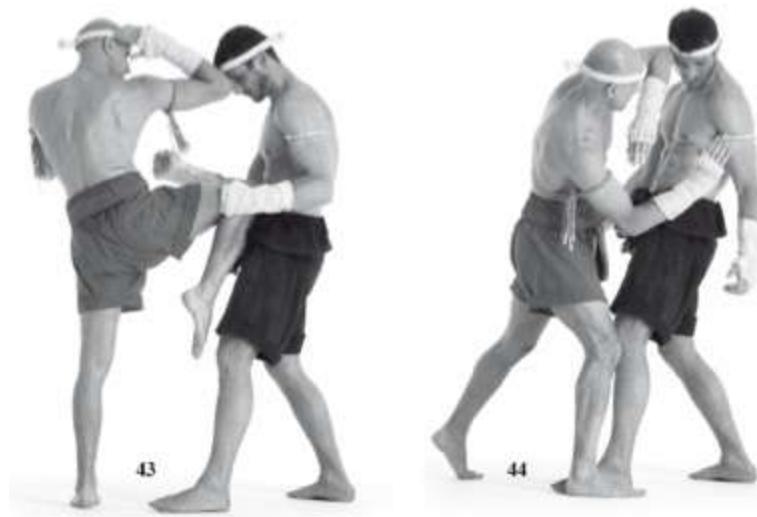
Naka Kab Hang (fig. 40, 41, 42, 43, 44)



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42



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44

Yud Yotha basic form (fig. 45, 46, 47)



45

46



Jumping form (fig. 48)



Luang Dan Hera (fig. 49, 50)



Dan Pupa (fig. 51, 52)



Pajon Chagsan (fig. 53, 54, 55)



53

54



55

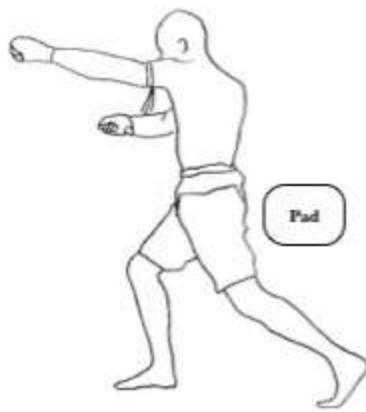
THE ART OF DEFENCE: THEORY AND PRACTICE

From a strategic point of view defensive techniques, as a whole, can be defined as Kon Muay or Mai Rab. The learning of Kon Muay techniques is the base to defend against properly executed attacks that employ the Natural Weapons of the body. The Art of Defence in Muay Thai, although rich in many facets, often difficult to classify, is actually founded on a few universal principles that are smartly combined to offer the practitioner an arsenal of strategies capable of tackling almost any offensive action performed by an opponent. These principles can be summarized into the following formulas: Pong – Pad – Pid – Poed – Tha – Yan, Loh Lo – Lop Lik.

Pong: raising the guard, blocking with an open palm.



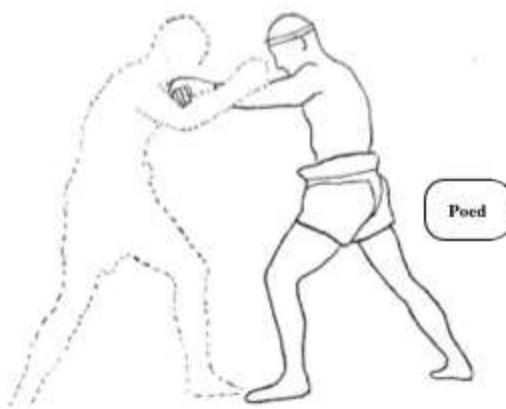
Pad: : deflecting inwards, outwards, downwards or upwards



Pid: “closing the gates” blocking with the hard parts of the body. We block with the forehead (hua), with the shoulder (lai), with the forearm (kaen) single or double, with the elbow (sok) single or double, with the shin (kaeng), with the knee (kao).



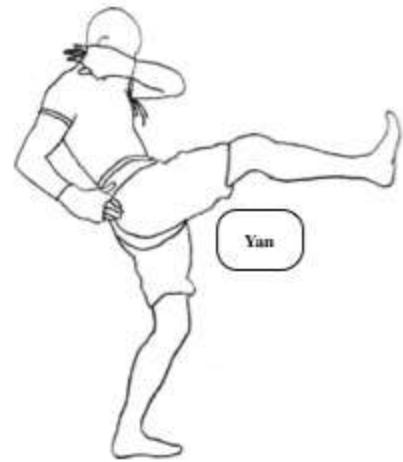
Poed: : opening the opponent's guard from the inside or from the outside, with one or two arms, with one or two hands.



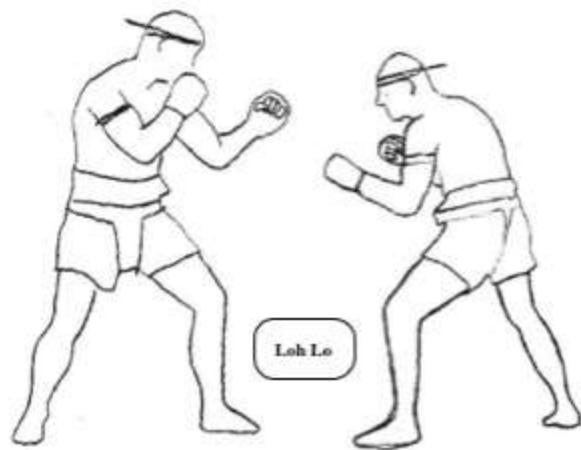
Tha: intercepting the weapon (arm or leg) of an opponent (by the heel, for example) before his attack reaches us.



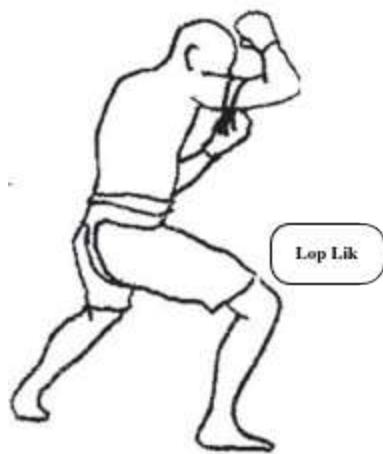
Yan: blocking an adversary by pushing against his body axis with hands, forearms, hips, shins or soles impeding his advance or his blows.



Loh Lo: feinting an attack and then striking or drawing, luring the opponent to strike thus exposing vital areas, to then parry his blows and easily counterattack.



Lop Lik: defending ourselves by evading strikes by twisting, flexing and rotating the trunk (bending the knees), stepping forwards, backwards, to the side and diagonally, employing half steps (moving only one point of support) both straight and crossed.





Chapter 2.5 - The fundamentals

MUAY PRAM BORAN, TRADITIONAL THAI GRAPPLING

Finally, halfway between Mai Rook and Mai Rab there is a branch of techniques which train a Nak Muay to fight at short range, not only using blows with the various natural weapons, but also by grasping the opponent to then violently throw him on the floor or twist his joints to cause dislocations or fractures.

This section of Muay Boran fighting is called Muay Pram and it based on traditional techniques, which as a whole are called Tum Tap Chap Hak. This type of technique has gradually been abandoned due to prohibitions being imposed during sporting events. The obvious danger of actions of this type

(not easy to perform against an expert opponent) did not comply well in a moment of mass development and international exportation of Thai Boxing. As a consequence, trainers and boxers, finding no interest in carrying out these actions during training, progressively abandoned them and they have slowly been forgotten (fig. VI – Siamese wrestlers, 15th century).



Tum Tap Tap (throwing and pressing to the ground) is a fighting strategy aimed at a quick win, above all in fights to the death of a military kind. Throwing the enemy to the ground with the intention of causing serious damage by the very act of throwing (causing the opponent to fall and land badly) whether or not causes serious immediate damage, still places the adversary at a remarkable disadvantage ready to be finished by a bladed weapon or with a heel, knee or elbow strike aimed at a vital point.



The **Chap Hak** strategy (grab and break) could also represent the final solution to finish an enemy, by breaking his elbow, shoulder, knee, ankle, or, at worst, his spine (usually cervical vertebrae through a violent upwards twist of the chin).



These techniques have been the basis for teaching soldiers to disarm the enemy and, in bare handed fights the Nak Muay were taught to perform “Break the swan’s wing” strategy, that means depriving the opponent of any chance to express his own abilities, thereby annihilating his fighting capacity.

The final stage of learning traditional close combat or Muay Pram Boran is hidden in the following formula, the profound significance of which is, since time immemorial, reserved only for the most adept students of each Khru. The secret formula for “high-level combat”, is the following:

Prakob – Prakab – Chap Rang – Khao Kang Lang – Hak Gaan Kor.

The meaning of the terms is subject to diverse interpretations but, according to the more traditional schools, the meaning is the following.

Prakob: marking (following and controlling the target at a close distance)

Prakab: joining (hooking and locking the target)

Chap Rang: grabbing and pulling (for example the arm or leg of the aggressor)

Khao Kang Lang: going behind the adversary (with angular and circular movements and changes of level)

Hak Gaan Kor: breaking the neck (with reference to techniques linked to the previous point or carried out from frontal or lateral positions).

Mae Mai Muay Thai techniques

The final stage of basic technique learning is the study of the interactions between the above mentioned offensive and defensive elements. By

combining Kon Muay and Chern Muay we shall finally have to hand the principles of real combat, the techniques of defence and counterattack, which allow us to build the real “phrasing” of combat starting from its base components. The result is represented by Kon Kee (or Mai Kee) techniques, which by their own nature are practically impossible to number considering the many combinations of the 9 elements at 4 distances and 5 levels, both in attack and in defense. However, amongst the many possibilities Siamese masters of the past have statistically verified that certain techniques lead to victory much more frequently than others. All the Muay Thai techniques have been developed from a scientific basis and must satisfy criteria of supreme efficiency in combat; it is also true that any good fighter is able to counter by taking the appropriate actions many of the possible attacks executed against him. Only certain movements, if performed at the right time, result as being absolutely “unstoppable”; separating the techniques that can potentially be neutralized from those which are absolutely unstoppable, created a conceptual base for the codification of “fundamental Muay techniques” or Mae Mai and Look Mai Muay Thai. Analysing these actions and grouping them, over the centuries, according to common combat principles, has enabled the formulation of a list of forms. These forms, if learned to perfection, guarantee a high probability of success in combat. The ancestral principles have been defined as Mae Mai or Mai Khru, and Look Mai or Mai Kred. The first can be referred to as basic techniques of Muay Thai (Mae Mai Muay Thai) whilst the second (Look Mai Muay Thai) are complementary or advanced techniques.

Mai Khru always have to be learned as a base from which one then enters into the study of Mai Kred. After a few years of training in the key actions of this discipline it will then become instinctive for the Thai Boxer to seek out new solutions to the strategic problems one has to face in fights. Most of them however, will almost certainly be resolvable by using Mae Mai techniques. An expert teacher will realise the best moment for a student to start Look Mai; the latter, if taught correctly, will provide an excellent way to widen a boxer's technical horizon.

The study of Mae Mai and Look Mai forms represent for a truly dedicated Nak Mauy, the apex of his learning process. These techniques have been forgotten in their own country for decades and have only recently come back into use during spectacular demonstrations of Siamese Fighting. In reality, Traditional Muay Thai Techniques are a technical/cultural treasure to be preserved at all costs. The Mai Khru for example, far from being merely offensive and defensive movements relatively simple in appearance, are the “distillation” of a complete system of Thai fighting which is enormously rich and sophisticated.



Each single technique has been developed over the centuries by warriors and teachers and is based upon concrete combat principles, tested “on the field” in times of war and peace and during the course of countless sport events (in a real scientific process concluded with an accurate assessment of

cause and effect).

To further clarify, we can say that every Mai Mae Technique in itself represents a complete vision of combat and a complete fighting strategy. The real value, the beauty inherent in such actions is that every Mae Mai is a “universal” movement that, if properly interpreted, can be developed through its many existing variations, resulting in several martial applications all of which are equally effective. The Masters of the past that have codified these sequences of techniques possessed such a mastery of close combat techniques, obtained through personal experience, that they managed to condense into 15, easy to copy actions a huge quantity of combat principles. In the different fighting styles developed over centuries in Thailand, practically all the Khru Muay recognize the 15 Mae Mai principles as fundamental.

The same may not be true for the complimentary techniques, Look Mai Muay Thai.

The research, which can be found in the second half of this text, is largely based on accurate studies carried out by Prof. Phaosawath Saengsawan during the last twenty years. The 15 Look Mai techniques which we shall examine in this volume are mostly, known as the perfect complement to the 15 basic techniques. However, this does not exclude the insertion of more Mai Kred deemed by some Masters to be techniques worthy enough to be included in this group. In Muay Korat, for example, it is reported the existence of 11 Look Mai, 21 Mae Mai, 5 fundamental techniques which, together with the 5 basic positions and 5 fundamental movements are combined in the so-called 47 Technical Portals.

According to some, in Muay Uttardit were listed 535 fundamental techniques, comprehensive of Chern Muay, Kon Muay, Mae Mai and Look Mai. Instead, Muay Lopburi is based on 5 Mae Mai and 5 Look Mai as pillars on which the technical ability of a Nak Muay of that style is founded. If Mae Mai are the starting blocks for all students of Muay Boran, Look Mai are the true “secret techniques” that every Bramajarn (Grand Master) of the past jealously guarded, revealing them only to his most adept and trustworthy students. If Mae Mai are for everyone, then Look Mai are for the elect; if Mae Mai, by definition, can be followed by all, Look Mai are beyond the reach of the average practitioner. Obtaining mastery of Look Mai is possible only to champions. If the principles brought to us by Mae Mai are both efficient and easy to understand, the language of Look Mai is cryptic and few can discover the real meaning of each action without the help of an expert Master.

The study of Look Mai can only be initiated after having mastered the basic concepts included in Mae Mai, Chern Muay and Kon Muay Techniques. This is the commandment of the Masters passed down through the ages and which we still respect today. Only when we have mastered the secrets and the fundamental methods of attack and defence, will it be possible to engage upon the long hard path towards learning advanced principles shown by Mai Kred, by their very nature both complex and hard to learn.

The 15 Mae Mai

The 15 Mae Mai Muay Thai strategies that follow are shown in their basic version, having been explained in depth in other works by this author.

1. Salab Fan Pla: the basis for the strategy of evasion “Lop Lik”, evading the attack using a zig zag movement.



2. **Paksa Waeg Rang:** : fundamental technique that penetrates the opponent's guard.



3. Chawa Sad Hok: defense on the outer circle, with circular body shifting or half step.



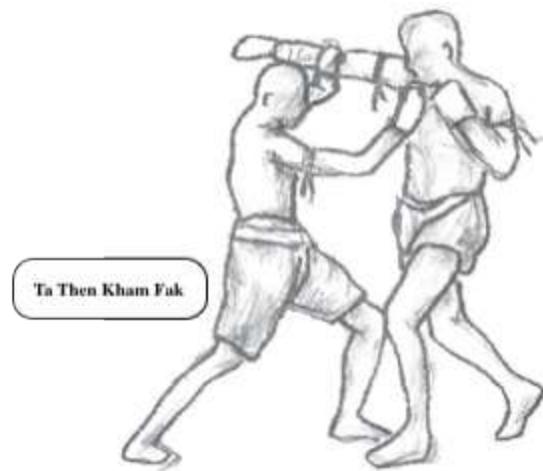
4. Inao Tang Grit: defense on the inner circle, with circular body shifting or half step.



5. Yo Kao Pra Sumeru: change of level or half diagonal step and uprooting of the opponent.



6. Ta Then Kham Fak: upwards deflection “pad Kun” against direct attack.



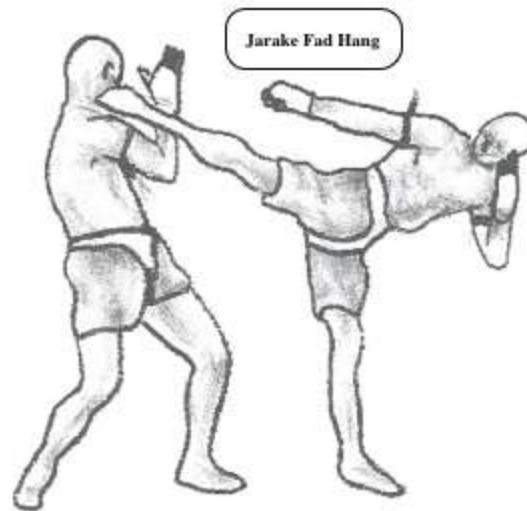
7. Morn Yan Lak: universal defensive principle “yan” executed with one’s feet to the opponent’s centre of gravity, against any attack from a distance.



8. **Pak Look Toy:** : defensive principle “pid” carried out with the elbows.



9. Jarake Fad Hang: feint at high or low level and spinning back round kick.



10. Hak Nguang Aiyara: defence with leg grab and counterattack with limb attrition.



11. Naka Bid Hang: hold, ankle dislocation (“chap hak”) and final blow.



12. Viroonhok Glab: defensive principle “tha”, striking the attack (here straight kick against a low round kick).



13. Dub Chawala: “pad lon” defense and counter to vital spot (punch in the eye).



14. Kun Yak Jub Ling: a compendium of various defence principles Pong, Pad, Pid, Poed, Loh Lo, Lop Lik.



15. **Hak Kor Erawan:** introduction to “Chap Ko”, neck hold (with knee blows to the head or dislocation of the cervical vertebrae) for which Muay Thai is famous.



PART TWO



Chapter 3 - Look Mai techniques

FROM MYTH TO THE REALITY OF COMBAT



Traditional Muay techniques offer a privileged point of view from which to study ancient Siamese culture. In order to make the first step into this fantastic world we need to deeply understand that in ancient times myth existed and was present in all human activities. A myth is a sacred story that explains the origins of the world or the ways in which the world itself and living things evolved. The main characters are usually gods and heroes and often the story takes place in a time preceding the invention of writing. By saying that myth is sacred story, we mean that myth was believed by faith and people assigned to it religious or spiritual value. At the same time myth is a crucial step in satisfying the need to provide an explanation for natural phenomena or questions about existence itself and cosmic matters. In ancient times rituals associated with public country festivals were portrayed in works of painting or sculpture, or vases, seals, cups, shields, tapestries, acquiring the status of myths over time. Since traditions would have to ensure the fertility of the land or the prosperity of kingdoms, myths became fundamental religious institutions. Their content was shared and considered important by all: the characters could be gods, heroes, ancestors, animals or monsters. Myths belong to the oral traditions of a people and in ancient times were often told to groups of people who were not literate and only later were collected and written down. This repeats itself even today when a child asks questions whose answers are beyond his capacity to comprehend. Nowadays, like then, we use stories to explain extremely important questions that

are difficult to rationally understand. The scope of these stories is to help the listener to get to the story's profound meaning on an unconscious level. Any story, from those of Phaedrus to the Grimm Brothers, encloses various concepts. By listening a story over and over again and becoming emotionally involved, a child understands the superficial meaning of the story on the first place and as time goes on he understands the hidden meanings. Myths like parables and fables have the task of taking the listener to the world of principles through words and emotional involvement. Rationality will then clarify the presumed contradictions by placing events in the right light. Many myths are similar even when coming from people living in different times and places; there is no culture, ancient or modern, archaic or civilized that does not have its myths. In America they tell stories similar to those narrated in Asia, Africa or Europe.

Changing the name of the characters, changing the place, changing some details the plot and the meaning remain the same. Ancient myths become a model, an example to follow and to imitate. Myths inextricably linked to Siamese cultural traditions have so inspired thai people, to the point of linking the exploits of the gods, heroes and fantastic creatures to the most devastating techniques of Muay Boran that the Masters of past held secret and guarded as they were passed on but never made "public". The capacity to meticulously analyse the classical myths as well as the ability to observe the reality around them was characteristic of the unknown creators of the art of Siamese fighting. An exceptional ability to synthesize meant that in a single sentence, drawing on mythological sagas or episodes of daily life, these past greats were able to condense a series of fighting principles of absolute validity. Correlating the epic of Rama, the seventh incarnation (or Avatar) of Vishnu, with a variety of fighting techniques is not easy, but selecting particular episodes of his story and using a moment of such a complex event to crystallize it and to connect it with a given attack or defence technique, created a direct link between the name of the move and the mind of the student who was being taught. Such a mental short circuit created an immediate image of what the Master wanted to communicate, bypassing the need for rationalization of the various movements needed for the best

performance.

It's very interesting to observe how the accurate analysis of an ancient style of fighting like Muay Boran, as well as providing technical instruments of extreme usefulness during fights, also offers a glimpse of the traditional customs of Thai people (or its ethnic minorities) which gave life to the Martial Art we are so passionate about; it is precisely the study of these cultural traditions the true last frontier in learning about traditional arts which from many points of view now seem to have no more secrets for the modern practitioner.

Traditional Muay techniques draw on mainly from 3 sources to define their nomenclature:

- the myths of Ramakien, the Thai version of Indian epic poem Ramayana
- the daily actions of the ancient Thai people and various populations with which the Thai people came into direct contact (like the Mon or the Tai Yuan)
- the actions of animals that actually exist (Chang the elephant, Jarake the crocodile, Ling the monkey, Kwang the deer) and those mythical ones whose undertakings can be found in the classical poems and Hindu and Buddhist legends (Erawan, Hanuman, Naka and Hongsa)

FROM RAMAYANA TO RAMAKIEN

Ramakien (or *Ramayana* in the original Indian version by the sage Valmiki dating back 2000 years and considered by Hindus the first written text) is an epic poem which recounts the life and deeds of the seventh Avatar of Vishnu (or Phra Narai in Thai), Prince Rama (Phra Ram in the Thai version) whose name means “Enchanting”. He represents the solar aspect of Vishnu and stresses the need for man to realize the perfection of his nature in accordance with cosmic law. The very root of his name “Ram” is considered by Hindus to be a sacred verbal seed often used as a mantra (mental formula) during yoga exercises. The deeds of the Prince narrated in the poem show that he, warrior and an exemplary son, after having victoriously fought and defeated the demons (or Rakshasa) that prevented the performance of sacrifices and who marrying the princess Sita (or Nang Sida) who was also a divine Avatar (incarnation of the goddess Lakshmi), accepts the decision of his father, King of Ayodha (Ayutthaya Thai version), to go into exile with Sita and his brother Lakshaman (Phra Lak, Avatar of the God Ananta Nakarat).



During his absence from Ayutthaya he did not cease to act for the good, to the point where Ravana, the Lord of the Demons (or Totsakan in the Thai version, the incarnation of God Nontok) became jealous. Ravana kidnapped the princess Sita and hid her on the island of Longka (Sri Lanka). Thanks to the help of the powerful Hanumat (or Hanuman in Ramakien) (fig. I), Lord of the Monkeys and son of Pai the wind god, Rama found the hiding place of the princess and together with the army of monkeys built a bridge from India to Longka. Together they invaded Ravana's realm, freed Sita and finally killed the Lord of the Demons (who actually being a fallen god could at last return to heaven).

The real theme to study is why an ancient Hindu tradition should have been chosen by the Thai for their epic poem, becoming a source of inspiration for their art, culture and in their very daily lives? Actually, if we go back in time, it can be observed how the Thai, as an independent population, settled down in a geographical and cultural context that was permeated by the dominant culture of that time (12th and 13th centuries), that of the Mon and the Khmer Empire.

It is believed that the Mon were the first inhabitants of the continental zone of South East Asia, their most important cities were Pegu, Mergui, Tavoy and Tenasserim. They were also the first to absorb the teachings of Theravada (the Doctrine of the Elders), which came from Sri Lanka and their civilisation laid the socio-cultural foundation for the creation and evolution of the Khmer Empire, which dominated South East Asia for centuries. The vestiges of Angkor, the fabulous historic capital of the Khmer, are still an indelible symbol of the greatness of that ancient civilisation.

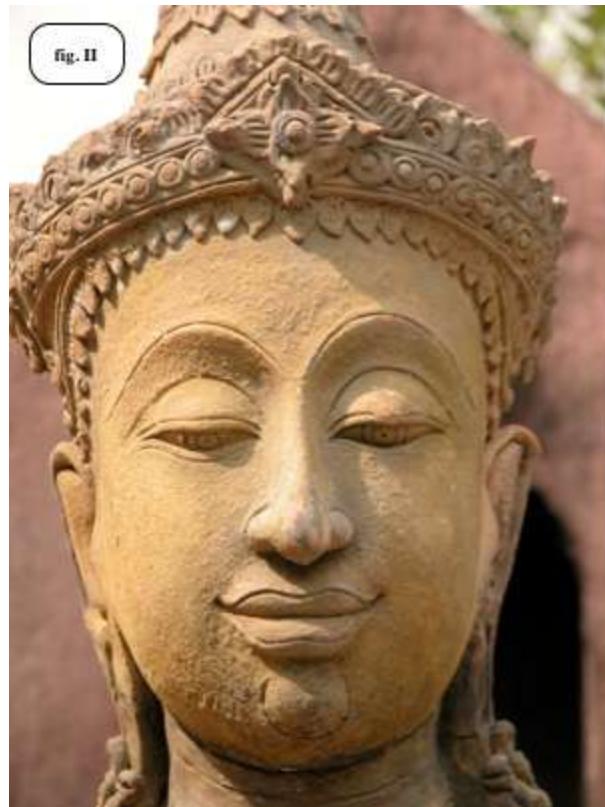


fig. II

These civilizations were profound and even fully evolved but nevertheless indebted to the even more ancient and splendid civilization of India; Indian architectural styles, religions and arts (music, painting, sculpture and arts of war – fig. II), even system of royal succession in use for centuries in India was completely absorbed by the peoples of South East Asia, by the Mon and the Khmer in the first place. Also, if it is true that the contacts between the Khmer Empire and the other dominant Empire of that time (the Chine-se) are well documented and cannot be denied, it is equally true that Chinese influence on the ancient civilizations of that area has been immeasurably less important than that of the Indian culture. Valmiki's poem has been for millennia one of the two reference texts in the Indian sub-continent, a poem that is wide-ranging and remarkably long, second in importance and body only to the Mahabharata. The Ramayana was composed by the Indian artist to celebrate the virtues of the king and to exalt the divine origins of the monarchy, embodied in the heroic figure of Rama. With such premises it isn't difficult to understand how such a work became inherent to all the

cultures of South East Asia, with the obvious approval of the royal dynasties. The myth of Ramayana via the Khmer also reached the Thais who made it their own, after having personalized it and adapted some key characters such as Hanuman according to their own sensibilities. The official Thai version of *Ramakien* (even the title, “Story of Rama”, has been translated in Thai) which we can read now is the fruit of the labours of a Thai King, Rama I. This allows us to understand the breadth of this work’s importance and the value it has had for the Siamese royalty right from the very beginning of their civilisation.

THE HARSH REALITY OF MARTIAL COMBAT

The hidden technical principles of Look Mai Muay Thai can embody the most appropriate answers to many situations that a Nak Muay may have to encounter. An expert in these techniques is trained to neutralize attacks executed with all body parts such as punches, leg strikes, knee blows, elbow blows; but also to face attempted holds and surprise or jumping attacks. Defense actions blend seamlessly with counterattacks, to make them more deadly and unstoppable. All these sophisticated techniques enable fighters to advance to the next level in the Art of all out fighting. The principles they teach are at a level of sophistication that is often not evident to a superficial examination; but analyzing with full knowledge the 15 different Mai Kred strategies, several crucial elements emerge to the watchful eye of the careful student.

Let's look at them in detail.

1. Most kicking techniques are carried out at low level (Laan) below the waist.

The technical element that usually strikes a neophyte, for the first time approaching Martial Arts, is the use of the legs to land powerful kicks; they look in awe to the ability with which seasoned experts knock out their opponents with spectacular head kicks.

However, it is well known by competent martial artists that a true expert of personal protection (contrary to what happens in action movies) dedicates most of his time to perfecting kicking techniques that do not go higher than the hip of his adversary. This is true for numerous types of Asian Martial Arts and Muay Boran is obviously, not an exception (fig. III). The discipline of Siamese fighting was born through observation of the concrete necessities of the practitioner during real fights. On the basis of the psychological attitude and morphology of the practitioner and his opponent, a series of diverse combat strategies have been developed, according to the

different fighting situations one has to face. The most common techniques are obviously the most efficient ones in those bouts where the opponent is both heavier and taller.



fig. III

A huge weight difference never occurs in sport fighting, in which one of the first conditions for the match to be played is that the two contenders in the ring are of similar size. It is however, relatively common in the event of a street attack, especially if the person being attacked is a woman and the aggressor is a man, that such weight difference can be found, thus a strategic approach different from the one which would be used in a ring, becomes necessary.

A true expert of real combat knows that low kicks are one of the best weapons at his disposition in the case of combat with no rules. These blows are fairly easy to execute even under unfavourable conditions, such as heavy clothing, slippery floor or taller or heavier opponents. Low kicks can cause serious damage without facing the risk of being grappled or forced into close combat. In addition, one of the best qualities of self defence techniques has to be that they are easy to carry out even in the case of prolonged stop from training or even in the case of poor physical condition. Since many of the attributes required for a correct and efficient execution of self defence techniques (speed, fluidity, reflexes) are rapidly compromised in cases of forced inactivity, only a few techniques are reliable under all conditions.

This does not happen with low level kicks since, once learned correctly and developed in all their variants, they can be “maintained” even with a reduced regime of exercise.

In Muay Boran many of the below-the-belt kicks have passed into disuse due to their scarce use during sport competitions. Of the many techniques of that sort only round kicks (mostly known as low kicks) to the legs meant to weaken the opponent’s resistance and front kicks to the thighs or abdomen with the aim of keeping a boxer at bay, are left as an integral part of the technical baggage of every Thai Boxer who wants to compete in the ring.

In reality, the traditional Siamese fighting style, originating as a technical support for the military elite that had to fight in extreme conditions on the battlefields, was rich with numerous kicking techniques that targeted such sensitive areas as the testicles or knees. This is the legacy of a time when even fighting in peacetime was conducted without rules, no time limits and

no weight classes. Especially small sized fighters, often specialized in surprise attacks that, employing low level kicks could easily reply to punches or kicks to the head “cutting the legs” of the opponent (as masters of old used to say) rendering the adversary completely harmless and unable to stand and fight (fig. IV).



The more the opponent is impetuous and therefore less shrewd, the easier to avoid the power of his attacks placing him in the position of being unable to inflict damage by aiming vicious attacks to exposed parts of his legs or groin.

In Muay Boran many of the techniques of this kind are contained in the basic forms Mae Mai and Look Mai Muay Thai, the real source of most of the Siamese fighting principles. In particular, Look Mai like Thaye Kham Sao, Kraisorn Khaam Hwai, Naka Mud Badan and Thaen Kwad Laan are applications of what has been discussed so far.

Obviously, like every other Muay Thai technique, even for these devastating actions a specific training is required with the aim of developing power in strikes and correct timing for their application. Combining the usual running schedule with specific weight lifting exercises (always under the direct supervision of an expert trainer), working out with big size heavy bags (called banana bags) and kicking shields, finally testing fighters with 3 steps sparring and pre arranged combat (traditional exercises meant to develop “body memory” of offensive and defensive techniques), in a relatively short time any boxer can reach a good level of fighting efficiency, even against bigger and stronger opponents.

***2.Great emphasis is placed on angular movements to avoid impact with the adversary and
to attack more efficiently.***

Traditional Look Mai Muay Thai Forms are focused on training advanced body shifting. The idea behind this practise consists in providing dedicated students a mean to develop advanced footwork, compared to simple straight stepping, learning movements in all four directions: the latter are needed for example in scenarios where one has to face more than one adversary at the same time. Such techniques need to be practised pretending that the attacks one has to face come from the sides and from behind and not just from the front (fig. V).



The usefulness of this practise is self explicatory: above all for an athlete exclusively prepared to face frontal attacks (be it single or in combinations) in sport contests, footwork training in all four directions has proved to be of exceptional usefulness. In the same way, if the attacker is heavier and stockier than the defender, the latter will absolutely need to master the angular movements so that attacks are avoided whilst at the same time being in the best position for a devastating counterattack. If at a more elementary level it is enough to master movements in a straight line, the technical growth of the Nak Muay has to develop in parallel, step by step, with the development of more sophisticated strategies of footwork, like those shown in Look Mai Forms.

3. Le Look Mai contengono uno studio accurato deThe vital points del corpo umano.

Such indications in certain cases are explicit, like in Sak Phuang Malai. In other cases to decipher the hidden map of sensitive targets the guidance of a true Khru Muay Boran is needed. According to Grand Master Sane, whose classification the author has followed, the vital points can be grouped according to the “vital system” to be affected, thus giving us the following scheme.

Points which attack the nervous system (situated in the head or neck).

Points which attack the respiratory or cardiac system (situated in the sternum, solar plexus, ribs, throat).

Points which attack the muscular system (on the legs and arms).

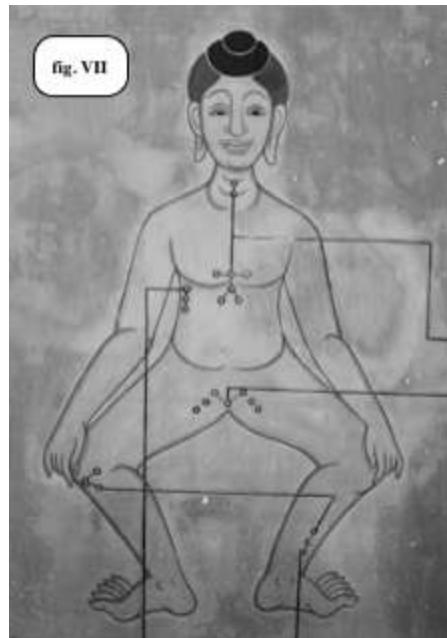
Points which attack the skeleton/joints (shoulders, elbows, wrists, knees, ankles and spine above all in the areas of the cervical and lumbar vertebrae).

Points which attack the skin's surface (situated in the so called T-zone from the forehead along the eye line to the mouth – fig. VI).



Muay Thai blows are often compared to attacks with blunt instruments like clubs, iron bars and hammers or blades such as knives or swords. This would result in some inaccuracy of the Nak Muay in getting a bull's eye with their attacks. But in fact even if it is true as the saying goes that "when you are run over by a truck it doesn't matter so much what part of your body is actually hit", it is also true that at a higher level (like that of the study of Look Mai) it becomes fundamental to learn how to best use a map of the sensitive areas of the human body and how to reach those areas efficiently. Excellent knowledge of the vital points, especially when matched with the power that a Thai Boxer is able to express, renders it much easier and safer to put an heavier opponent hors de combat by strongly reducing the number of actions needed to overcome him. It has been calculated that being hit by a Kao Trong (straight knee blow) to the sternum causes the same damage as being hit by a car travelling at 40 kmph. Knowing where to precisely strike the blow

exponentially raises the possibility of obtaining a devastating effect by a single blow. The map of the most sensitive parts of the body which in the martial applications of Look Mai are used for destructive ends, is actually a sophisticated extrapolation based on traditional Thai medicine, which has been in use for hundreds of years in Thailand.



The theoretical foundation of this way of conceiving the human being follows the theory of Sib Sen, the ten pathways of energy through which vital energy flows, the so-called “Breath of Life”. The study of Sib Sen (fig. VII) implies knowledge of anatomy and of traditional Thai medicine. The latter follows Buddhist teaching according to which the human being is composed of five aggregates; together they are defined as Panca Khandha, that is to say: body (rupa); feelings /sensation (vedana); perceptions (samjna); thought (samskara); and consciousness (vijnana). The first, Rupa, indicates the bodily

aspect, the concrete form. The second, Vedana, describes sensitivity or sensation; it is without form and emerges from the five senses and the mind. Samjna, the third, describes recognition of current actions and awareness of those actions. Sankhara, the fourth is the thought process, which guides the actions. Finally, Vijnana, the fifth is the awareness of the senses and the emotions. These five aggregates are a combination of body and mind, every human being is born on the basis of Panca Khandha. In turn the physical body, is composed of four elements; earth, water, wind and fire.

The element Earth represents the 20 organs and body parts; the element Water reflects the 12 products of the organs of the body; the element Wind circulates in 6 directions within the body; the element Fire warms the 4 areas of the body. All four elements are correlated and balance should be maintained; whenever an imbalance occurs between these 4 elements it causes a blockage of Sib Sen, which in turn can cause consequences that could be serious. From the destructive application codified by Khru Muay of the past in the traditional Look Mai techniques, a more profound knowledge of all these anatomical theories emerges as well as a method for using them in both a curative and destructive way.

4. Within the 15 Forms, many sophisticated strategies of martial combat are “hidden”.

The ancient techniques of military (or martial) combat have been studied in depth by Khru Muay who considered a clash between two fighters as being like a battle between two armies. The vanguard was represented by the

forward arm stretched out towards the opponent and the front leg held ready to spring forward or block attacks sliding rapidly towards the center of gravity of our body. The rearguard was represented by the back arm and leg, further away from the “front” but ready to rush in to lend a hand to the front line with powerful surprise attacks. Similarly, kicking techniques are considered to be long distance moves similar to heavy artillery (or catapults) that can strike from far away. When the distance is closed, the battle moves to close combat and the shorter weapons become necessary, while long-range ones turn out to be virtually useless if not harmful. Moreover, beyond these cornerstones of warfare, in Look Mai combat even more subtle mechanisms are inserted that, if properly decoded, open up a wealth of superior techniques that are not easily identifiable without proper technical guidance.

Some of the martial strategies found in Mai Kred are the following.

Attrition: the attacks contained in Hong Peek Hak indicate that in order to have the best of a big opponent, it is necessary to take small bites out of his physical efficiency, bites that don't compromise his physical integrity in one move but through repeated offensive actions deprive him of his “weapons” or his capacity to move around.

The psychological warfare. The provocative technique of face kick shown in Bath Loob Paak, rarely causes an immediate end of fight. However, the psychological effect (losing self-control) induced by such a ‘slap’ (one of the versions of those front kick is exactly that, a slap to the nose and mouth) renders the adversary careless and his attacks become predictable. At this point getting the better of him becomes much easier.

Camouflage and misdirection. Directly striking with a favoured technique

is a typical error of beginners. A connoisseur of Look May will use feints and draws to precede and camouflage the real attack. Kwang Liew Lang lessons teach just this; never show intentions directly but ‘camouflage’ them always making the adversary guess that he is going to be attacked from one direction when the attack will actually come from another, or that a high attack is being planned when it is really a low one and so on.



Umbalancing and knocking down (fig. VIII). Muay Boran’s base strategy forecasts the following phases; engaging (achieving contact with the adversary by means of defense or attacks with the body’s natural weapons), throwing down (by techniques found in Khun Yak Panang, Yuan Thod Hae, and Then Kwad Laan for example) and finalizing the opponent on the ground

(by kicks or knee blows struck downwards). In modern Muay Thai phases 2 and 3 (throwing down and finalizing the opponent to the ground) have actually been eliminated either by taking away their importance scorewise (like in the case of sweeps) or by forbidding the actions due to their dangerousness (as in the case of Khun Yak Panang-style throws and ground strikes). Actually, a practitioner of traditional techniques, once the level of Look Mai has been reached, should master these actions to perfection for their high coefficient of efficiency in any real fight.

THE LOOK MAI MUAY THAI FORM



The solo practise of fundamental techniques of defense and counterattack (fig. IX) is considered one of the most important phases of training and is usually expressed in series of free style movements and codified sets of fighting actions, these latter called Forms. In Thailand this practice takes various names, Ram Muay, which means Dance of Combat, being the most used. In fact, this way of defining the technical sequences has often caused confusion through the habit of seeing the Ram Muay only as a part of the pre-fight ritual, now devoid of all values of a real fighting Form. Nevertheless, the practice of martial sequences that reproduce in a precise way the attacks, defenses and movements of Muay Boran, is thankfully making a comeback in Thailand as in the rest of the world and there are many practitioners who are returning to using traditional forms as training tools and consider them a crucial element to be learned. Speed, fluidity, balance, cardiovascular endurance, technical accuracy, coordination, flexibility and last but not least correct learning of the traditional nomenclatures of each technique (thus making each Form an unequalled reminder, useful in itself and indispensable to be able to correctly transmit to others the various traditional Mai Muay according to their correct order); these are just some of the attributes developed with a correct practise of traditional shadow fighting (fig. X).



Furthermore the practise of Muay and in particular Look Mai techniques is aimed to developing harmonious physiques and body movements. The origin itself of the term Muay is to be found in the habit of Siamese men to wear their hair tied up in order to make their appearance more harmonic.

Today, as in the remote past, Thai people believe that combat efficiency of has to go hand in hand with the fluidity and harmony of the moves employed to attack and defend in a sort of mortal dance of combat or Ram Muay.

For this reason the solo practise of codified sequences which reproduce real fighting situations, like those more choreographed ones still used today

before every fight, is held to be one of the best training systems to improve the development of efficient and harmonious mind/body coordination (fig. XI).



fig. XI

Basically the traditional Forms of Muay are practised in two distinct ways: either in sequences for couples or for singles.

There are many similarities, mutatis mutandis, in the first modality with Judo Kata.

Both practitioners perform a series of attacks, defenses and counterattacks, using only the body's natural weapons (fists, elbows, knees, feet, shins and head), alternating slow and rhythmic movements with bursts of energy accompanied by forceful exhalations.

The second mode is rather similar to Karate Kata (and those of many other martial arts that follow a similar system) and aims to perform a series of offensive and defensive movements against an imaginary opponent, again with alternating slow and rapid movements.

In this case, the practitioner must strive to perform every action with utmost fluidity linking movements without interruption. The two modes of practising Muay forms develop in the practitioner attributes that are essential to improve their effectiveness in a real fight. By assiduously practicing in pairs, the Thai Boxer greatly increases his own sense of timing and distance in front of an opponent who, depending on the form being practiced, charges in, escapes, violently attacks him with his arms or legs, tries to grapple him, and so on. It also deepens their knowledge of vital points; boxers learn how to attack these areas and at the same time how to protect them.

Through constant solo practise one really learns how to seamlessly combine offensive and defensive movements with strikes, parries or dodges, bringing to perfection the techniques and at the same time improving the

speed of attacks, his dynamic equilibrium and cardiovascular resistance. It has also been proved that profound concentration during solitary practise can be compared to a real form of meditation in movement. This element characterises high-level martial exercises in all eastern disciplines of fighting. Moreover, it has been proved that spelling the traditional name of each technique at the moment in which it is performed works as a mantra which greatly increases the efficiency of performance and makes every move sort of “magical”. The latter is the typical mode of performing traditional Muay forms passed down to us by Grand Master Sane who trained the author at length with this system.



Chapter 4.1 - Look Mai techniques

LA RAM MUAY LOOK MAI MUAY THAI

NB. The perspective for observing the undertaking is fixed with respect to the executor; as it is difficult to grasp all the details from a set position, another observation point has been inserted (to the front or opposite to the fixed position) to make it easier understanding the technical gesture. In case the perspective changes, then the relevant image will be highlighted by the sign







1: Erawan
Soei Nga





2: Bata Loob Paak



3: Khun Yak Pa Nang

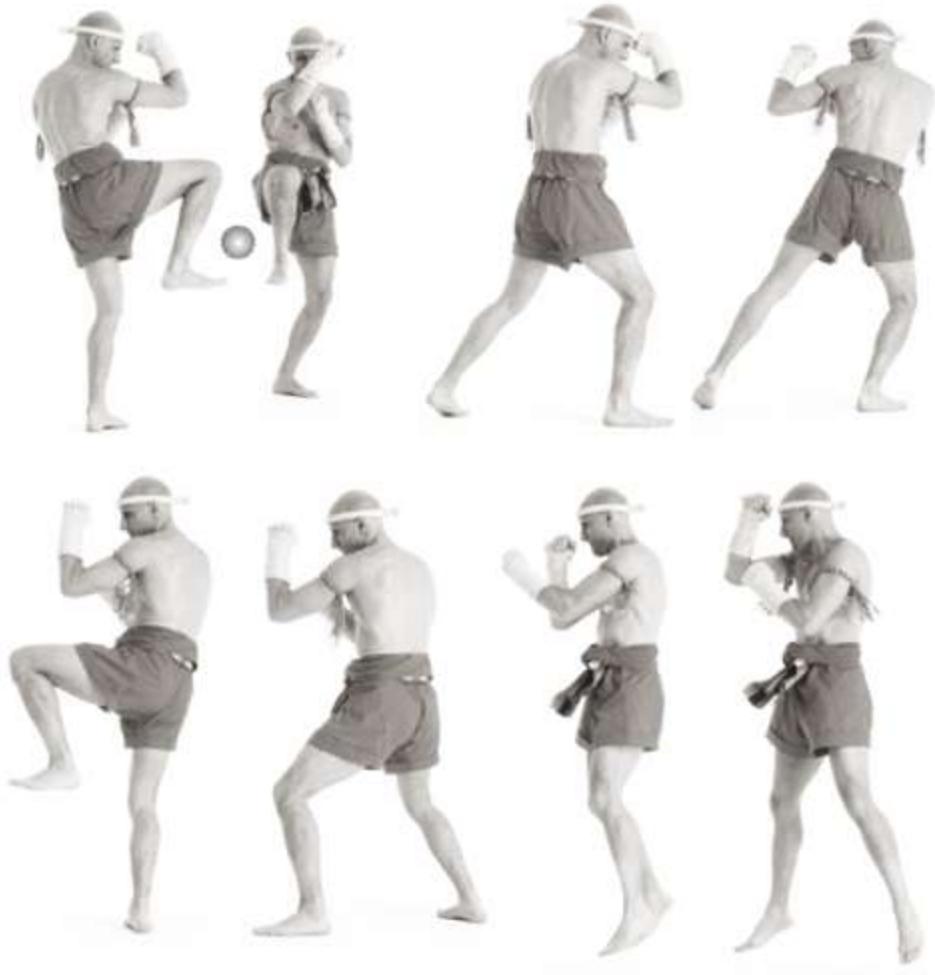


4: Phra Ram Now Sorn



5: Kraisorn Khaam Hwai

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan





6: Kwang Liew

Lang



7: Hiran Muan Paen Din



8: Naka Mud Badan



9: Hanuman Tawai Waen



10: Yuan Thod Hae

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan





11: Thaye Khan Sao



12: Hong Peek Hak



13: Sawk Phuang Malai



14 Thaen Kwad Laan

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan





15a: Fan Look Buab



15b: Fan Look Buab







Chapter 4.2 - **Look Mai techniques**

LOOK MAI N. 1: ERAWAN SOEI NGA

Translation: Erawan (three-headed white elephant) strikes with its tusk



ເອរາວັນເສຍງາ

The origin

The Hindu name of Erawan is Airavata, the mythical white elephant. The elephant is the mount of kings and symbol of royal power, and the power of dominion; in fact, Indra, King of the Heavens, rode the elephant Airavata. According to tradition it had 4 tusks and 7 trunks and was an albino. Airavata is linked to water and to rain. In fact the powerful elephant immerses his trunk in the water of the underworld and sprays it into the sky creating clouds, which Indra shoots therby, making rain and thus tying together the two worlds, heaven and the underworld. Erawan, the Thai version of Airavata is represented by an enormous three-headed elephant (in some versions with 33 heads), each head has two or more tusks; even in this version Erawan is the steed of the god Indra.

The real protagonist: as well as having a fundamental role in the every day practical life of the Thais, elephants have always traditionally held great spiritual significance. They were mentioned for the first time centuries ago in Hinduist and Buddhist texts and from then on have enjoyed more prestige than any other animal. This spiritual significance can be traced back to Ganesh, the Hindu god of conscience, which removes all obstacles. His trunk is curved and symbolizes that he is capable of reaching the supreme goal bypassing all obstacles in his path. The significance of white elephants, considered the most sacred, has instead its roots in Buddhism. In Thailand only the King can possess them. Since King Ramkamhaeng (13th century), a king's importance is measured by how many white elephants he possesses.



The technique

The elephant is a huge animal of exceptional power, in fact it is even capable of uprooting a tree. Techniques correlated to the elephant spring from observations of the use of its tusks to strike blows and from the trunk to divert, strike, grasp and break.

The use of the trunk to strike in a relaxed but powerful way has inspired Thai people and has served as a model to develop Tae, the deadly roundhouse kick, typical to Muay Thai. In this kick, the leg is projected without being contracted or bent and then stretched out, as it happens in other Asian martial art kicking techniques.

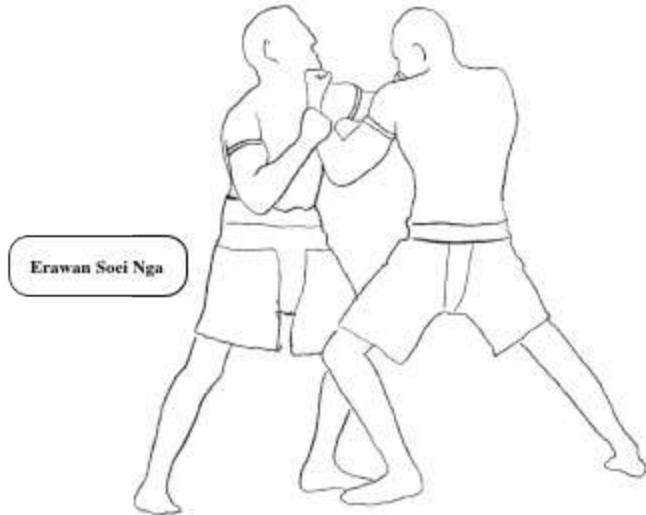
The tusks of the elephant are deadly weapons and are mimicked by upwards punches (exactly as the Mahd Suhy in Erawan Soei Nga) or by the elbows going either up or down (as in the double attack Chang Prasan Nga).

Apart from blows, the trunk is also used to probe, grasp and rip away branches or any other object the elephant finds in its path. In the same way the legs of the adversary are grasped and pulled provoking a disastrous fall (as in the Pang Sabat Ya technique).

Finally, the foot of the elephant can crush anything with a destructive effect; thus the heel blow upon an adversary who is down can often result in being a finishing technique.

The vital points

The mandible or lower jaw form the lower half of the face and keep the teeth in place. The inferior alveolar nerve, a mandibular branch of the trigeminal nerve, enters the mandibular foramen and runs forward in the mandibular canal, providing sensitivity to the teeth. A strong blow in this area especially one delivered at 45° angle (such as when you're hit with **Erawan Soei Nga** technique), can cause a mandibular fracture inflicting acute pain and difficulties with opening the mouth and may lead to numbness of the lips and chin. Dislocation may occur simultaneously with jaw fracture (or even in the absence of fracture) if the stroke connects with the highest part of the bone (toward the ear). Being hit whilst the mouth is open (even slightly) will only increase the chances of mandibular dislocation. In the worst cases, a sharp blow to the jaw can also cause traumatic injuries to the brain (intracranial injury).



MARTIAL APPLICATIONS

The technique of Erawan which strikes with its tusks, offers numerous applications of great efficiency. The main offensive actions against which this Look Mai shows itself to be extremely useful are those carried out at short distances and which consist in attacks using the arm (straight punches, hooks) and knees or wrestling techniques (tentative neck holds or clinches). This Mai Kred technique proves to be useful also against long range attacks such as those carried out using roundhouse kicks. Counterattacks, as shown in the previous section, foresee uppercuts or upwards elbow blows which, in their dynamics remind us of an attacking elephant which, by suddenly jerking its head upwards, strikes with its tusks the unfortunate adversary. When striking these blows, the movements of our body (Erawan's head) should be in coordination with the extension of the legs in order to obtain maximum effect.

VS STRAIGHT LEAD PUNCH

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2, 3, 4)



Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan



2



3



4

VS STRAIGHT LEAD PUNCH

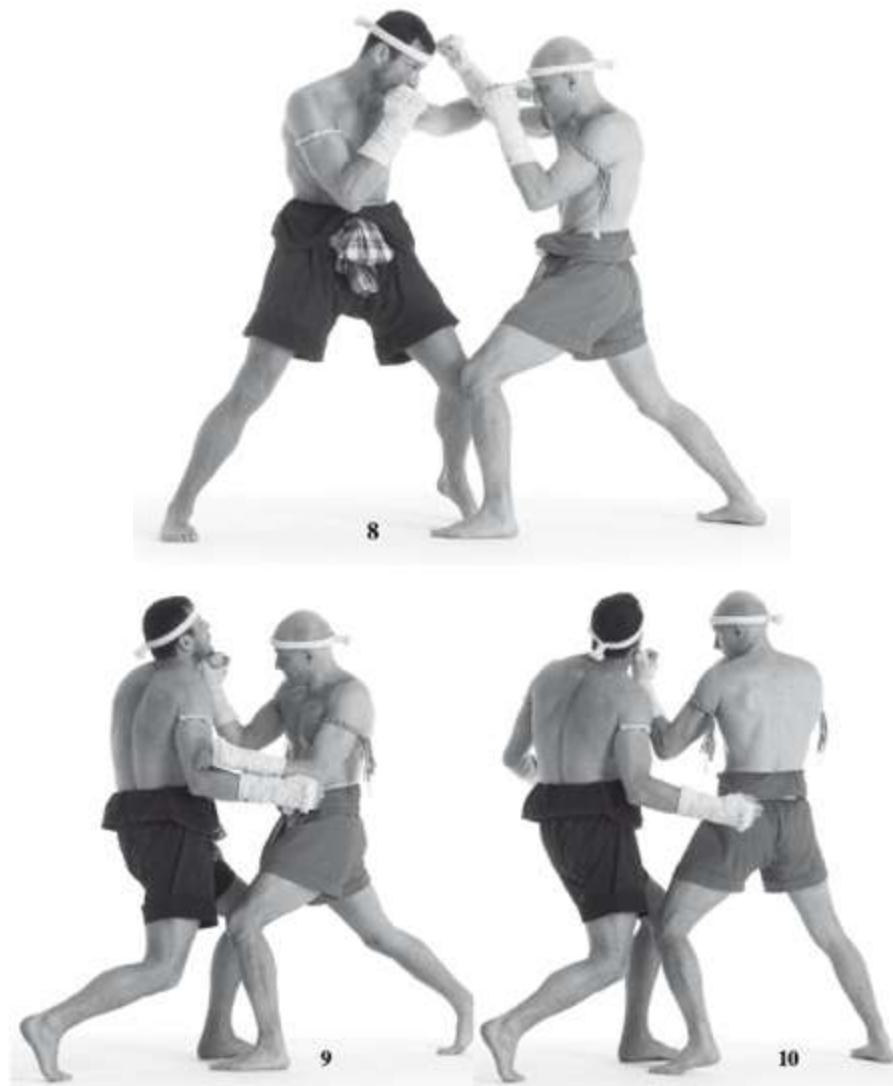
SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 5, 6, 7)





Vs left hook, right hook

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 8, 9, 10)



Vs neck hold

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 11, 12, 13)



11

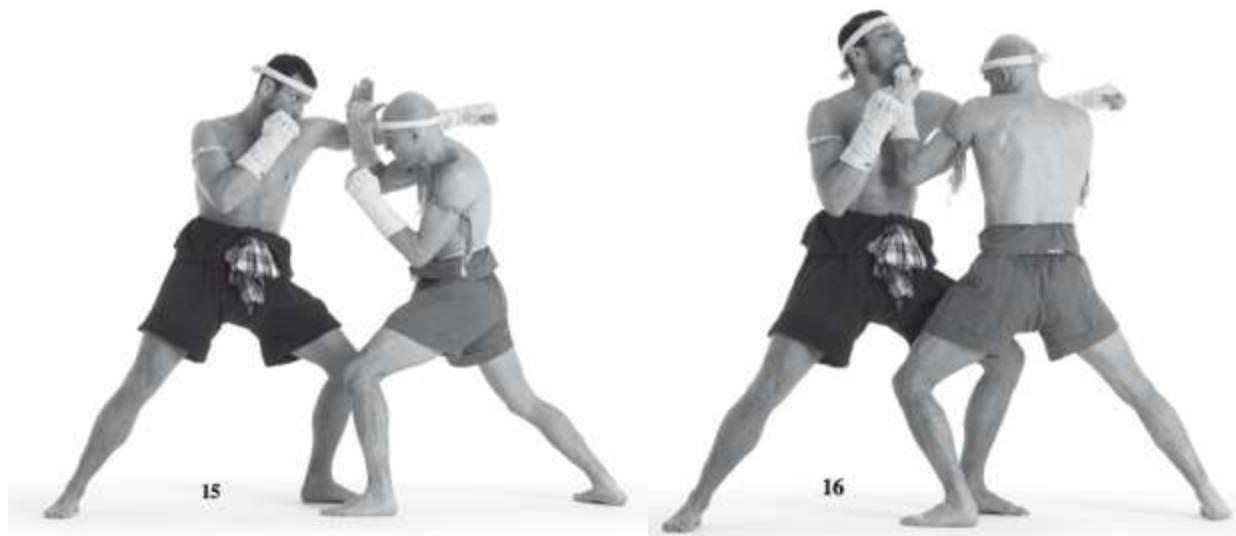
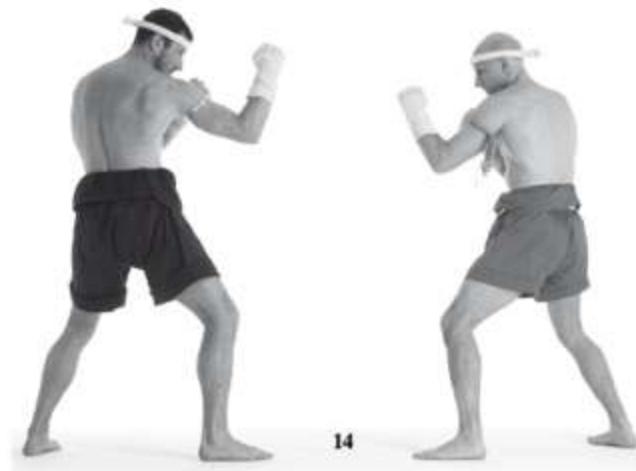


12



VS PUNCH WITH CHANGE OF GUARD

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 14, 15, 16)



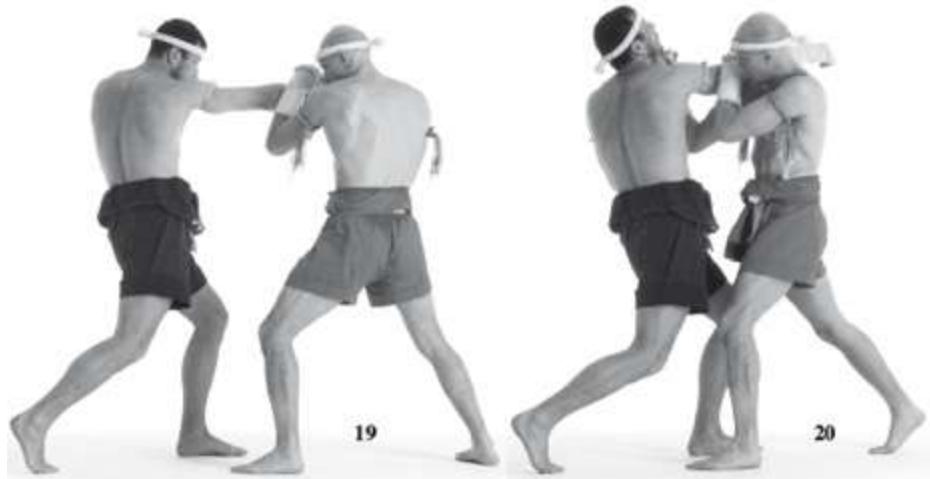
Vs straight knee blow

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 17, 18)



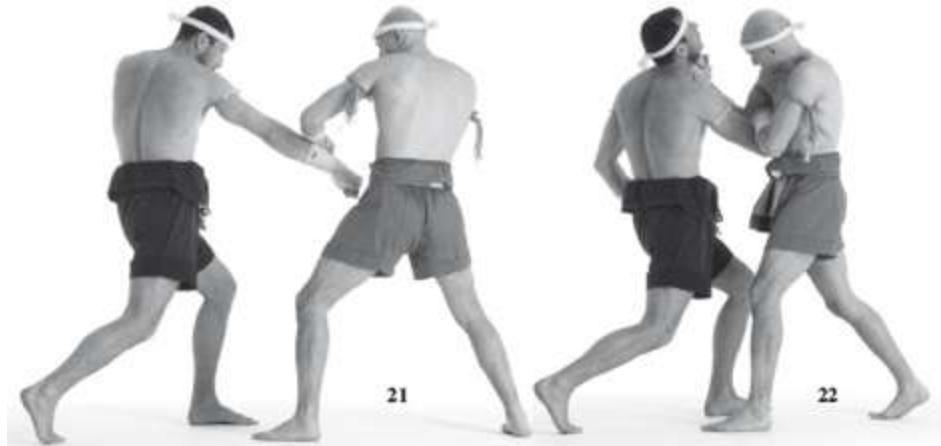
Vs Rear straight punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 19, 20)



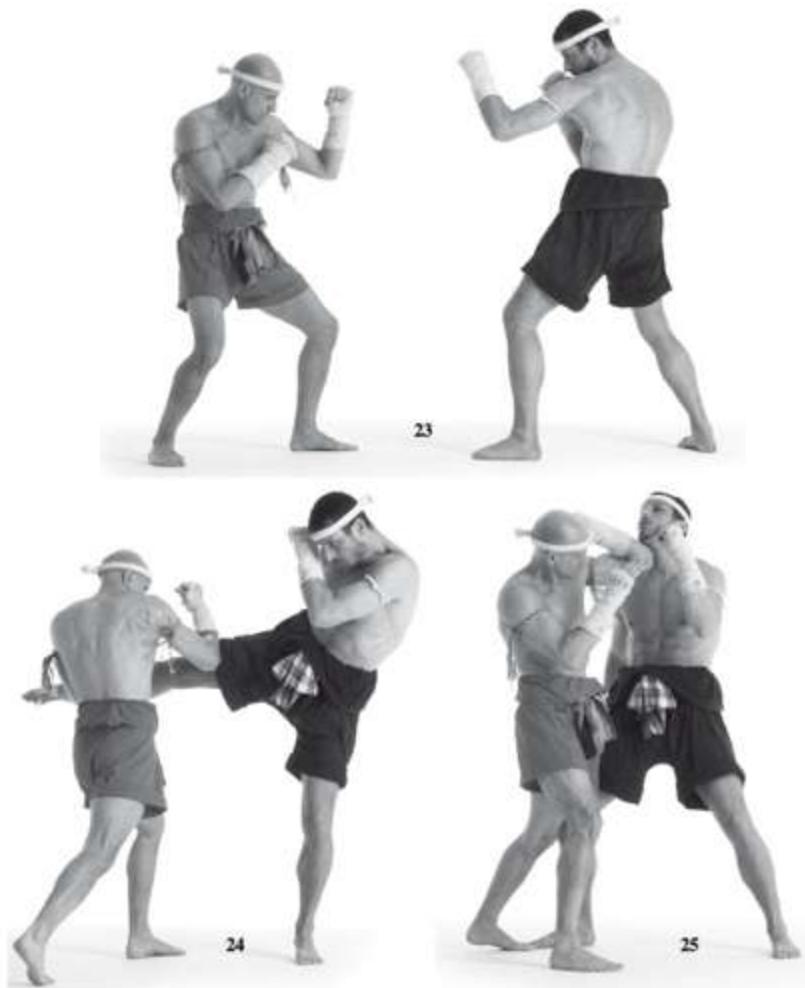
Vs Rear straight punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 21, 22)



Vs roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 23, 24, 25)





Chapter 4.3 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 2: BATA LOOB PAAK

Translation: The foot touches the mouth



บำนาญบพักตร์

The origin

The disrespectful adversary receives a warning that tests his pride and his desire to fight. The sole of the foot touching the mouth signifies a serious insult for a Thai and is a clear warning to every Thai Boxer: don't insist on fighting or you could be seriously hurt.

For a Thai etiquette, the correct way of behaving in public, is extremely

important. As for every other culture the first step a foreigner (farang) must take towards being accepted consists in adapting to the customs and manners of the people with which they want to have a relationship. Here are some of the most common uses which must always be respected in order to be welcome in Thailand.

The typical Thai greeting consists in a small bow whilst keeping the palms together in a kind of praying position. The hands go higher and the bow lower depending on how much respect you wish to demonstrate to the person in front of you. This gesture is called the Wai. The Wai is known to all practitioners of Muay Thai in that it is integral to the respect that should always be shown by a Nak Muay to his Master, his training colleagues and his eventual opponents.

Touching another person with the soles of the feet is not allowed; pointing the feet towards an image of Buddha is absolutely forbidden as Buddhists consider the soles to be an impure part of the body.

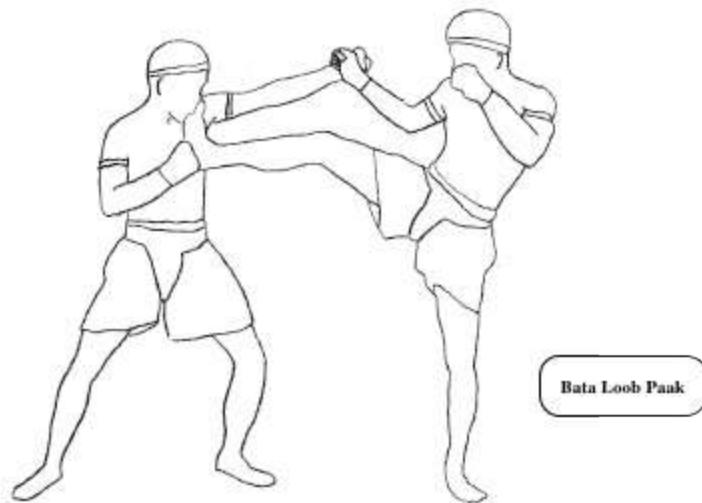
In Thai culture it is also considered disrespectful to point the feet towards a monk or a statue in the sanctuary of a monastery. It is also considered disrespectful to approach a monk without making a gesture of respect. When offerings are given to monks it is not considered polite to be on a higher level than the monk. For example, if the monk is seated it would not be polite to approach him standing up in order to give your offering.

The Thai consider the head as being the highest (literally) and most elevated (in a figurative sense) part of the body. For this reason touching the head of someone, even by accident, calls for an immediate apology. In Muay Thai the head is encircled with a crown (the Mongkon) which has great

spiritual value for practitioners and which must never touch the ground, as doing so would mean the loss of its own symbolic worth. With this in mind it can be understood how upsetting it would be if an adversary's foot strikes one's face, for a fighter this is considered the ultimate insult.

The technique

The first result of the Bata Loob Paak is that of causing a harsh negative psychological impact due to being touched in the face by an opponent's foot. This can result in irritating the opponent to such an extent that he literally loses his head, forgetting all the hours of training he has gone through, literally transforming him into a crude aggressor, which is an easier victim to a colder rival. In addition, the sensation of inferiority, which may creep into the mind of the person at the receiving end of this technique, can also become a chink in one's armor, which could be decisive in a real encounter. As well as the psychological effects, the blow to the face by either sole or heel can also have devastating physiological effects. In fact, the mouth is an extremely vulnerable part of the body to be targeted by the foot. The lips, in particular, can easily split or even (as used to happen in european bare-fist fighting at the end of the 1800s) can be penetrated by the teeth, creating a grotesque and untenable position for the opponent. An appropriate heel blow can even break teeth and the same can be said for the base of the nose, the nasal septum and the nasal root (all areas extremely sensitive to blows and therefore favored targets for powerful straight kicks). If the Bata Loob Paak aims for the chin and succeeds in connecting with power, it is capable of causing a lightning fast knockout with no possibility of retaliation.



The vital points

A nasal fracture, commonly called a broken nose, is a fracture of the bone and/or the cartilage. Due to it protruding from the face and the fragility of the bones that make it up, a broken nose is one of the most common of the so-called “facial” injuries. A direct kick to this fragile part of the face (as foreseen with the Look Mai **Bata Loob Paak**) easily causes such an injury. If the kick should strike the area at the base of the nose a fracture of the jawbone (which forms the upper part of the face) is another possible consequence. Another possibility is that a front kick reaches the mouth, in which event the worst case scenario is that it causes a dental trauma. Some types of dental injury that might occur are: enamel fracture, complex fracture of the tooth, tooth root fracture, dislocation or tearing away of the teeth. The kick can also cause an ocular trauma or damage to the lips.

Martial applications

The “foot that touches the mouth” technique is the movement par excellence of the long range fighter who works best keeping his opponent at bay, while at the same time being able to inflict serious damage upon his enemy. To keep the attacker from closing in dangerously, the expert of the long distance fighting, should base his actions on perfect timing, stop-hitting the opponent as he starts to move forward. The kick can be made against tentative punches but also against leg kicks. It can be a trust, snap or slap kick, carried out by the toes or the sole. The most popular version prescribes the use of a quick whipping action of the leg carrying out the kick with the forefoot as the surface of impact in order to create maximum damage.

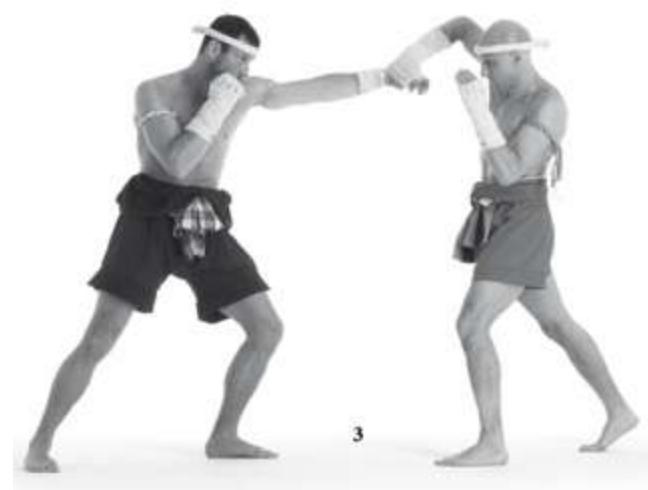
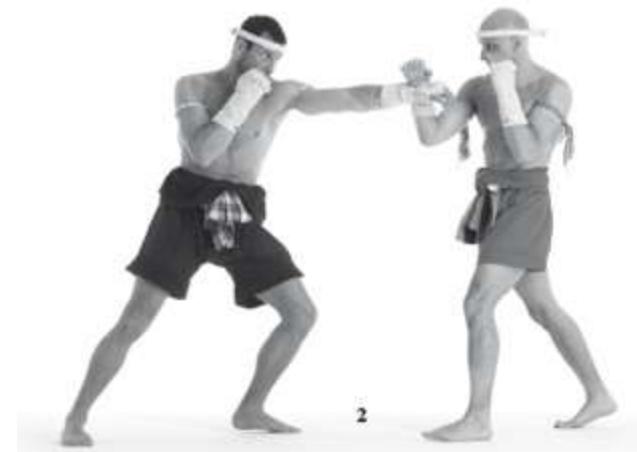
Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1)



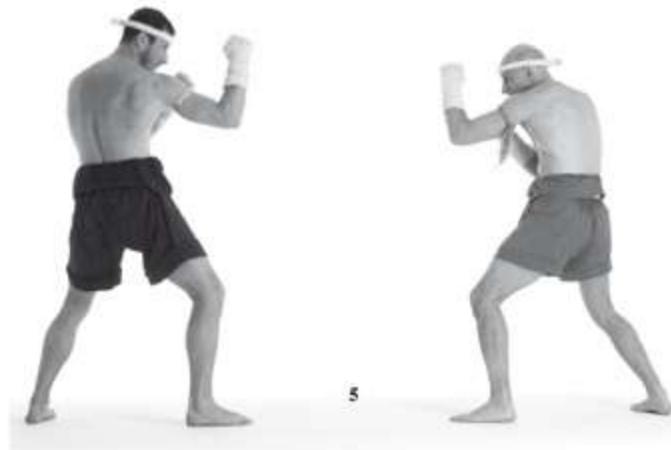
Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 2, 3, 4)



Vs straight punch with change of guard

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 5, 6)



In attack

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 7, 8)



In attack

SOLUTION 2 CWITH TOES TO THE THROAT (FIG. 9)



Vs straight lead punch, with slap kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 10, 11, 12)





Vs low roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 13)



Vs Rear straight punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 14, 15)





Chapter 4.4 - **Look Mai techniques**

LOOK MAI N. 3: KHUN YAK PANANG

Translation: The Lord of the Demons kidnaps the princess



បុណ្យម៉ោគម៉ោង

The origin

Look Mai Khun Yak Panang refers to a particular scene of Ramakien, which sees as the protagonists Princess Nang Sita and Totsakan the Lord of Demons. The princess, Rama's bride, is actually Totsakan's own daughter, abandoned at birth and adopted by King Janaka. Raised as the king's daughter she is called Janaka Sita or "Furrow" because it is said that she was born in a furrow made by the king himself during the period of ploughing. During Rama and his bride's stay in the forest, a demon in the guise of a beautiful golden deer fascinates Sita to the extent that she begs Rama and his brother, Phra Lak, to hunt the deer for her. Once the two warriors are lured far away from the princess, Totsakan (whose name can also be spelled

Totsagan) the Lord of Demons seizes the moment and kidnaps the princess grasping her tightly so that she can't escape. But who is actually the character of Totsakan? The original Indian name is Ravana, an important character of Hindu mythology. Although Ravana in the classic text is portrayed as an eminently negative character, this interpretation has given rise to much criticism. From a more precise scrutiny of classic texts it would seem that Ravana was a Brahmin, a great scholar who wrote the Ravan Sanhita a powerful Hindu book of astrology. He was also in possession of a deep knowledge of the Ayurveda and would have also gained the nectar of immortality. The "mission" of Phra Rama and Phra Lak on Earth would have only apparently been that of finding Nang Sita because their real aim consisted in liberating one of the celestial companions of Vishnu from a terrible destiny, that had transformed him into the horrible demon Ravana, due to a curse cast upon him by Bhrama.



The technique

The action that Totsakan carries out to keep Sita under control during her kidnapping corresponds to a series of holding and throwing techniques that are commonly called Tum Tap. Despite the fact that this technique, which was part of the technical background of Nak Muay, has almost fallen in disuse due to sport regulations which prohibit it, the Khun Yak Panang throw was a deadly technique mainly used in Muay Boran. In the ancient times it was often employed on the battlefield by Siamese warriors, in the furious clashes, aimed at killing their armed enemy by a hard fall on his head, possibly breaking his neck in the best case scenario. The base of this type of move resides in a good knowledge of holds and is aimed to controlling the mobility of the opponent; once we manage to get hold of a limb, the neck or the waist of the enemy and block for a moment his capacity to strike or move, the numerous strategies of Tum Tap can be applied. These will cause the opponent to fall disastrously to the ground where it is then easier to apply a finishing strike (preferably with the heel or knee). Close body combat is one of the technical elements that have always distinguished the Thai Boxer. Learning to grasp the opponent with quick holds to then strike with elbow, knee or head blows, throw him to the ground, twist his limbs in order to dislocate them, can prove to be a real ace in the sleeve for every practitioner of Muay interested in self defense or competition. Today Muay Thai is known worldwide as the art of combat famous for its repertoire of attacks using the natural weapons of the body, hands, elbows, knees, legs and head. Whoever deepens their technical knowledge of the discipline with Masters who are real experts in this Siamese Art, realise that one of the characteristics peculiar to Muay Thai, above all in its traditional form, is that of it being a fine mixture of striking techniques and wrestling holds. The result is a hybrid discipline, which creates fighters halfway between pure “strikers” and pure “grapplers”, making the most of the characteristics of both these great families of techniques.

Whilst much has been written and filmed about the striking techniques of Muay Thai, the majority of practitioners do not generally know about the

innumerable possibilities offered by Thai grappling, which is in its complexity traditionally called Muay Pram.

Born as a way of wrestling “tout court”, performed in rural festivals, Muay Pram has been partially incorporated in the techniques of Thai Boxing since the time of “Kard Chiek”. In those fights the boxers confronted one another with their hands protected by rope bindings, without weight categories, without time limits, and with few technical limitations. With the passing of the years and with the implementation of Western-style Boxing gloves, which dates back to 1930, the use of Muay Thai wrestling techniques has been decreasing, to the point of practically being limited to Neck Wrestling or Chap Ko. Since knee strikes score most in professional fights, neck clinching along with those violent knee attacks became the main technique used in modern Thai Boxing close fighting and due to this, neck holds and knee strikes represents all the grappling that is now practiced and taught in most of the Kai Muay, or Thai training camps.

Furthermore, the use of gloves, which on the one hand increases the protection of the fighters – especially regarding lacerations – on the other hand, have made grips and consequently grappling actions, far more difficult to perform. In fact, all this has made obsolete the deadly techniques of Muay Pram which have been progressively abandoned, and worst of all, completely forgotten by the vast majority of professional trainers.

The techniques of dislocation and strangulation deserve special mention; nowadays they have been totally eliminated from the technical knowledge of trainers and Thai Boxers. In past times, since Muay Pram was one of the principle elements of study for a Siamese warrior, the “finishing” techniques, like joint breaking, strangulations and throws, were practiced and studied in deep, and, in cases of necessity, they even proved to be of greater value than

the striking techniques, which are the absolute specialty of the Thais.

The vital points

The fracturing of cervical vertebrae is commonly called a broken neck. There are seven cervical vertebrae (neck bone) in humans. The effects of a fracture to these vertebrae can be devastating. Abnormal movements of the neck bones can cause spinal cord injuries resulting in loss of sensation, paralysis or death. Considerable force is needed to cause a fracture of the neck, falls are a common cause. A severe, sudden twisting of the neck or a blow to the area of the head or neck can cause a cervical fracture. The throw used in **Khun Yak Panang** aims precisely to cause a precipitous fall head first resulting in severe trauma to the cervical vertebrae. Because of its inherent danger that violent action was banned in the competitive sport of Thai Boxing and slowly fell into disuse among Muay coaches.



Martial applications

The Giant Totsakan's technique is obviously one of the basic movements for expert grapplers. With a single quick action the expert of this Look Mai is capable of throwing to the ground an opponent even much heavier than himself, avoiding being struck or grasped thanks to a particular evasive half-moon step which puts him into an optimum position to perform a violent throw with a minimum expenditure of energy. Entry on the opponent is presumed to be performed from a long range and it is therefore absolutely necessary a control technique of the possible stop hit (punch, kick or knee strike) carried out by the adversary.

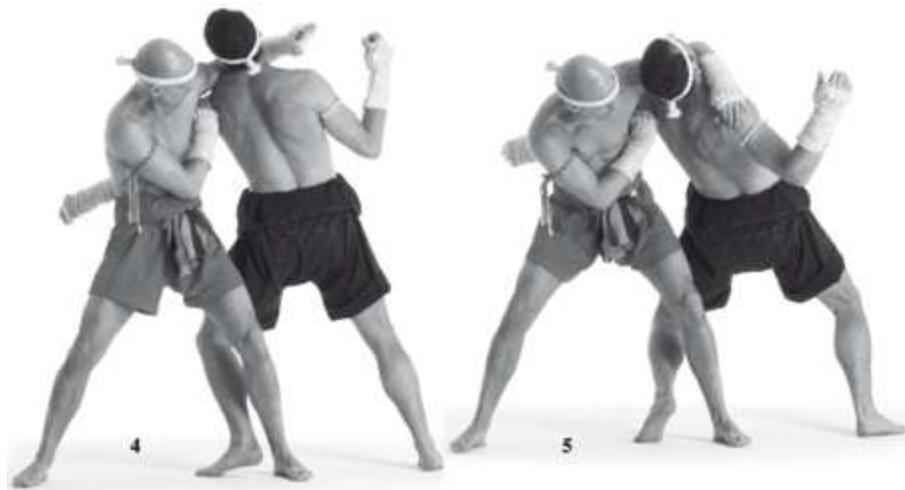
Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2, 3)



Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 4, 5)



Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 6, 7, 8, 9)





Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 4 (FIG.10, 11)

Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 5



(FIG.12,13,14,15,16)





Vs rear straight punch

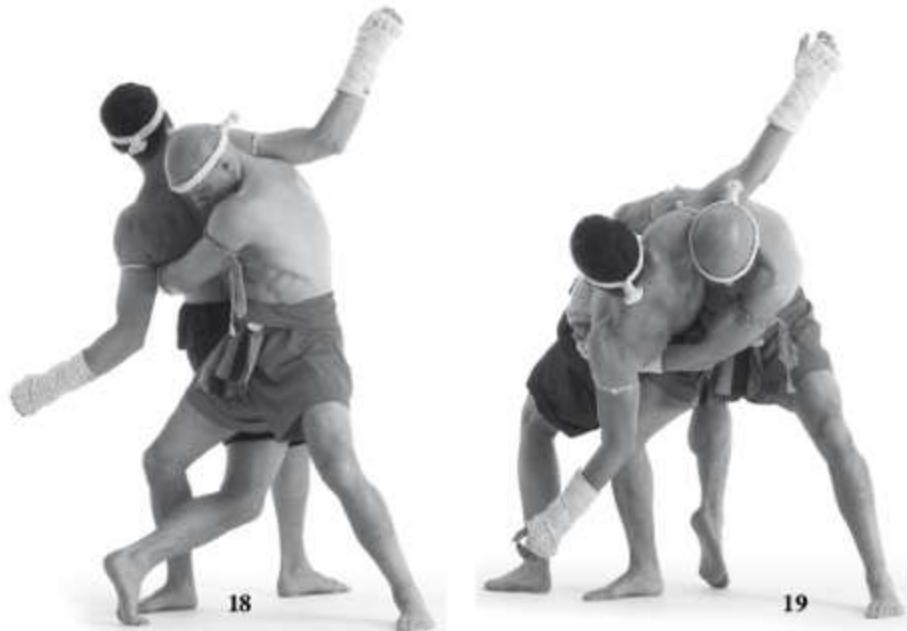
SOLUTION 1 (FIG.12,13,14,15,16)



17

Vs rear
straight
punch

SOLUTION 2
(FIG. 20, 21,
22, 23, 24)



18

19

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan



Vs straight knee

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 25)



Vs front kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 26, 27)





Chapter 4.5 - **Look Mai techniques**

LOOK MAI N. 4: PHRA RAM NOW SORN

Translation: Lord Rama draws the bow

(Phra is a prefix which we can translate as Sir or Lord, which indicates profound reverence, as in the case of religious or royal figures, and it is always used to accompany gods' names and the names of their Avatars. The correspondent feminine name is Nang, Madam or Lady).



พระรามนำวศร

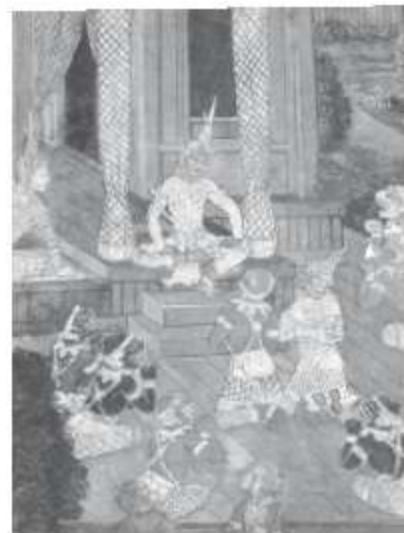
The origin

Rama, a magic word, means enchanting. He is the main character of the

epic poem that bears his name (Ramayana or the story of Rama) and one of the most popular figures in the Hindu pantheon. Rama (Phra Ram in the Thai translation – fig. II) is the seventh incarnation or Avatar of the god Vishnu (Phra Narai in the Thai version) and the devoted groom of Princess Nang Sita (who in turn is the Avatar of the goddess Lak-shmi). Rama in his human guise is the son of Dasharatha the King of Ayothia (know to Thai people as Ayutthaya). Rama is the perfect human, the lord of virtue. To conquer his future bride Rama was asked to lift and attach a string to Vishnu's bow, which he eventually was able to break. The myth of the bow that was impossible to pull occurs several times in western traditions too, for example in the saga of Ulysses who wins the heart of Penelope by managing to pull an extremely heavy bow. When Rama was 16 he was trained in the forest with his brother Laksham in the arts of warfare and he was given knowledge of heavenly weapons, in particular the bow. The influence of the figure of Rama in Thai traditions is evident in the very name of the ancient capital of the Kingdom of Siam, Ayutthaya, and the name that many Thai royals have adopted once risen to the throne (Rama I, Rama II etc.). His warrior abilities have been venerated and emulated in many Indian combat disciplines; above all the Kalarippayatt, which is diffuse in the Kerala zone. From India these techniques were “exported” towards the east and over the centuries have influenced many South East Asian styles, amongst which, through the filter of the Khmer Empire, even Muay Thai.

The technique

In many cultures the bow and arrow have great symbolic worth, as well as a practical one. Asian kings are often represented brandishing a bow and also effigies of Rama show ample proof of this. As a regal weapon, the bow is considered of equal worth as a sword.



In Look Mai Phra Ram Now Sorn the movement of pulling the bowstring is represented in the first phase of the technique, the upwards parry by the forearm. The arrow flying towards the opponent is the second phase and is symbolised by a punch directed to the throat or the chin of the adversary.

The technique of deflection performed by opening the guard of the opponent against a blow from above in Thai is called Poed. In Phra Ram Now Sorn the movement from the inside to the outside can be carried out against a single punch attack, a forearm or elbow blow, or against double attacks. Whilst carrying out a defensive technique it is important to combine the parry with an upper body twist towards the inside of our guard, thus rendering our action much more efficient.

Rama's "techniques" are many and varied and are useful for combat at different ranges. Just like the divine warrior was trained in the arts of warfare to be able to use weapons at long, medium or short range so the actions which bear his name reveal themselves useful for short or long range combat. Four strategies which are usually employed to neutralise elbow blows (Kon

Sok) belong to the technical series of Rama fighting with bow and arrow.



Phra Ram Now Sorn

The vital points

A very powerful up-wards blow to the front of the throat can damage, with very serious consequences, the hyoid bone. Thanks to its position, the hyoid is not easy to fracture. In a case of suspected homicide a fractured hyoid decisively points to an extremely violent strike or to a possible strangulation. A sudden and powerful pressure can also crush the larynx resulting in an enormous stimulus to the laryngeal nerves which activating the epi-glottis cause breathing to be inhibited and result in loss of consciousness and death, only a tracheotomy will resolve this trauma. The Mahd Suhy carried out in

Phra Ram Now Sorn must be both sudden and violent, like an arrow shot upwards; if this move is correctly executed and the target is hit precisely the effect can be fatal for the opponent.

Martial applications

This technique of Rama has always been seen as a purely defensive action. The emphasis was exclusively placed on the forearm moving up to block an attack coming from above. Whilst in reality, although it is true than defense represents 50% of the whole technique, it is just as important to know that the arrow that is shot (the very short upwards blow to the throat) represents a lethal counterattack that often reaches its target without being blocked. The efficacy of this action consists in considering the parry (the act of drawing the bow) and the counterattack (shooting the arrow) as a whole, a complete and indissoluble movement; only thus can we completely appreciate the fatal efficiency of Rama's bow, so clearly cited here. The adversaries' attacks from which we have to defend ourselves are all rained down on us, from a short range, by one or two elbow blows or by a punch.

Vs downward elbow strike

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)



Vs double downward elbow strike

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 3, 4)



Vs double downward elbow strike

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 5, 6, 7)



Vs jumping elbow strike

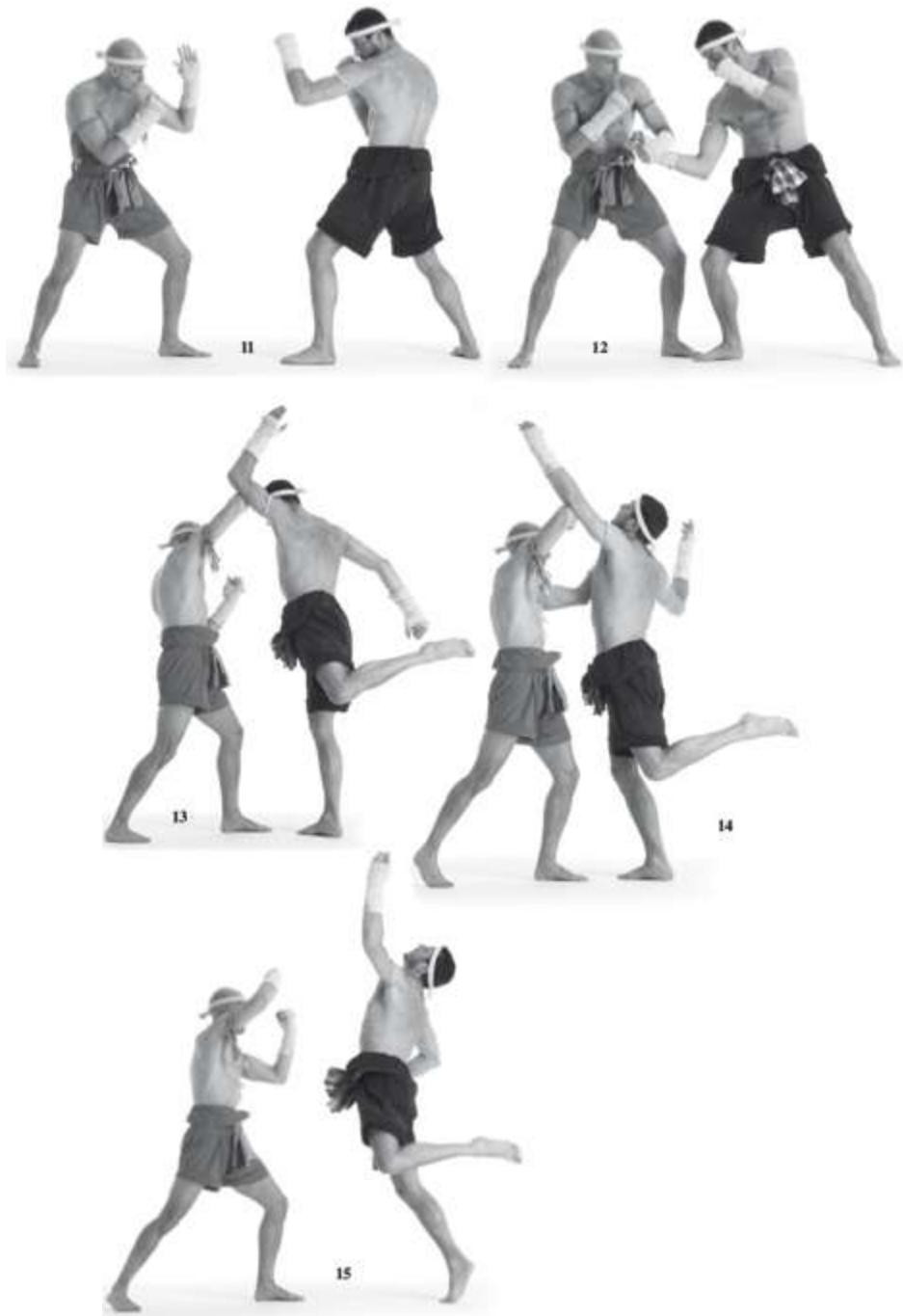
SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 8, 9, 10)



Vs punch and elbow strike

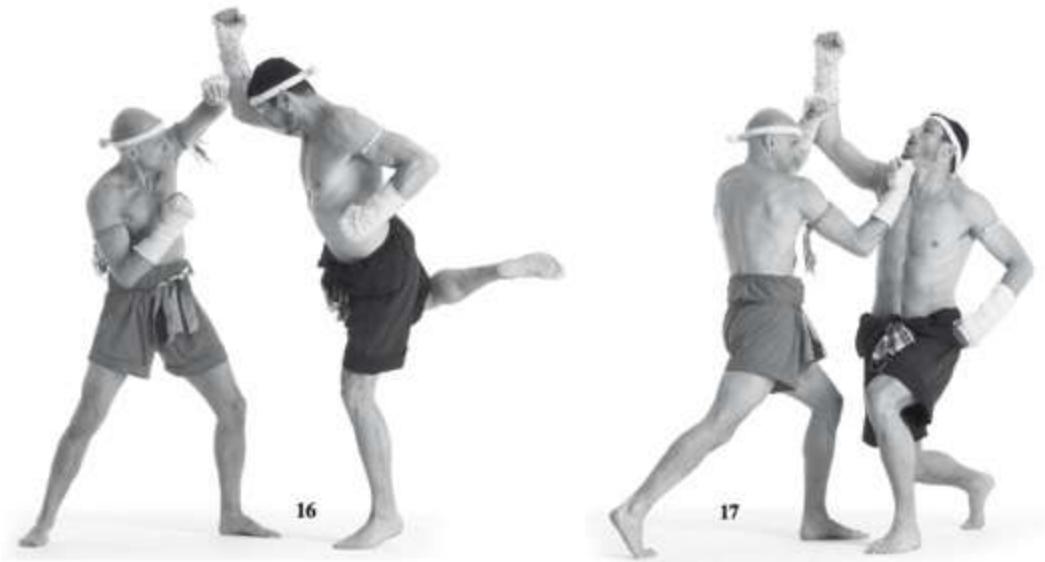
SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)

Kho Sach Vo Thuat Phi Loi Nhuan



Vs hammer punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 16, 17)





Chapter 4.6 - **Look Mai techniques**

LOOK MAI N. 5: KRAISORN KHAAM HUAI

Translation: The lion (Kraisorn) crosses the stream



ไกรสารข้ามห้าย

The origin

The diagonal step performed to avoid an opponent's attack and to prepare for counter attack symbolises the mythological lion that with one leap crosses the stream. The lion cited in this Look Mai corresponds to a Kraisorn (or Graisorn), an inhabitant of Himmapan forest who can be found on the slopes of Mount Meru. This mount is the abode of the gods, a sort of Mount Olympus of Hindu tradition, situated somewhere in correspondence to the

Himalayas. At its feet is a lush forest inhabited by fantastic creatures that have inspired South East Asian artists many times. Amongst these creatures is the Kraisorn, one of the most powerful, with his muscular body, tawny mane and fire-red paws. Pure Kraisorn is represented as the perfect hunter, gifted with a large head, powerful jaws and strong and fast paws. His technique of hunting was the inspiration for the creators of the Look Mai Kraisorn Khaam Huai. Once the prey (often large herbivores such as deers or wild horses) has been singled out, the lion slowly advances circling the victim to surprise it with a lightning fast attack that nearly always culminates with a leap. The power of the attack itself is so strong that bites and blows from the paws are only used to finish off the prey. Beyond the myth, even in history the great cat has left its mark on Siamese culture, infact in 12th century the lion (at that time diffuse in forests in the north) was considered in Thailand a venerable animal, and was seen as a protector of Buddhist doctrine.

The story of Phra Wetsandon is the original source of the exploits of Kraisorn



After his enlightenment which occurred in 500 BC, the Buddha attained perfect knowledge, and, as part of this knowledge, he was able to remember the details of his previous 547 incarnations on his path to enlightenment (fig. III). The Buddha told these stories to his followers during the forty years of his teaching. These stories are called the “Jataka Tales” and, although they were originally handed down orally, have long been written down. Among the 547 stories, the last ten stories are considered particularly important in providing examples of edifying moral virtues. In Thailand they are called the Tosachat or “The ten incarnations”. Each one of these stories describes a desirable aspect of human behavior that, all together, will bring you to the final enlightenment. Many temples in Thailand have mural paintings that illustrate each of the ten steps. The tenth and final episode is the most important and tells of the life of Prince Wetsandon (or Prince Vessantara in the Indian version), which represents the virtue of charity. This embodiment is considered particularly important because it is in this embodiment that the Buddha lived before he was born as Sakya family’s Siddhartha Gautama from Nepal. The life of Phra Wetsandon is well known in Thailand, it is documented in textbooks, sermons and on many temples’ mural paintings. The story is narrated in the Maha Wetsandon Chadok which has been written in various poetic forms: the Rai, the Klong, the Karp and in prose (Roi Kiew). In Thailand, every year, most of the temples dedicate three days to the reading of the story of Prince Wetsandon. During the festival called Thet Maha Chat or “The Sermons on the great incarnation”, these are sung by the monks in the Rai form and are divided into 13 khans. In his sermon called “the great forest” to indicate the area close to the refuge of Prince Wetsandon, the Himmapan Forest is cited, in which fantastic creatures beyond any imagination live. Here is the residing place of Kraisorn the mythical lion who inspired the Khru Muay so much that they based their devastating technique,

Kraisorn Khaam Huai, on his movements. In the sermon, 4 types of lions and 10 families of elephants are indicated as well as trees endowed by incredible characteristics. The types of lions are the followings:

Tinnaratchasi, Kalasing, Pandusuramarukhin and Kraisorn Singharat (Singha in Thai is the current word for lion). The latter, is the lion which inspired the Look Mai technique. It is described in a lengthier version than the others, as follows: the tip of the tail, the paws and the mane are lacquer red, he has red stripes on his back and is as large as a big cow. The King of wild beasts lives in caves, but loves to hunt near water courses; in the afternoon whilst out in search of food his mighty roar echoes loudly in the forest.

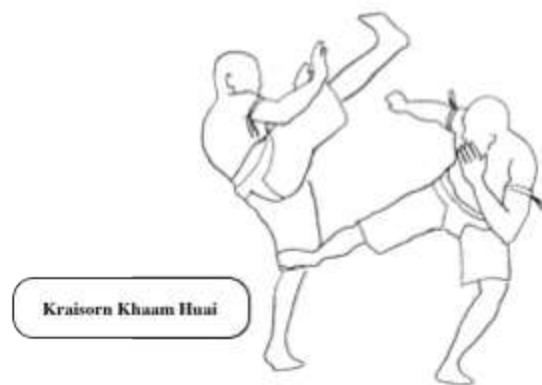
The technique

The lion is seen in all cultures as the King of beasts and is the most ferocious of all felines, even more aggressive than the tiger. The powerful body of the lion bases the efficiency of his attacks on a long and unobserved stalk towards his prey followed by an explosive jump, which, with one action gives him the upperhand over his victim. The lion, not being a runner, needs to develop perfect footwork to approach and attack its prey giving them no chance of escape. The slow steps and the leap are the foundation for the effectiveness of Kraisorn Khaam Hwai, the technique which, if carried out correctly, leaves the adversary with no chance. In Muay Boran the art of movement for attacking or defending is summarized in the Yang Sam Khum

movement, the footwork par excellence of Siamese discipline. Every martial discipline from the Far East is characterised by a setting of the guard position and movements that make them unique. Muay Thai has been transformed over the past 60/70 years in its homeland into a combat sport, starting from a much older martial array; the result of this process was the homologation of the basic elements such as the guard position and the fundamental movements, which has been inspired, to a large extent by Western boxing. In reality, in the golden era of traditional Muay, which usually coincides with the Ayutthaya period (from the mid 14th century to the second half of the 18th century) Thai Martial Arts were characterised by a particular type of footwork and combat guard styles that were inspired by a legendary exploit dear to the Thai people for centuries. The footwork that we are referring to is the Yang Sam Khum the name of which derives once again from a quintessential Siamese epic poem, the Ramakien. Phra Ram, in one of his earthly manifestations, was called by Shiva to punish the demon (or Rakhshasa) Tatawan, for acts of oppression on the inhabitants of Himmapan Forest at the feet of Mount Meru. Noble Rama, in order to confront and defeat the rebel demon adopted a precise technique, transforming himself into an innocuous Brahmin in order to approach the adversary without raising suspicion. When his opponent was near enough he would then revert back to his real self, ferociously attacking the enemy, “closing the distance” with only three thundering steps. The demon was easily killed and the combat tactic used by Rama (the three steps that from then on were called Yang Sam Khum) remained as the winning “footwork” to be followed and used by all Thai warriors. As in the legend, the Nak Muay learns to move in a slow and seemingly inoffensive way when the distance from the opponent is too great to attack with one single movement. The distance is closed with the opponent remaining unsuspecting of the imminent danger. Once the right range for attack has been reached, the movements become rapid and relentless like those of a lion leaping on its prey. This is the secret of Look Mai Kraisorn Khaam Huai which if mastered can overwhelm, in one blow, even taller and heavier adversaries.

The vital points

The anterior cruciate ligament of the knee joint is a ligament that is most commonly damaged when the supporting leg of the person who is kicking is struck by the **Kraisorn Khaam Huai** technique. Knee twisting is a common cause of muscle strains or tearing of the ligament. When it is damaged you can often hear a muffled sound of breaking and the leg can suddenly give way. In addition to the conspicuous swelling and pain you feel, you are no longer able to stand up and the knee remains unstable for a long time. Little muscle strains of the anterior cruciate ligament can heal over time, but serious tearing requires surgery.

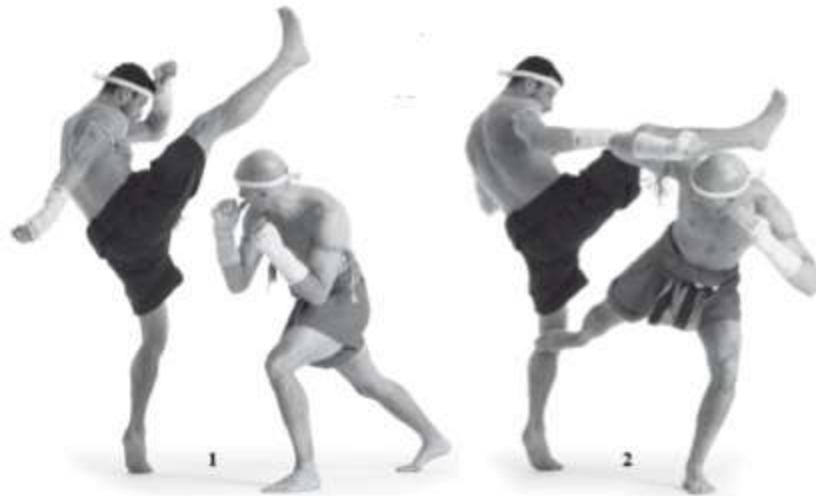


Martial applications

The Look Mai of Kraisorn, the mythical lion, bases its deadly efficiency on a lethal combination between sophisticated angular movements and low kicks that are extremely difficult to counter. When one is suddenly attacked by straight kicks aimed at one's face, connecting in fractions of a second, the only efficient defense consists in using a fast diagonal step which puts the defender into a position that allows to evade the attack whilst at the same time being in an optimal position to counterattack. Combining shifting, step and side-kick to the supporting leg of the adversary, Look Mai Kraisorn Khaam Huai results as being a technique that is virtually unstoppable. In the best case scenario, a loss of balance, structural damage to the leg that have been struck and a general unsettling of the opponent's emotional state, will be the consequences of the low kick.

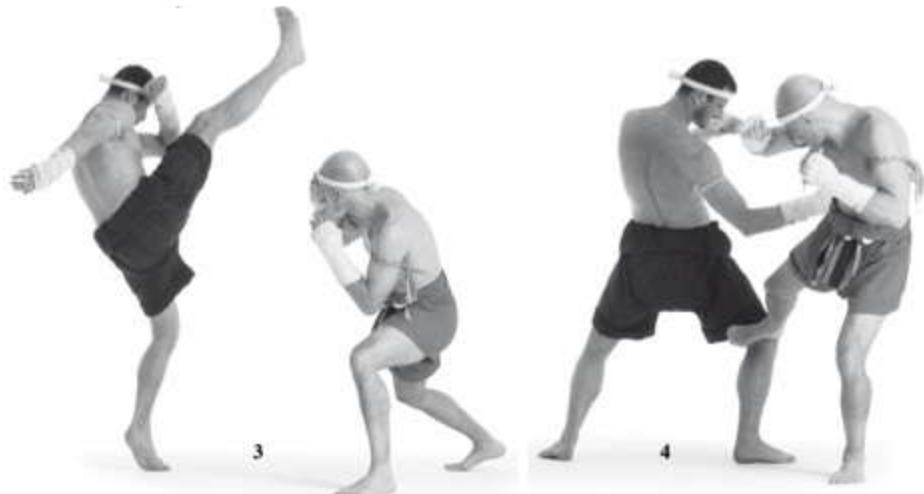
Vs straight kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)



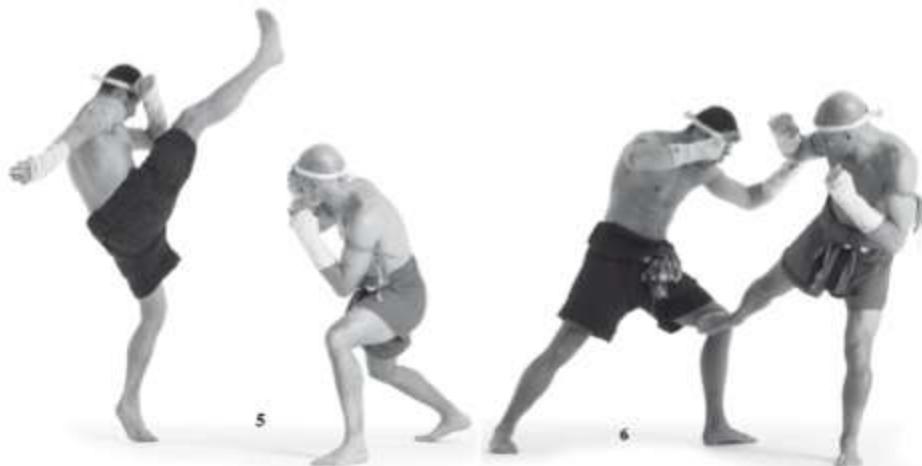
Vs straight kick

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 3, 4)



Vs straight kick

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 5, 6)



Vs straight kick

SOLUTION 4 (fig. 7, 8)



Vs roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 1 (fig. 9, 10, 11)



9



10

11

Vs front kick

SOLUTION 1 (fig. 12, 13)





Chapter 4.7 - **Look Mai techniques**

LOOK MAI N. 6: KWANG LIEW LANG

Translation: The deer looks back



ກວາງເໜີຢວຫລັງ

The origin

In one of the highlights of Ramakien's story, Nang Sita, the bride princess of Rama, follows into the forest a beautiful golden deer. She asks her custodians Rama and Lakshman (the younger brother of Rama) to capture the deer for her. However, she doesn't suspect that the deer disguises in itself a

deadly trap. In fact, the deer is none other than a Rakshasa called Mareet (a Raksasha is a human eating demon, often cited in myths derived from Hinduism or Buddhism – fig. IV). Mareet (or Maricha in the original Indian version) has been sent by the Lord of the Demons Totsakan in order to trick Princess Sita and lure her faithful protectors away from her. Once the princess was alone she could easily be captured by Totsakan himself (as illustrated in the other Look Mai inspired from this story, Khun Yak Panang). The deer is often identified as a powerful object of desire, its body or even just its horns, in many myths, are made of gold; and almost always represent a shy and elusive female, as in the Ramakien episode described above. In the same way in which the Rakshasa has tricked Rama and captured Nang Sita, we have to approach our opponents fooling them with a feint and then, adopting the posture of the deer which looks over its shoulder, striking them surprisingly (for example with a powerful backwards kick).

The real protagonist: the Sambar deer is the biggest existing species in Thailand. Its natural habitat corresponds with the rain forests situated more than 600 metres above sea level. His techniques of attack include blows from his horns, bites and kicks carried out mostly with his back legs.



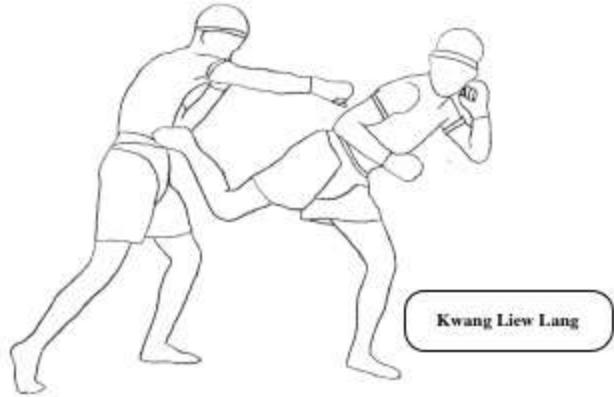
The technique

The technique of deception is based on the principle of Loh Lo, luring into the trap; faking to attempt an escape and then unexpectedly striking the unaware adversary. Just like it was done in the Ramayana by the Rakshasa Mareet who transformed herself into a Golden Deer creating a diversion, so must the Nak Muay be trained in order to surprise opponents. Numerous myths and legends recount the concept of warfare by means of camouflage and surprise attacks. Turning into an apparently harmless being is often the stratagem used by mythological characters in order to draw near to a particularly dangerous adversary, without raising suspicion. In this way the attack can be both devastating and definitive. Muay Boran masters have taken these tactics to heart and have included them amongst their most important precepts, the necessity for a good fighter not to carry out straight forward attacks, in their words “banal actions”, that can easily be detected and blocked. To create continuous doubt within the adversary with a series of feints and draws, thereby leaving him always insecure of what our real intentions are; this is the real secret of Kwang Liew Lang, which conceals a sophisticated fighting principle valid for any kind of confrontation. A straight back-kick is an attack typical of the deer, horse or mule; if the fighter is well trained, such a kick which uses powerful muscle tissues such as those of the gluteus and the back can cause serious damage. The main targets of the Muay Thai backwards kick (called Tiip Glab Lang) executed striking by the heel, the forefoot or the outstretched toes are the knees, the groin, the liver, the solar plexus, the throat and the chin. The tactics which must always be followed to bring off this type of stroke consist in creating a smokescreen by

faking a punch or a kick, which mask the fighter's real intentions. An efficient strategy consists in inducing the opponent in a certain direction to then easily attack him with a backwards kick, knowing exactly where the target will be. Another way consists in faking a high blow causing the opponent to raise his arms thus leaving open the trunk (abdomen). To avoid exposing the genitals whilst carrying out a back kick, the striking leg should be kept at an angle, with the knee bent downwards thus using the knee itself as a barrier to eventual counter blows from the adversary (such as straight kicks or upwards roundhouse kicks).

The vital points

The liver is a vital organ; at this point in time there is nothing that can compensate for the lack of liver function. An abdominal trauma can be bevelled or penetrating and can damage the internal organs, above all it can cause lesions to the spleen or the liver. A powerful abdominal trauma can be the source of serious internal bleeding and infection, and surgery may become necessary. The Deer Looks Back technique (**Kwang Liew Lang**) places the Nak Muay in a perfect position from which to unleash the enormous power of a back kick that strikes, with the heel, the abdominal area. In the worst of cases the liver can be bruised or lacerated and a hematoma may develop. If the liver is seriously damaged causing internal hemorrhage, emergency surgery will be necessary to stop the bleeding.



Le applicazione marziali

From a series of measurements carried out by specialised institutes it has been found that the deer kick (or horse kick, or mule kick, according to which fighting style is being used) is one of the most powerful techniques used in Martial Arts. Being hit by such a kick in the abdominal or thoracic area can cause serious damage. The practical problem resides in the difficulty of reaching the target with a back kick when matched against a vigilant opponent, who in most cases will block the attack by the forearms, causing at most a backwards falling movement. The finesse of the Look Mai “the deer looks back” resides in the practical information given to the Muay Boran student. This codified information recounts how to strike only at the right moment and only to the vital points of the opponent, without wasting any energy, aiming to the elimination of the enemy with just one powerful kick.

In attack

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2, 3)





In attack

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 4, 5, 6)





In attack

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 7)



In attack

SOLUTION 4 (FIG. 8, 9, 10)



8



9



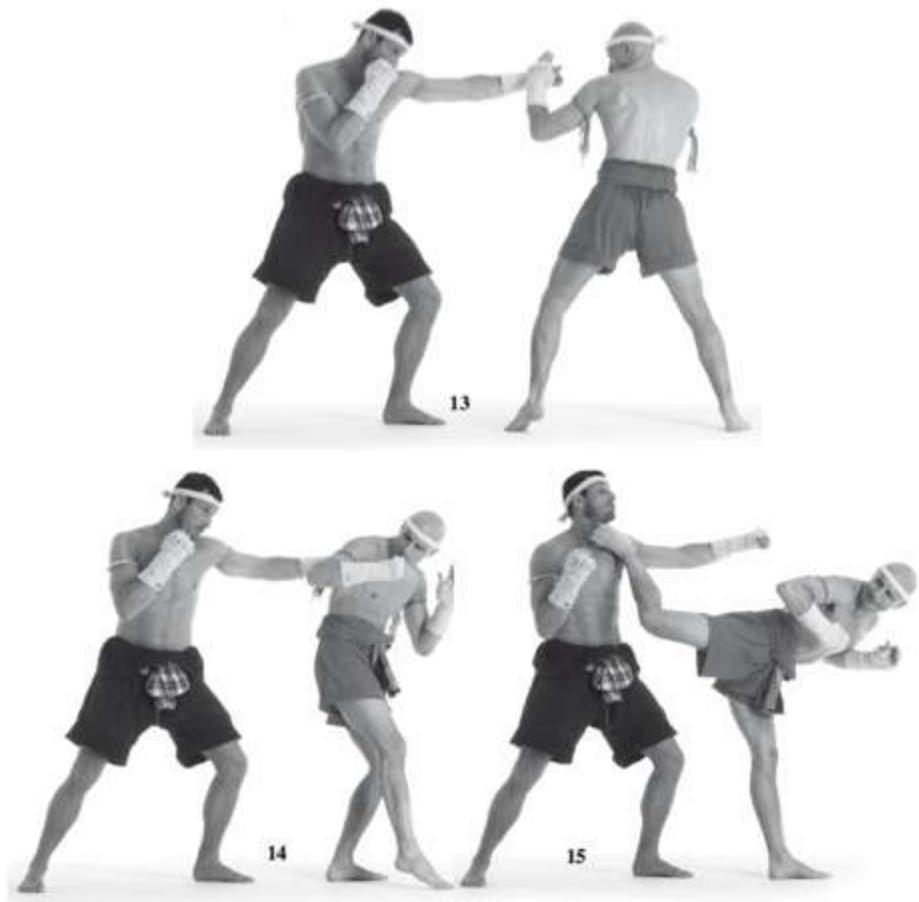
In attack

SOLUTION 5 (FIG. 11, 12)



Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 13, 14, 15)



Vs roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 16, 17)





Chapter 4.8 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 7: HIRAN MUAN PAEN DIN

Translation: Hiran (Hiranyaksha) overturns the Earth



ဟိရဏတံမားနေပေါင်

The origin

The myth of Hiranyaksha the giant demon revolves around his punishment of holding the Earth (believed flat) on his shoulders. Look Mai Hiran Muan Paen Din has immortalised the moment of the giant's rebellion against his destiny, when he turns the Earth upside down throwing it into the chaos of the underworld; it then becomes imprisoned down there in a kind of Cosmic Ocean where it seems it will never arise again. Phra Narai (the Hindu God Vishnu) cannot stand this arrogant gesture and decides to punish him; with this in mind he transforms himself into a white wild boar in order to kill the giant and bring order back to the world. The divine Narai gets the better of the giant making the world reemerge from the Ocean's bottom, putting it

back in its proper place and making all as it was before. Looking deeper at the character of Hiranyaksha (whose name derives from Sanscrit and means “Golden Eye”) we find that in Hin-duism he was the demon son of Diti and Kashyapa, who fought his battle against Vishnu for a thousand years. His image appears as a decorative motif in the Royal Palace of Bangkok, immortalised in the act of holding up the world.

The technique

Absorbing the attack by turning around and striking a surprise blow with the elbow: in order to create chaos and confuse the opponent it is necessary to learn to change one's own point of view. Looking at the realities of combat from an unusual perspective really confuses the orthodox rules of a fight and the way these rules are generally understood. In the same way the giant Hiranyaksha threw down the Earth overturning the natural order of things so should the Nak Muay use his wiles in order to surprise his opponent, and consequently exploit this element of surprise to his own advantage, in order to subdue his enemy. Great Masters of the past have affirmed that the art of striking with Sok Glab (the spinning back elbow movement which represents the crucial gesture of Hiran's Look Mai) is slowly disappearing. The use of this refined technique (which if executed correctly can cause cuts or even serious brain trauma) demands for body dynamics that are difficult to adapt to the haste that is required in the training of a modern professional ring athlete. In the distant past of Muay Boran Khru Muay subjected their students to a long period of apprenticeship to allow them to gain the necessary motor skills for effectively studying the movements necessary for combat. Before Sok Glab can be effectively used, angular movements must be perfected

(necessary to gain mastery in twisting the body) as well as the Loh Lo strategies for feints and draws (essential to lure the adversary towards our blow which must strike at the same time of his attack). Only when all this is in place can speed be used and the power of the elbow's impact be increased by practicing on different types of targets, for hours. Such targets as little lemons hanging from tree branches or the trunks of banana trees that were used as "heavy bags" in ancient times. This period of training was essential in order to develop the ability of the athlete, in order to understand how to strike with the hard part of the elbow, avoiding impact with the most sensitive zone rich with tendons and nerve endings. The Sok Glab technique has a long tradition of exceptional performers who in the past have gained the fame of being experts in this refined counterattack movement. One of the last representatives of this art of the spinning elbow was the famous Pol Pra Pradang, known as the wild boar because of the devastating power of his blows (his real name being Pol Poon Serm). Pradang, one of the most famed experts of Muay Lopburi, retired after having taken part in more than 350 bouts both in Muay Thai and Western Boxing, even against opponents over weighing him by many kilos and without ever being knocked down or knocked out. As well as having developed a legendary Ram Muay (Hanuman Tob Yoon), Pol became a real master in the application of the Hiran Muan Paen Din strategy. Thanks to evasive movements with the aim of provoking uncontrolled attacks from the adversary, making them nervous and forcing them to drop their defenses, he succeeded in paving the way to bringing about a decisive blow. Once the opponent became confused and nervous due to these evasive movements, he would, with lightning fast action, absorb the most powerful blow aimed at him redirecting the power of its impact and concentrating all his energy into the tip of his elbow, which would then relentlessly strike on the chin, or the temple of the adversary. The victim, already unconscious, would then fall to the ground unable to keep fighting.

The vital points

In order to understand the mechanism of “concussion” one needs to look at the brain’s anatomy. It is surrounded by cerebrospinal fluid that protects it from minor blows but not major ones (as in the example of the spinning back elbow of Look Mai **Hiran Muan Paen Din**), which cause the head to make a sharp, snapping twist. Impacts, which cause concussion, can be linear, oblique or rotated, in the latter case causing a rapid movement along the sagittal plane (generated by an up-ward blow) or along the axial plane (originating from a circular blow). This latter one is the example of the elbow blow in question. When this blow is struck, the impact by the elbow generates a powerful rotation effect on the target causing the head to twist around its centre of gravity in an explosive way. The effect is that of concussion in which the brain collides against the interior walls of the skull and normal cellular processes becomes altered, causing loss of consciousness and potentially generating a series of mild to serious post-traumatic consequences ranging from memory losses and inability to focus to headaches.

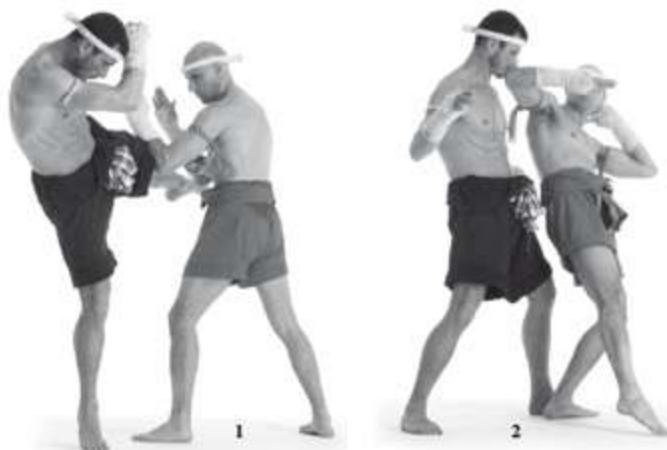


Martial applications

This Look Mai is part of the technical knowledge appertaining to all regional styles, even if, in some cases called by a different name. The action goes seamlessly from the defense, carried out for example by absorbing the impact of an adversary's kick (whose leg will be damaged if we use an elbow block against his thigh) to a violent counterattack, which often proves decisive if it reaches a vital point. The efficiency of Giant Hiran's technique is amazing; it unites the "soft aspect" of defense which absorbs and redirects the attack, while at the same time throwing the opponent off-balance, to the "hard" aspect, the elbow strike to the head which, charged with the power of torsion that the legs have passed through to the body and the shoulders, is capable of knocking out even a massive opponent.

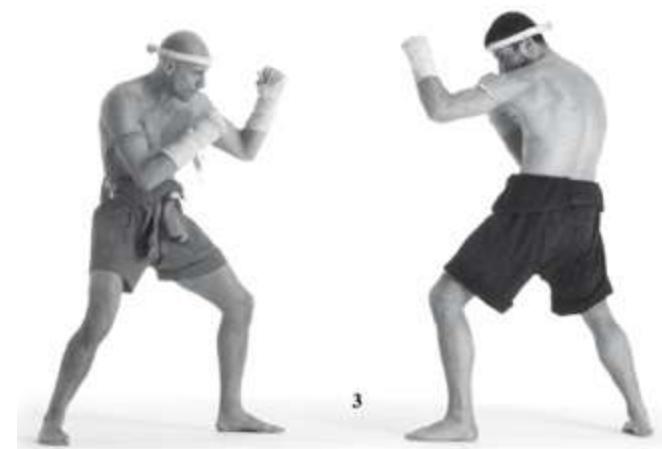
Vs middle round kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)



Vs middle round kick

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 3, 4, 5)



3



4



5

Vs middle round kick

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 6, 7)



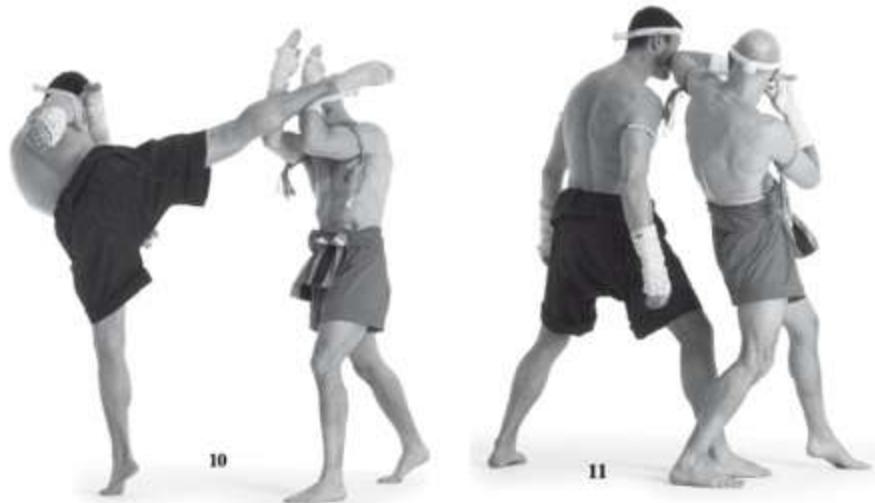
Vs middle round kick

SOLUTION 4 (FIG. 8, 9)



Vs high round kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 10, 11)



Vs roundhouse kick to the hip

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 12, 13)



Vs roundhouse kick, with leg grab

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 14, 15, 16)





Chapter 4.9 - **Look Mai techniques**

LOOK MAI N. 8: NAKA MUD BADAN

Translation: Naka dives into the depths



นาค�ุคบาดาล

The origin

Naka or Naga is the name of a divinity of Hindu origin, which takes the form of an enormous snake or, to be more specific, a hooded King Cobra. The Naka is present in the legends that from India spread into the whole of South East Asia. The Nakas (fig. V) are multi headed (usually seven) dragon-snakes which are venerated because they symbolize the energy of life, they are the custodians of the treasures of the earth, inhabitants of the underworld, genies of water (their element) and are connected to the lunar cycles. In a famous Hindu legend (even now represented in a group of sculptures to be found at Bangkok International Airport) a Naka, Vasuki, allows his body to be wrapped around Mount Meru (the axis of the world) and then be pulled in opposite directions by the gods and anti-gods, giving rise to the formation of

the Milky Way and thus creating the treasures of nature (milk, medicine, wine etc). A famous king of Nakas, the dragon-serpent Muchilinda, can also be found in Buddhism. He protected Buddha during a storm offering his coils as a seat and his hood with seven heads as an umbrella. From the Mahabharata, an epic Indian poem, rivalry between the Naka and the mythical Garuda birds emerges. These birds are fantastic eagles which carry Lord Vishnu for eternity (the Garuda is also the symbol for the State of Thailand). They are both sons of Kashyapa but with different mothers, Kadru for the Naka and Vinata for the Garuda. They represent different life forces at odds with each other but both are as necessary to life as water (Naka's element) and fire (Garuda's element). According to some interpretations both one and the other represent different forms of the same dragon (the swimming dragon and the flying dragon). They both symbolise the unceasing conflict between matter (Naka) and spirit (Garuda), two elements that coexist in every human being.



The technique

Naka, the great snake, dives into the Ocean Kingdom and in doing so strikes with his poisonous tail (low side kick or high roundhouse kick). The snake is an extremely flexible creature that can move rapidly over ground and can swim without the benefit of either legs or fins. It can coil itself and jump high or forwards thanks to the power and the elasticity of its muscles. There are two major categories of snakes, poisonous and non-poisonous. The latter attack their prey and squeeze it in their coils until it suffocates and its bones are broken. Instead, the poisonous snakes base their techniques on lightning fast attacks concluded with a fatal bite. This is the principle of Look Mai Naka Mood Badan, exploding towards the opponent and striking in a lethal way. This lethal strike is carried out by targeting the knees or the sides of the neck, both extremely sensitive anatomical zones. The first target is the knee which is struck by forcefully bringing the heel forward with a strong piston-like action. One of the most logical consequences is a distortion or even a tearing of tendons. The second target is the neck, to be hit with a roundhouse kick (Tae Chieng or Tae Dtawad) carried out by the shinbone or the instep. If the Tae succeeds in landing correctly on target against the carotid sinus, the result will certainly be an immediate knock out.

The vital points

Version 1: : low kick

Naka Mood Badan in its first fundamental version teaches the Nak Muay to target the supporting leg of the person, who is aiming to kick our head, using a side kick that impacts with the sole of the foot or the heel. The area to aim for with a low kick (Tiip Khang Laan) is not the knee but the thigh area immediately adjacent to this joint. If the blow is executed at the right time, the leg undergoes powerful pressure and the knee tendons, which attach the muscle to the bone, can be hyperextended or ripped, in particular the patellar tendon. If the tendon is completely torn then bending or extending the leg becomes impossible, this type of lesion is extremely serious in that a completely torn tendon can only be repaired by a surgeon.



Version 2: high kick

Syncope is pathology characterized by a transient loss of consciousness with an inability to maintain postural tone and is associated with alterations in blood circulation and respiratory function. Syncope can be caused by a poor supply of blood to the brain. Over stimulation of the carotid sinus can cause a particular kind of syncope; the activation of the sino-carotid reflex can cause brief instances of reversible asystole or even just a notable reduction in blood pressure and fainting. This is what can happen at the moment in which the shin of a Thai Boxer executing a roundhouse kick hits the neck of his opponent. If the goal of a fighter is to knock out his opponent, one of the most effective methods to reach it, is certainly a roundhouse kick which is launched by bringing the shin towards the opponent's neck. This action is called Tae Kaen Ko in Thai language. The explosive power of such a blow and the sensitivity of the target (the sino-carotid zone) make it almost impossible, if the target is reached, to keep on fighting. There are many styles in which a roundhouse kick to the neck can be performed, one of the most widely used is the snake's kick, exemplified in an excellent manner by the Look Mai Naka Mood Badan. In this technique the kicking leg may follow a downward trajectory (Tae Dtawad), the shin (or the instep) striking the opponent's neck like an axe, causing an immediate knockout.

MARTIAL APPLICATIONS

Naka's low side kick bases its terrible effectiveness on two elements the dodging of the opponent's head kick and the power of our side kick. This

kick is thrown with the whole body in an almost horizontal position. In this position, which in effect simulates the movement of a snake on the ground, it is easy to avoid the adversary's high kick whilst at the same time side kicking with a perfect alignment of bones and muscles that is ideal for bringing explosive power to the blow. In addition, the siamese Khru Muay were well aware that whilst performing a roundhouse kick to the head a boxer will inevitably open a weak point to the enemy, even if just for a fraction of a second: this weak point is the supporting leg. If the timing is optimal a Nak Muay who knows how to use the snake's Look Mai can attack, with an explosive technique such as Tiip Khang Laan his opponent's weak spot when this is exposed and indefendable. This is such a highly sophisticated move that, if well executed, is unstoppable.

Vs roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1)



Vs roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 2)



Vs roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 3)



Vs roundhouse kick rotante

SOLUTION 4 (FIG. 4, 5, 6)



Vs straight punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 7, 8)





Chapter 4.10 - **Look Mai techniques**

LOOK MAI N. 9: HANUMAN TAWAI WAEN

Translation: Hanuman presents the ring



ហនុមានគាយខោវ

The origin

Hanuman (Hanumat in the *Ramayana*) is a Hindu demi-god, of legendary power and a faithful devotee of Rama, the main character in the Ramakien epic. Hanuman is the Wanorn's (Vanara in the Indian version) army commander. The Wanorn is a race with monkey features and he himself has the appearance of a big white monkey. He is considered to be the son of the god of wind Vayu (Phra Pai in Thai) and as such has the gift of flight. During the seeking of Sita and in her freeing from her forced captivity by the demon Totsakan, Hanuman plays a fundamental role. He uses all his powers (flight, ability to transform, ability to grow bigger, fighting and cunning skills) to find the princess and restore her to her groom Rama. In one of the episodes of the poem Hanuman is the first to discover where Sita is being held prisoner.

(in Totsakan's palace at Longka) and he offers to immediately go there thanks to his incredible powers for a “reconnaissance”. Once this was done and enough information was gathered, Rama and his troupes were finally able to throw themselves into the final battle against the enemy. To make himself known to the princess, Hanuman is given Rama's ring, which in the presence of Sita he shows her to prove her groom's love and to reassure her that she will soon be freed. This special moment of the offering of the ring is reproduced both on the wall paintings of Bangkok Royal Palace and in Khon traditional theatre performances both of the past and today, so dear to Thai people. This same moment was immortalised with great mastery by Khru Muay of past in the Look Mai Hanuman Tawai Waen.

The technique



The gesture in which Hanuman shows Rama's ring in order for Princess Sita, who has been imprisoned by the demon Totsakan, to recognize him is replicated in this powerful double-punch attack, carried out by lowering oneself, thus dodging the attack, with the Joh technique and then by raising oneself with the Lug technique from a squat position. From a technical perspective there is no doubt that the anonymous creators of Muay carefully observed monkeys and their way of fighting in order to steal their "secrets". They are very intelligent animals; their way of fighting is based on the unpredictability of their actions; a monkey jumps, rolls, turns about and strikes unexpectedly from all directions. The legendary Hanuman combines all these traits, amplified due to his semi divine nature.

Hanuman Tawai Waen represents one of the favoured attacks of the son of the wind which strikes with both fists whilst leaning forwards or jumping upwards thanks to an explosive movement of all the muscles in the body, from the arms to the legs. The Muay Lopburi style has made this its own technique developing it down to the smallest particular in order to make it a decisive blow.

Amongst the many devastating actions used by Nak Muay over the

centuries, a large family of techniques has been inspired by the agile movements of Hanuman and has characterised Muay Boran, helping Siamese warriors survive in countless battles. The particular techniques of which we are addressing are commonly gathered under the term “techniques of Hanuman” and they are mostly attacks carried out whilst jumping. A good warrior, a Muay expert should be able to face any kind of adversary, be he alone or in a group and what better way then a flying assault carried out with the ferocity of an aggressive monkey in order to surprise and defeat with a single blow the most powerful enemy or rapidly break through encircling attackers? In Muay every part of the body is used when striking a blow whilst jumping: the head; the shoulders; the fists; the forearms; the elbows; the hips; the knees; the shins and the feet. Targets can be practically all the sensitive zones of the enemy, from the head to the legs. The various natural weapons can be combined and used in conjunction with each other (for example a knee and an elbow) making it even more difficult to block this offensive action. Only someone who has undergone a sudden, violent flying attack hurled from an “impossible” distance (from very long or very close range) can fully appreciate the danger posed by these extremely effective techniques.

There are many criticisms surrounding the indiscriminate use of flying attacks in combat: the vulnerability of the attacker during ‘flight’; his precarious equilibrium as he lands; the predictability of the techniques; the difficulty of performing the blow with enough speed (with respect to the same blow carried out on the ground). In actuality, such criticisms mainly refer to jumping kicks and in some ways are not unfounded, but, if we widen our technical perspective to the use of other blows (punches, knee and elbow strikes) and refine strategies suitable for those attacks, the problems highlighted will to a major extent be overcome.

This does not exclude the fact that a fully rounded fighter should have a perfectly balanced arsenal, combining the heavy artillery of the flying techniques with a powerful supply of holds, locks, throws and short range

blows. This is, in a nutshell, the objective of the lethal techniques of Hanuman, the mythical white monkey.



Theory and technique of the jumping attack

Generally, a jumping attack can be used directing the jump upwards or forwards, according to how far away the adversary is and which type of technique is being used. In performing a flying attack the blow can occur at the moment in which the body leaves the ground (as with the knee blow called Kao Dode), whilst “flying” (as with the punch called Gradot Mahd Trong) or whilst landing (as with the elbow blow called Gradot Sok Sahb). The crucial element for transforming a spectacular choreographed movement into an effective and difficult to defend attack is the range at which it is performed. An excessive run-up, if needed for the action to be carried out during an exhibition or whilst practising a stylised form, in

reality makes the flying attack too predictable. The vast majority of “real” flying techniques are performed at the same distance as a kick or even closer. Only thus can one express all the power of these violent surprise attacks in a really efficient way. The second fundamental element necessary to move on from the choreographed phase to putting it into practise is represented by studying real fight situations into which the various jumping movements could be inserted. The myth, according to which, jumping blows (with or without the help of a support such as a long stick with which to increase the elevation of the attack) were performed in order to unseat horsemen, even if proved, belongs to a bygone era and similar situations would be difficult to encounter today. It is therefore fundamental to adapt attacks to realistic current situations, be they in the context of self-defense (civil or military) or sport (on the tatami, in the ring or in the cage).

A jumping attack:

- Serves to increase the power of the blow using total body mass, above all if the adversary is heavier or more robust. The whole body is utilised like a missile shot against a target, whether the head, the body or the legs. As well as more obvious examples such as kicks or knee blows, it's also to be observed how the power of punches increases notably if performed whilst jumping. A fact well known by western Bare Knuckle boxers who often combined their long range attacks with a leap with devastating effects.

- Serves to increase the elevation of the blow. Again in the example of a more imposing adversary, attacking whilst jumping allows one to be raised above the target and thus able to strike the head even of a much taller aggressor. Above all when jumping on the spot, it is essential to acquire great explosive power in the legs and a body weight that is as close as

possible to the perfect one for your stature.

- Serves to increase the range of the blow, in particular in the long jump version. Against an adversary with long arms and legs, a well-timed jumping attack allows one to overcome an eventual barrage of stop hits. In this way one can close the gap, in a single move, going from any position out of range of the adversary's kicks, to striking range.
- Is capable of making the most of gravity, in the example in which the blow is struck whilst landing. A downward elbow strike like Sok Sahb, if performed whilst jumping is capable of unloading all the body weight whilst descending, concentrating the tremendous impact into the tip of the elbow. As you can guess, the effects will be devastating.
- Serves to diminish to a minimum the friction of roundhouse blows. As the foot is not touching the ground during torsion it is not subject to the braking effect of contact with the ground (note that the hips have to work with greater force during torsions in flight).
- It can cause notable loss of balance for the adversary who is struck. Once all the body mass of the executor is launched in flight towards the opponent, the body is capable of impacting like an enormous bullet, charged with powerful kinetic energy, against which it is difficult to keep one's balance. If the attack does not cause a KO directly, it does however put the executor in a favourable position to carry out further attacks.
- Offers a great surprise effect. If performed from a distance from which the

adversary expects a kick attack (long range) or rather a punch (medium range), jumping blows can reveal a nasty surprise for the person on the receiving end. In this case mounting an adequate defense, above all if the attack is multiple (using more than one weapon at a time) becomes very difficult. It's for this reason that flying attacks, above all if preceded by a feint, are often defined as "changing" techniques.

- It is very useful to quickly close the distance thus enabling a boxer to stick to an escaping adversary, or to close the gap from a long range without passing through the middle range. Expert close range fighters know well that the crucial phase of their strategy, the one in which they are most vulnerable is when they are closing the distance. Being able to overcome this critical moment with a single action (potentially definitive if the attack hits home) gives it a priceless tactical value.
- Can be used in any attack by overcoming an obstacle, for instance in a street fighting situation.
- Can be used to break through an encirclement in the unfortunate event of an attack by several opponents or to evade their blows with a vertical, sideways or backwards jump.



The techniques

Muay Boran flying techniques are divided into the following categories: shifting techniques; single attack techniques (punch, kick, elbow blow, knee blow, head butt); combined techniques (punch-punch, punch-kick, punch-knee; elbow-knee; kick-knee).

Learning the methodologies of shifting should come before practise of the actual flying blows. The adept should therefore be familiar with the jumping movement called Gradot, in the various ways it can be performed. At first concentration should be exclusively placed on forwards, backwards and diagonal movements, keeping the same guard position. Once this first phase has been completed, the next is to start practising more complex actions such as the jump with a change of guard position, the jump with a complete turn and finally compound movements such a Seub (sliding step) and jump, Seua Yang (step with alternate feet) and jump and so on.

The vital points

Injuries to the cervical spine are common at the level of the second cervical vertebra but neurological damage is not common. It has however, been proven, that they can cause death, serious invalidity, paralysis of the arms, legs and the diaphragm which can cause respiratory failure. The general models of injuries include the so-called hangman fracture; this being the colloquial name given to the fracture of both pedicles (pars interarticularis) of the vertebral axis. The mechanism of such injuries – a sudden strong hyperextension centered just below the chin – occurs mainly with traumas in which the face or the chin of the victim hit an unflexible target, with an extended neck. The most common scenario would be a head-on collision in the case of a car crash with a passenger without a seatbelt who hits the dashboard and windscreen with the face or the chin. This is the effect that the powerful double uppercut illustrated in the Look Mai **Hanuman Tawai Waen** can cause.

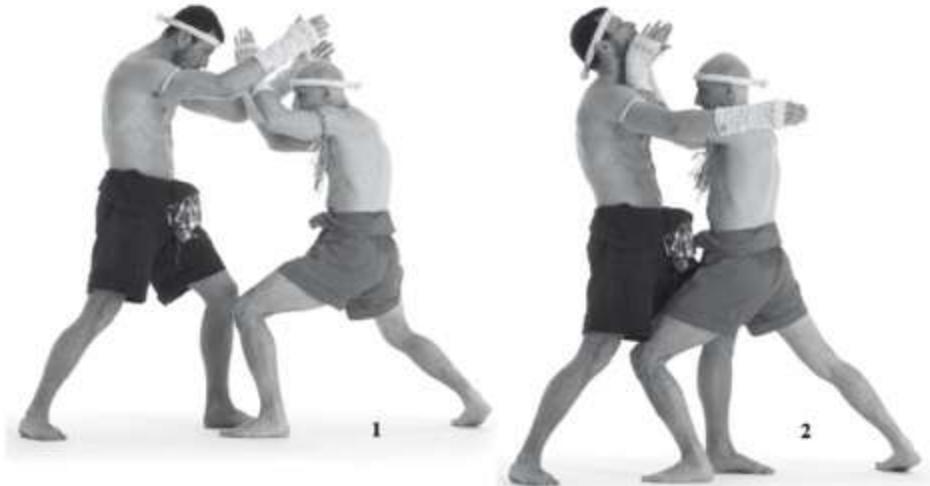


Martial applications

The gesture of Hanuman that kneels and shows the ring to Nang Sita is extremely important because in this image the power of the Son of the Wind exploding inexorably upwards like a volcanic eruption is condensed. This powerful action is expressed through a double uppercut punch that hits the throat or chin of the opponent and is based on the integration of two classical principles of Muay Boran, the principle Joh and the principle Lug. Like a gigantic spring the Nak Muay bends at the knees avoiding a high attack with the gesture called Joh, immediately afterwards the body extends upwards/forwards with the Lug gesture throwing all the body mass against the adversary as though lifting a mountain (one of the brave deeds of Hanuman).

Vs neck hold

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)

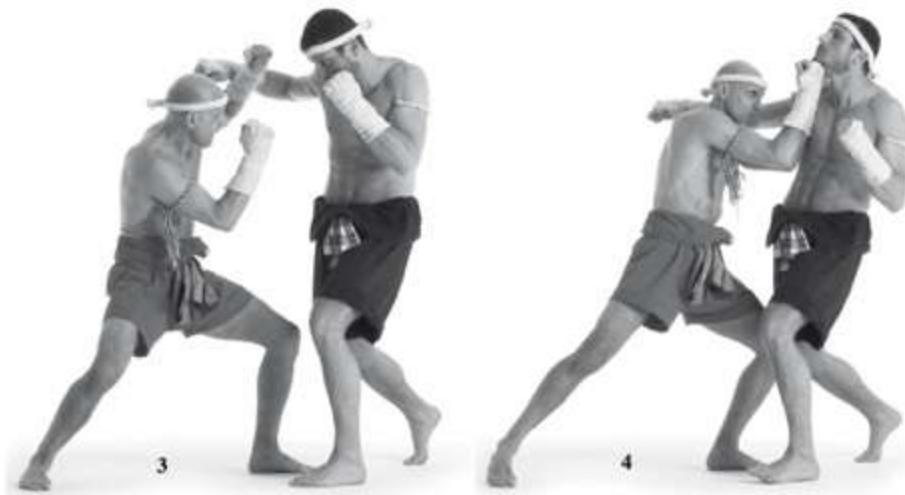


Vs hook

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 3, 4)

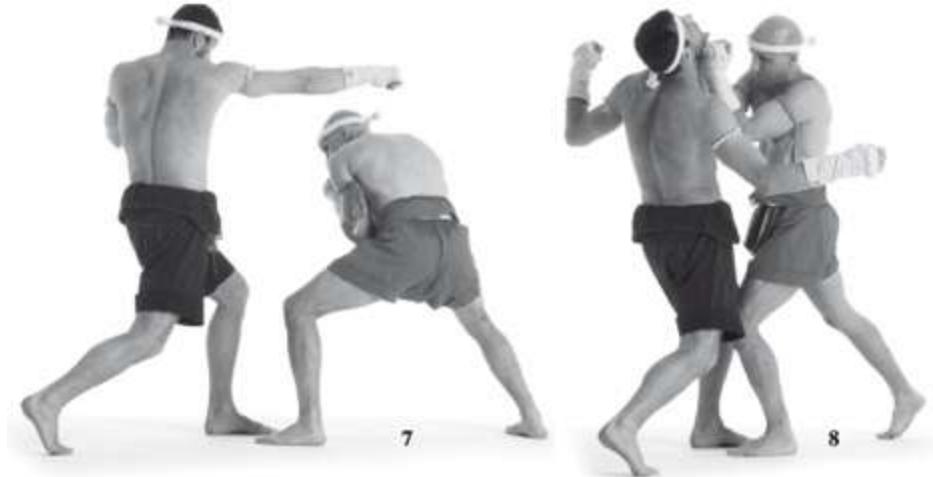
Vs rear
straight
punch

SOLUTION 1
(FIG. 5, 6)



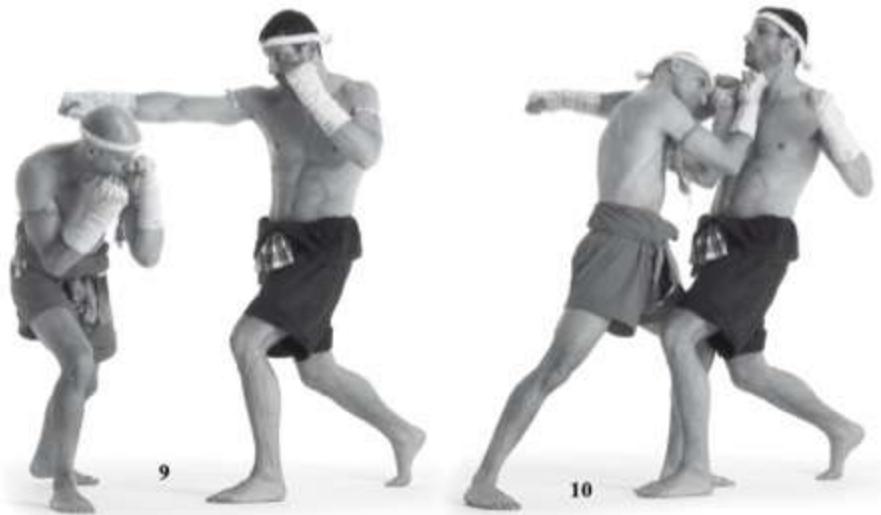
Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 7, 8)



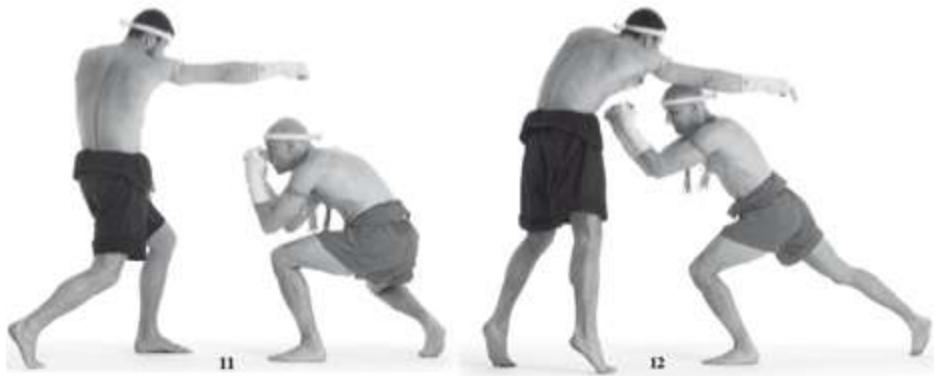
Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 9, 10)



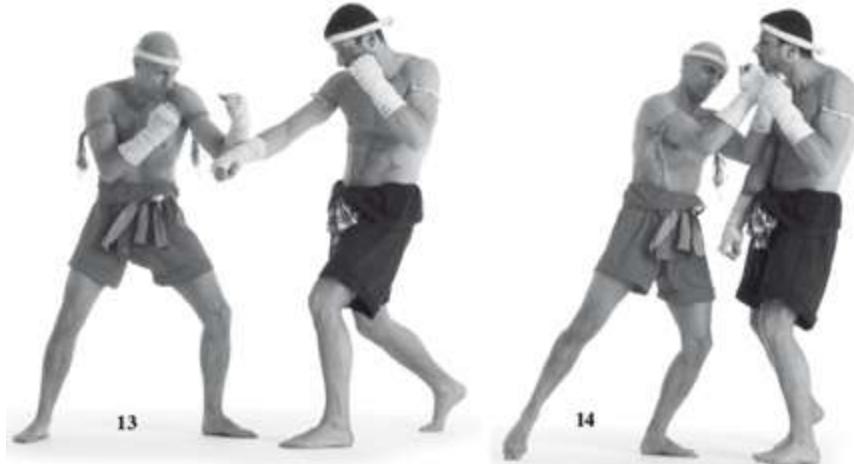
Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 4 (FIG. 11, 12)



Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 5 (FIG. 13, 14)



Vs roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 15, 16)



In attack

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 17)



In attack

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 18)



In attack

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 19)





Chapter 4.11 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 10: YUAN THOD HAE

Translation: The Yuan casts his fishing net



ល្អាងកំណែ

The origin

For centuries the Tai Yuan have been inhabitants of the Kingdom of Lanna and other kingdoms before Lanna was established. During the period from the 13th to the 18th century the Kingdom of Lanna was a State whose territory would correspond to present Northern Thailand. During the 15th century the Lanna came to rival the Ayutthaya Kingdom and after various events the sovereign king of Siam, Taksin of Thonburi, definitively conquered the kingdom in 1774. He proceeded to divide it into the smaller realms of Lampang and Chiangmai, both vassal states and therefore subject to pay taxes to Siam. The Tai Yuan people gave rise to a very interesting culture which has survived for centuries. The Yuan, amongst other customs and traditions, used a particular system for casting fishing nets. In Look Mai

Yuan Thod Hae this method has been adapted to the needs of a Muay Thai fighter. Still today modern practitioners of the art use the Tai Yuan mode of fishing for defense against straight kicks or punches and counterattack immediately.



The technique

The true artist of Muay (called Fi Meu in Thai), is someone who can exploit the weaknesses of an adversary in order to attack whilst at the same time nullifying every tentative at offense thanks to a superior defense strategy. The ancient masters considered head on clashes as being similar to buffaloes fighting. This is a nonsense that does not answer to the true precepts of Thai Martial Art. According to these masters' respected opinion, since modern day Thai Boxers must abide to the demands of show business thus their fights are often a test of strength and resistance that has little or nothing to do with the beauty and effectiveness of traditional Muay Thai.

It is, in fact, known that in the distant past, thanks to a long and meticulous apprenticeship, an aspiring candidate would be directed towards principles of control of the attacks of the adversary in a way that nowadays would be considered anachronistic. In reality, when the goal was survival and not winning a competition, the Khru Muay (fight masters) held that the ability to defend was the real base around which to build the technical knowledge of the practitioner. In addition, if a limited technical capacity in relation to the repertoire of possible actions of defense against the attacks of an opponent, can be compensated for by other qualities (the ability to resist blows, fast-paced attacks, etc) in sport events, it can prove to be a serious defect in situations where there are no rules. If it is in fact acceptable to offer hard body parts (shins, forearms, etc.) to the blows of an adversary of equal weight (as it happens in Thai Boxing matches), such an approach of taking a lot of "punishment" can become deleterious if we find ourselves blocking the kicks of a fighter who weighs 10 or 20 kgs more than we do.

Exactly for these reasons it is essential to master to perfection the three fundamental approaches of the Ancient Art of Defense, Sillapha Kon Rab, going from complete evasion mode, to the deflection or contrast techniques until you reach the point of using blows to attack blows. Let's look in detail at the three strategies.

Loh Lo Lop Lik: in this first mode, the adept is taught the technique of drawing, feinting, dodging and body shifting to cope with various types of attack from the 3 core ranges (excluding the phases of close combat, which are addressed using other principles). This strategy is analysed in depth in the section dedicated to the Look Mai Kwang Liew Lang.

Pong Pad Pid Poed: this second mode is vast and complex and studies the various possibilities offered by blocking and contrasting actions (aiming for the sensitive areas of the attacker using the hard parts of our bodies), by deflection (diverting blows with or without the help of body shifting), by means of opening the opponent's guard or by wrapping and thereby controlling the attacking limbs (this technique is commonly called trapping or entrapment). All these strategies impose upon the executor to counter, as a first choice, contemporarily to defense or even, as a second-best choice, immediately after having neutralised the attack, by using the so-called "two beats" timing. Yuan Thod Hae is a typical application of the Pad technique.

Tha Yan: is the refined art of the blow that attacks whilst defending. The blow is aimed for the aggressor's limb or his body at the same time as his offensive action is performed.

The vital points

Dislocation of the patella (the knee cap, the bone which articulates the knee) occurs with considerable frequency and involves a sliding of the patella out of its physiological position in the knee. Such sliding occurs more frequently on a lateral axis and in most cases this traumatic event is associated with very strong pain and immediate swelling. In carrying out the Look Mai **Yuan Thod Hae** one of the modes in which to deflect the opponent's kick is by holding the ankle of the attacking leg whilst striking with force the knee of the supporting leg. If this action is swift, patellar

dislocation of the supporting leg is often one of the most traumatic consequences of a counterattack. The worst case scenario which in fact rarely happens, is a fracture of the patella. This can occur when a violent blow pushes forward the knee, whilst the body falls heavily backwards, the tension of the muscles at the front of the thigh are stretched can be so strong as to break the patella in half; walking and even standing become impossible at this point.



Martial applications

The Low Kick is one of the devastating techniques that have made Muay Thai famous

in the world of Martial Arts. What the majority of kick boxers have adopted is essentially

a method of “attrition” based on a repetition of blows carried out by the shins against

the thigh muscles of the adversary. The continuous kicking against the same area drains

the opponent’s physical and mental energy to the point of stop fighting. Even though

this strategy is very successful in the medium term, with the aim of quickly ending

a no holds barred confrontation it’s necessary to study carefully the Yuan Thod Hae

strategy (or even that of Thaen Kwad Laan, as we shall see) that brilliantly demonstrates

how to kick low while holding on the opponent’s leg or unbalancing him in order to

deliver a blow more securely and with greater precision to a vital point. In martial

combat every action tends to be definitive ending the fight using as few techniques

as possible.

Vs front kick with leading leg

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)



Vs front kick with leading leg

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 3, 4)



Vs front kick with leading leg

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 5, 6)



Vs front kick with leading leg

SOLUTION 4 (FIG. 7, 8, 9)



7

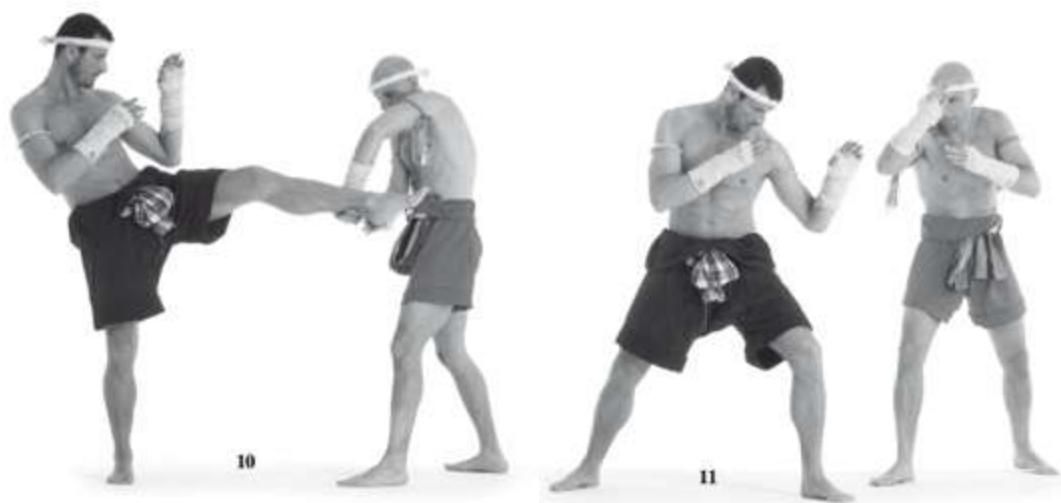


8

9

Vs front kick with leading leg

SOLUTION 5 (FIG. 10, 11, 12)





Vs front kick with leading leg

SOLUTION 6 (FIG. 13, 14)



Vs front kick with rear leg

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 15, 16, 17)





Vs front kick with rear leg

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 18, 19)

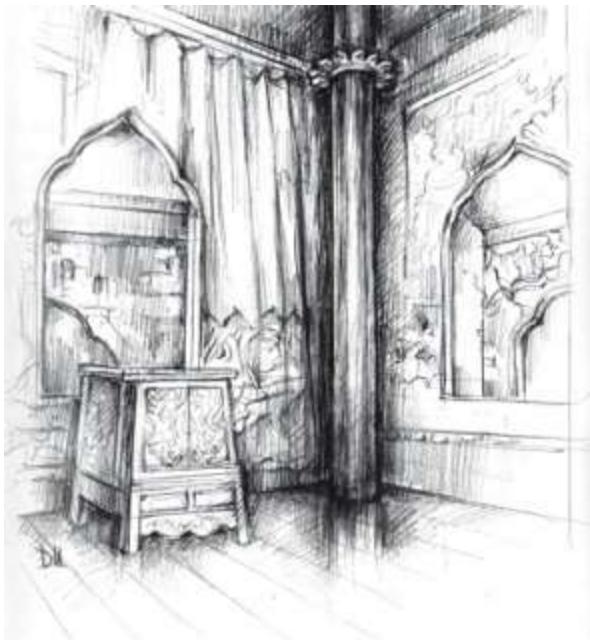




Chapter 4.12 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 11: THAYE KHAM SAO

Translation: The Thaye supports the pillar



ກະແຍຄຳເສາ

The origin

In the distant past when a new temple or house was built in the rural areas of Thailand, the placement of the main pillar, which with that type of architecture could be found at the centre of the main room and therefore supported the whole building (it was the “back bone” of the temple) represented a most crucial moment. Such a pillar was usually the trunk of a large tree which as well as functioning as support represented for the people an important vital symbol (like the Bodhi tree). The moment in which the pillar was inserted into place, was a critical phase that necessitated the help of the whole village. Those people taking part in the building were supported by a band playing a Thaye melody during the whole procedure. This melody came from the province of Pathum Thani and was the heritage of the ancient

Mon culture, one of the first people to inhabit South East Asia. It is similar to Mo Lam, which is typical of the North East region, and also to Lam Tat from the central area of Thailand. According to some scholars of traditional South East Asian music, the Thaye took the name from a Burmese leather instrument used for playing this melody. Going back to the placement of the central pillar, at the most difficult part of the operation, the strongest men pushed with their hands and feet whilst the music gave them a rhythm, cadence and energy (something like that happens during Muay Thai fights with the Chao Sen Melody). If we keep in mind the teachings that come to us from Thaye Kham Sao, today like then this Look Mai teaches us to push the supporting leg of our kicking opponent (that is temporarily the axis of his body) with the sole of the foot with such force as to sustain the great pillar, the archaic back bone of the temple.



The tree of enlightenment (Bodhi)

The tree is a universal symbol of life and protection, an image of the perfect relationship between opposites (heaven and earth), it is the symbol of humanity and its wisdom. Living near a tree, or having one in the house, holds great importance for Thai people. The most venerated example of this great plant is without doubt the Bodhi tree. This Sacred Fig tree (*Ficus Religiosa*) is situated in the area of Bodh Gaya, in India. Siddhartha (who later became Buddha) meditated beneath this tree for five years before he achieved enlightenment or Bodhi. The term Bodhi has been applied to many trees of the same species situated in various zones of Asia and also in Thailand near Sukhotai, Chulalongkorn, Ayutthaya.

The technique

Tha-Yan: is the refined Art of the stop-hit, which allows those who have mastered it to attack the limb of the aggressor or his body at the precise moment in which he attacks. Whilst carrying out a “Tha” action we must try to attack against an attack aimed at us. Instead, with the techniques that use the Yan principle, we must aim for the aggressor’s body at a point around his centre of gravity (as in Mae Mai Morn Yan Lak) or against his main axis. Above all in this latter mode, which we can see well portrayed by Look Mai **Thaye Kham Sao**, it is clearly demonstrated the idea of the central pillar, which in the human body corresponds to the backbone and to its downward extension towards the body’s base of support. Blocking the pillar signifies blocking the body’s central axis and thus any adversary’s movement. The

pressure that we can exert with the sole of our foot on the knee of the supporting leg of a kicker is capable of “paralyzing” a possible offensive action. This last action should be directed precisely to the most sensitive part of the leg (the knee). To be able to do this within an extremely short period of time, during the very fast actions of attack and counterattack, the adept must develop an excellent sense of distance and timing, which can only occur thanks to intense specific training with the master and by practising with his peers.



The vital points

The meniscus act as shock absorbers and separate the two extremities of the femur and the tibia. The two meniscuses in the joint are the medial (internal) and the lateral (external). Someone who is struck with the stomp kick technique of **Thaye Kham Sao** can suffer a twisting of the meniscus and

may be able to walk but often the pain and the swelling in a very brief time will impede mobility. In the worst case scenario the lesion caused by this Look Mai can be a fracture of the knee, albeit rare, which is very serious. Usually there is immediate pain and swelling and an impossibility to put any weight onto the affected leg. The muscles spasm and even at the smallest movement hurt; all this happens at the same time as the traumatic event.

Martial applications

Here is the third Look Mai in which a low side kick is used to break our opponent's knee. In this case controlling the kicking leg and aiming for the supporting leg with a strong downwards stomp kick. The side kick has practically disappeared in modern Thai Boxing: the question naturally arises as to why this happened; lack of efficiency or maybe because the proper systems for correct training of this action disappeared? In the past, during combat with swords and spears on the battlefield, this blow was often used above all as a technique for "crippling" an enemy considered dangerous. More recently the only type of side kick included into the curriculum of the ring sport of Muay Thai has proved to be the rarely used Tiip Khang Glan, the lateral kick to the body, which has been replaced by the more practical front kick, or Tiip Trong. Having at one's disposition enough time and a Master worth of this name every Nak Muay can, however, insert into his own technical knowledge the low side kick, providing they go through the sophisticated preparatory instruction. Such techniques are the real secrets hidden in Look Mai strategies like the Thaye Kham Sao.

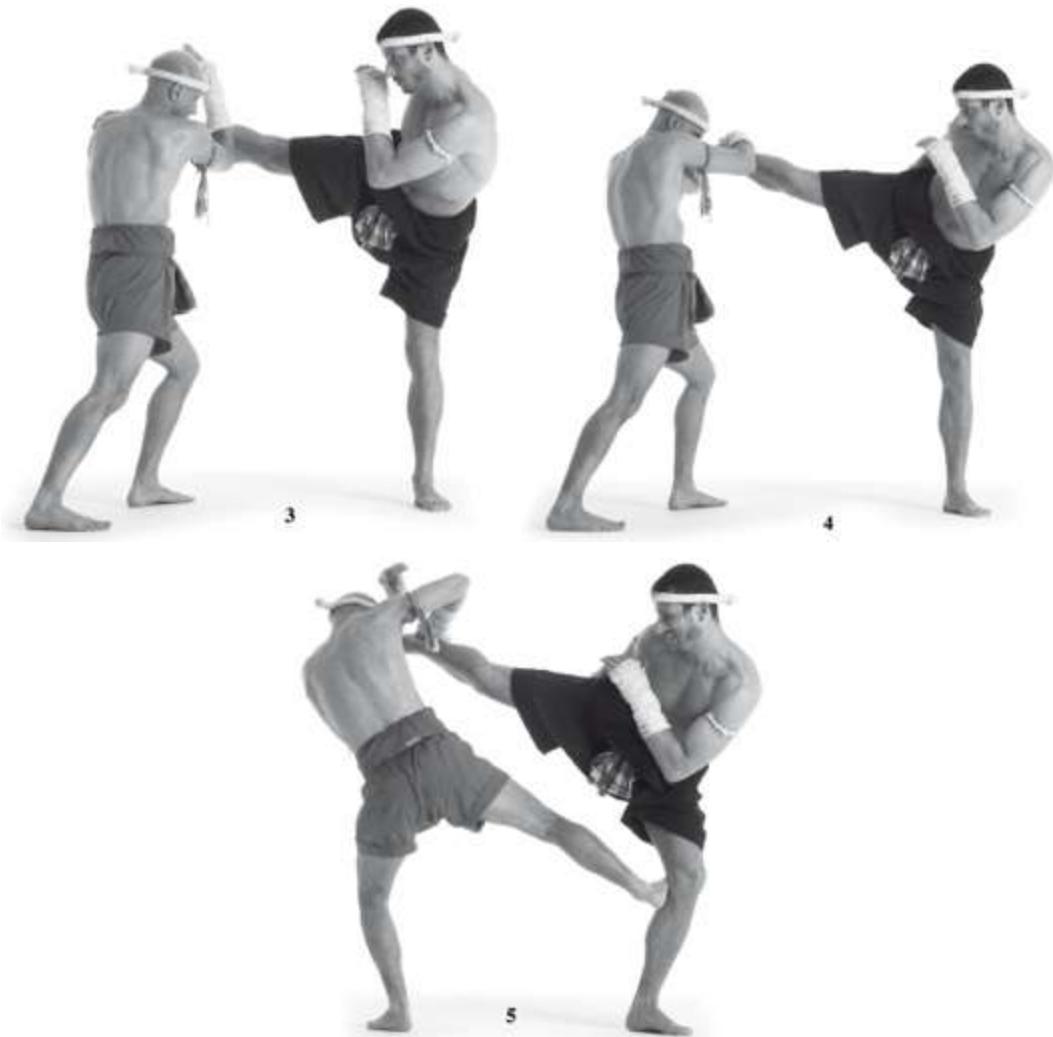
Vs roundhouse kick to the head

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)



Vs roundhouse kick to the head

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 3, 4, 5)



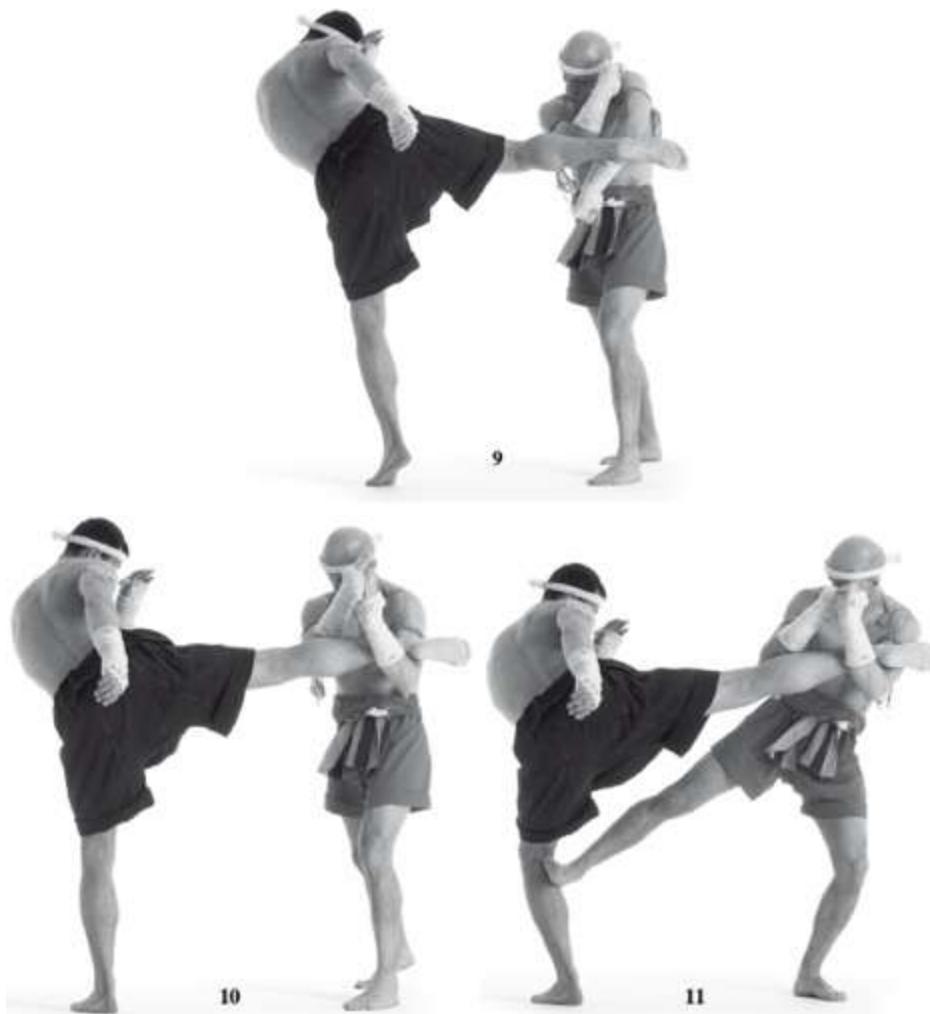
Vs roundhouse kick to the head

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 6, 7, 8)



Vs roundhouse kick to the body

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 9, 10, 11)



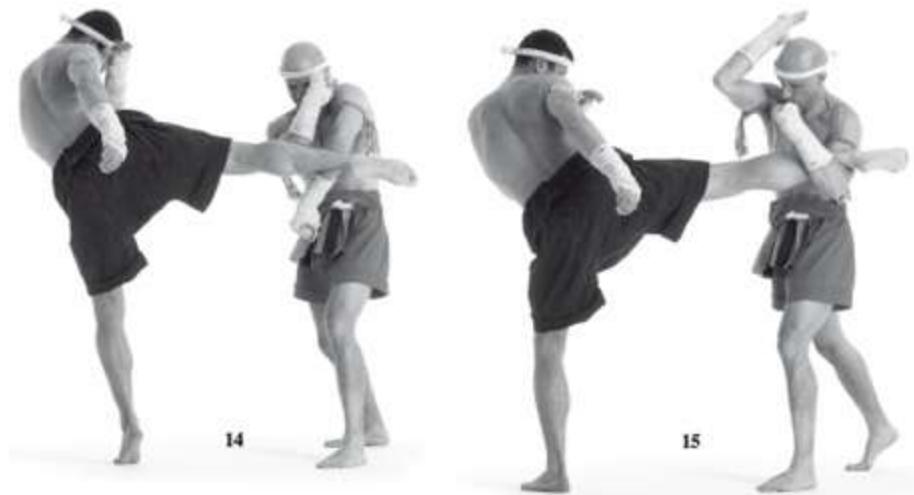
Vs roundhouse kick to the body

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 12, 13)

Vs
**roundhouse
kick to the
body**



SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 14, 15, 16, 17)





Chapter 4.13 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 12: HONG PEEK HAK

Translation: The swan (Hongsa) with the broken wing



ຮ່າງຍືປຶກຫັກ

The origin

The Hongsa is a mythical bird from the Himmapan forest, at the lower slope of Mount Meru (the mythical mountain home of the gods, central axis of the world). The bird appears in many pictures and can be found in various elements of Thai architecture. Ayutthaya style boats dating back to the mid 1700s were decorated with motifs of exceptional artistic beauty. Amongst them was the royal vessel, the Supphanahongsa, or golden Hongsa, which had this mythical creature as a figurehead. Usually, the Hongsa is defined as

a swan, in that it shares the same main characteristics; in reality, not much is known about the origins of this fantastic creature. A certain element comes from Hindu religion, according to which the Hongsa (called Hamsa in India) is the vehicle by which Brahma, the Creator, travels. For that religion the Hamsa is a bar-headed duck of incomparable beauty and elegance. In Buddhism it is told that one of the incarnations of Buddha himself was as Hongsa and as such was in command of an army of 96,000 of his similars.

Together with the elephant Erawan, the mount of Shiva, and Naka, the throne on which Vishnu sits, the Hongsa, vehicle of Brahma, completes the group of fantastical creatures so intimately linked to the Trimurti (or Trinity) of the Hindu Pantheon.

The Hams was also the ancient symbol of the Mon people, one of the first inhabitants of South East Asia, whose original kingdom corresponds to the southern part of today's Myanmar.

The technique

The swan is an extremely elegant creature who in order to move fluidly needs both wings. Once one of the wings has been damaged it is impossible for the bird to continue to be agile and elegant in its movements. Thus we must act with our adversaries, break one of their arms as though it was the wing of a Hongsa.

The fighting principle of Hong Peek Hak is one of Muay Boran's most sophisticated and foresees the weakening of the adversary carried out by taking away piece by piece his physical integrity with the aim of damaging his whole ability to fight. The underlying principle of the Look Mai attack with the elbow to the adversary's arm is that of "attrition", progressively taking away strength or means of offense from an adversary who is either too skilled or too powerful to be erased with a single technique. This is the system that was devised by the ancient Khru Muay to demolish piece by piece the walls of defense or the wea-pons of the enemy. For the case in question, the wing to break is the arm of the opponent but in other techniques of attrition, for example, it could also be the leg.



The vital points

The dislocation, or subluxation of the shoulder, is a fairly common acromioclavicular joint injury. This joint is located at the distal end of the clavicle and is attached to the scapular acromion. The first level of separation occurs when the capsule of the acromioclavicular joint becomes damaged, without tearing or serious fractures (in such a case the damage is called a distortion). The worst cases are when the ligaments are torn and the collarbone becomes displaced. An elbow attack such as that illustrated in the Look Mai **Hong Peek Hak**, in order to do as much damage as stated above would have to be carried out with enormous force and often aided by a jump in order to increase the blow's crushing effect on its target. If, however, the attack causes such damage it would have the immediate effect of placing the adversary in a completely harmless position.

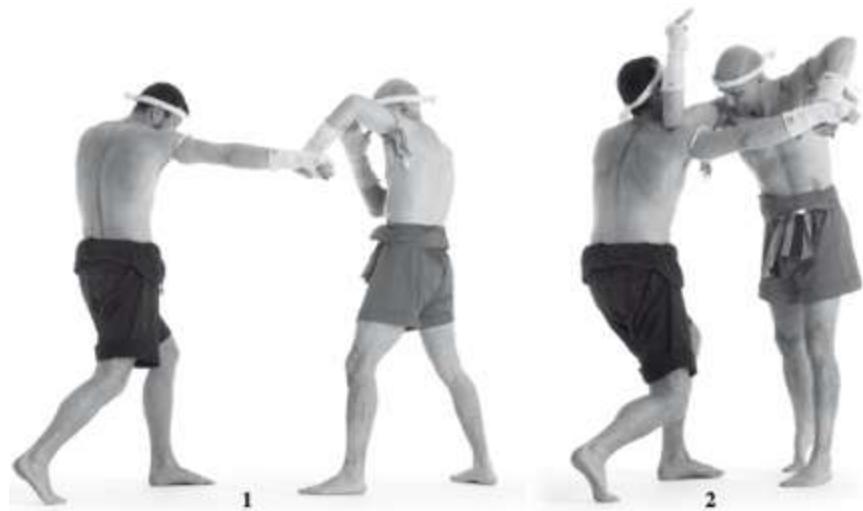


Martial applications

This is the first of the three Look Mai of “intrusion” against a close range (and therefore extremely dangerous) attack led by the opponent with his fists (or possibly with blunt instruments). Speaking of the Nine Natural Weapons we have cited the so-called cycle of weapons that we must always keep present both in offensive phases and when we plan and train defense techniques. According to this principle a strong boxer (an expert on punching attacks) shall be subject to counterattacks carried out by the elbows at very close range. This tactic makes punching less efficient above all if the opponent's arms are controlled with trapping actions. In order to neutralize the punches, close the distance, trap the arms and finish off the adversary with elbow strikes (for example by breaking his “wings”) it is necessary to master the sophisticated principles of the Look Mai Hong Peek Hak and the following, Look Mai no. 13 and 15.

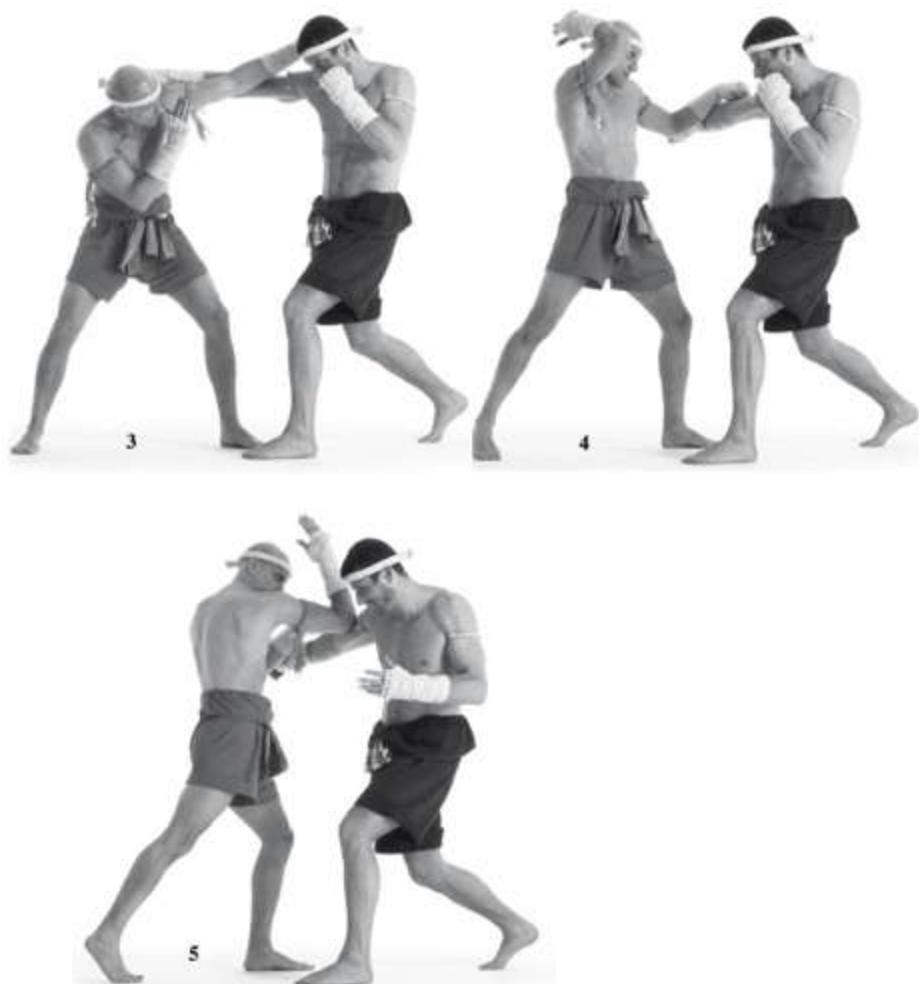
Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)



Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 3, 4, 5)



Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10)





Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 1 WITH ARM HOLD AND THROW (FIG. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15)





Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 2 WITH HOLD AND BLOW TO THE COLLARBONE (FIG. 16)



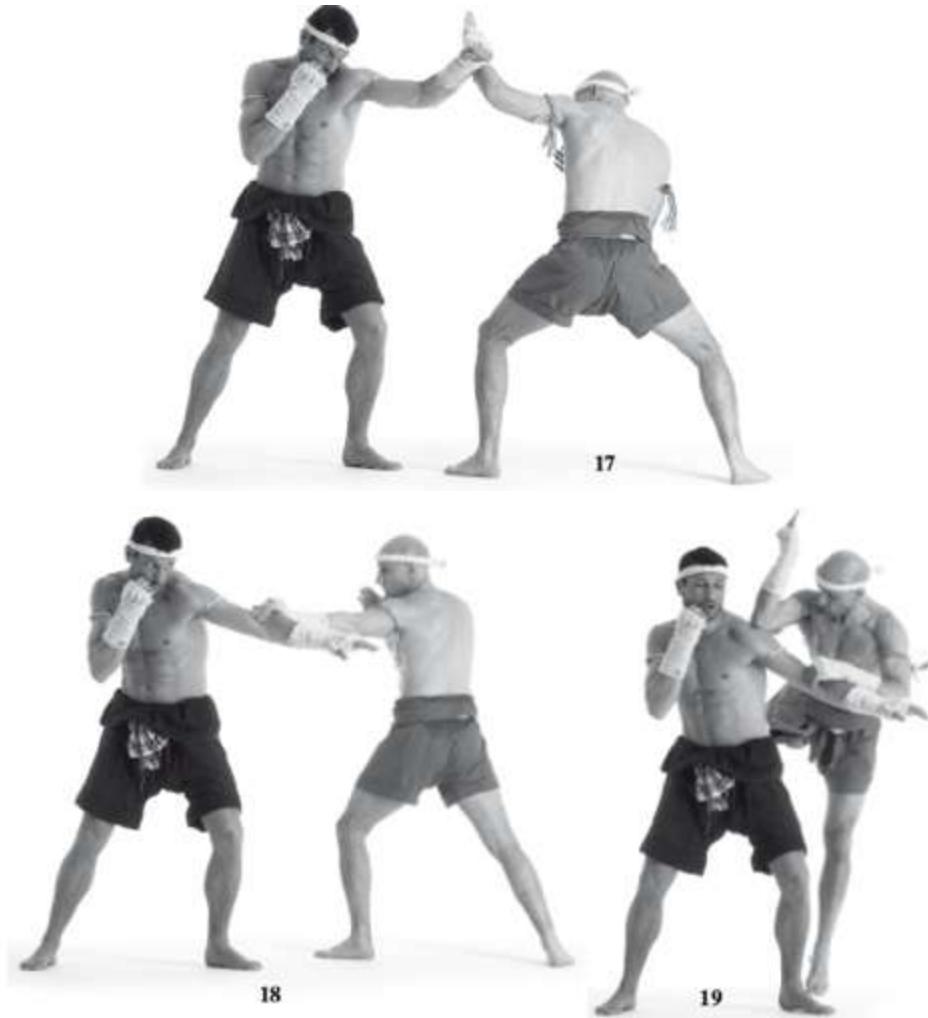
Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 2 WITH HOLD AND BLOW TO THE COLLARBONE (FIG. 16)



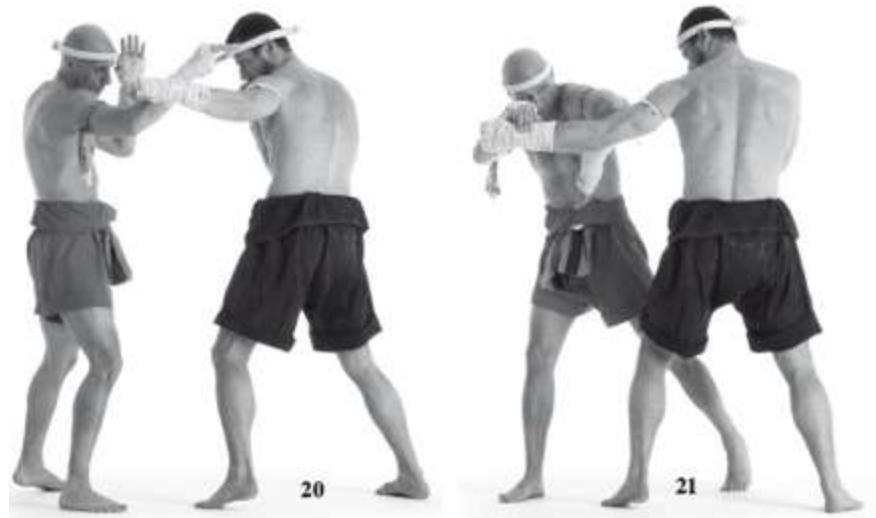
Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 3 Whilst jumping (FIG. 17, 18, 19)



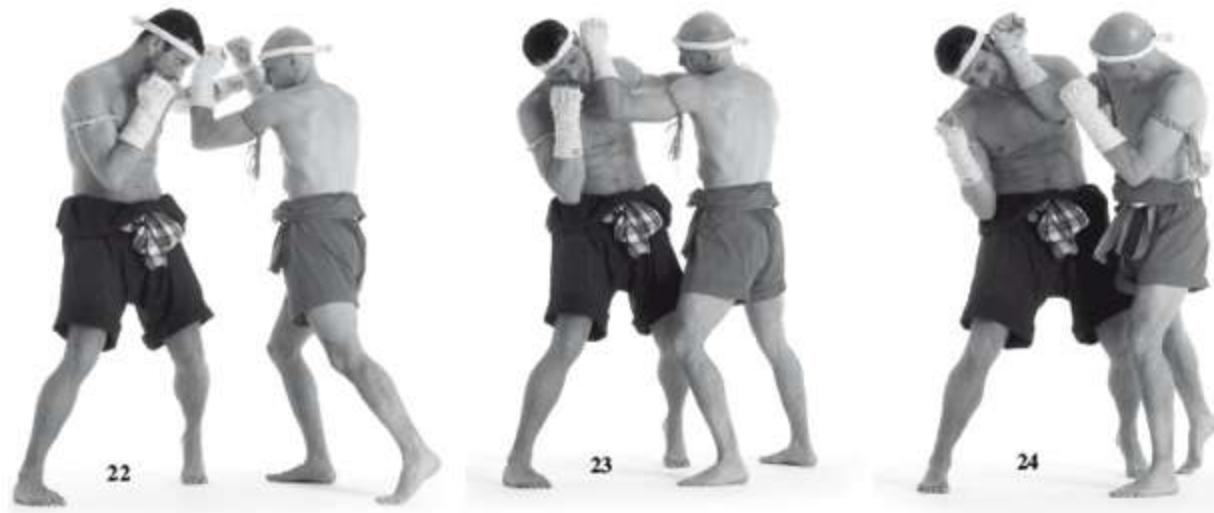
Vs lead hook punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 20, 21)



Vs lead hook punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 22, 23, 24)



Vs rear hook punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 25)



Vs rear hook punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 26)





Chapter 4.14 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 13: SAWK PHUANG MALAI

Translation: Tattooing the garland of flowers



ត័កពាងមាតី

The origin

The Sawk Yant, also called the Yantra tattoo, is a form of holy tattooing practised in South East Asia, above all in Thailand, Cambodia and Laos. Buddhist monks usually make these ritual tattoos; the most renowned temple where they can be done in Thailand is the Wat Bang Phra at Nakhon Chaysri, but it's also possible to get them done by Masters of this antique art in Bangkok and Ayutthaya. The Phuang Malai or jasmine garland is a traditionally used object in Thailand, it symbolizes the beauty of Buddha's teachings and because Buddha is destined to die, jasmine represents with their transience the finiteness of life. The Phuang Malai tattoo (extremely painful) was worn by the more courageous Thai Boxers on the chest, for the purpose of protection, the central point of the tattoo going from the area of

the sternum to the solar plexus. It is thought that tattoos with magical designs and formulas were developed over the centuries in Thailand thanks to various influences, the primary source of all these coming from Indian Hindu traditions.

The traditional practises of protection

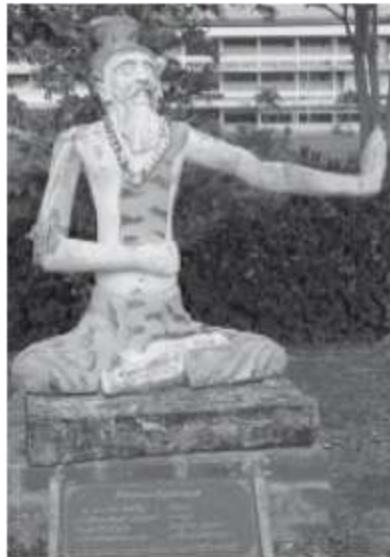
Many of the tattoos used by ancient Siamese warriors were believed to be protective shields not only against external attacks carried out with weapons or body parts but also against evil spells. As a result, they tended to be inscribed in direct correspondence to the vital points of the body. The basic geometric elements that make up the various linear figures are called Yantra or magic diagrams and are extremely symbolic. The Yantra are always combined with oral formulas called mantra (see below) that are defined as the soul of symbolic diagrams. Legend has it that the father of the Yantra was a Ruesi (or Luesi), a sort of hermit wizard that is told, lived in the depths of the forest, studied magical spells and practised magic. A Ruesi is a being endowed with strong psychological powers that thanks to his practises could reach levels of knowledge of the universe that no common mortal could ever achieve. Siddartha himself received teachings from a Ruesi before starting his journey on the path to enlightenment. This demonstrates that this type of ancestral wizards existed well before the birth of Buddha. A Ruesi is a being endowed with supernatural powers, too; he can levitate, can see the past and the future, can talk to animals, can read minds and can also teleport himself. In his kingdom hidden in the forest or in an inaccessible cave or on the highest mountains, he dedicates himself to the study of magical herbs which are capable of acting as powerful medicines. One of the Muay Boran

techniques whose name was inspired by the actions of these characters is called Luesi Bod Ya and it immortalises the hermit right at the moment when he is grinding magical herbs in his mortar. A famous hermit wizard was Ruesi Dudton (the hermit who massages); sculptures that represent this figure in Thai Yoga poses can be found in various places that cultivate the Art of the Nuad Paen Thai Boran (traditional Thai massage). Even in the Ramakien, some Ruesi are mentioned as reference figures to be turned to for counsel or help, in the same way that the medieval leaders of Siam called on the Ruesi to reveal their future and asked for political or military advice. The prayers (mantra), the amulets (Kruang Ruang) and to a smaller extent the magical herbs have always been used by the Nak Muay for protection in combat (or war). As well as tattoos, Siamese Boxers used diverse protective amulets that due to their importance, when worn for the first time, were blessed during a complex ceremony that was always accompanied by magical spells and songs, necessary to repel evil spirits. During the blessing ceremony, often carried out by monks, various mantras (mental formulas) would be recited and repeated. The words used during these rituals are sacred and belong to a mystical primordial language. The word mantra literally means mental formula, the divine power of the word that contains divinity within itself. There is no fine being or energy that cannot be evoked through its mantra. Mantras are based on the pronunciation of verbal seeds, the constituent elements of all the languages in the world. The monosyllabic mental formulas are the foundation elements of these spells and each one of them is pronounced singularly or combined with others to build a mantra with a particular aim in mind: to honour the divine, to acquire superhuman powers, to remove negative influences, to purify the body etc. Amongst the various verbal seeds we can mention, for example, Haum (Shiva), Phat (the weapon that can kill anything), Ram (the fire, the triangle, the ram), Hai (the wind) and so on. In the critical moment before a fight a Khru Muay places the Mongkon, or crown, on the head of the boxer. Carrying out this gesture and later on (after the athlete has completed the Wai Khru ritual and is ready to fight) whilst removing it, the Master pronounces a particular mantra that confers supernatural po-wers. This specific formula is a characteristic particular to each tea-cher and, as such, is guarded jealously. When the Grand Master Yod-thong Senanan decided to accept the author into his bloodline he gave him his own personal mantra, written by his own hand, as a permanent

sign of a relationship that can be likened to that between father and son.

As well as tattoos and other magic formulas, the Thai Boxer has always kept various sacred objects for protection. The most important one being the Mongkon which represents one's own master and school and is worn before every combat. In the moment in which the Master removes the Mongkon from the head of the Nak Muay, before battle starts, he will carry out an apparently simple action that has a very deep meaning: he will blow on the head of his pupil, gently and at length. This step is linked to the characteristics of the mythical Hanuman, son of Phra Pai god of wind; when Hanuman was wounded or killed, he could be brought back to life by the breath of his divine father. When the Khru Muay blows on the head of his boxer he transmits the same paternal protection that Phra Pai showed to his beloved Hanuman, confirming once more the existence of a deep relationship between Khru and Nak Muay. The Prajaet is a personal ornament that is tied around the arm and worn before and during a fight, by modern Thai Boxers too and that usually contains a relic of great spiritual importance for them. Almost fallen in disuse are the Takrut, thin flexible sheets made of copper, silver or gold with magical spells inscribed on them and worn around the waist or around the arm or neck of a fighter. Instead, Pisamorn are strips of metal in triangular shape (also made from palm leaves) inscribed with Buddhist sermons. The Pirot is an engraved bracelet that represents two Nakas which are coiled up biting their tails; they are considered objects with great magical powers and are still used by some fighters, passionate about ancient traditions. Some boxers actually carried in their mouths during combat or around their necks a Phra Krueng, small Buddha images which have been previously blessed. Last but not least, magic herbs were used to give fighters superhuman abilities to be used in battle. The origin of this practise is thought to be the mythical tradition of the Selaginella bryopteris commonly known as Sanjeevani. This would be a plant with medicinal properties whose name could be translated into "that which gives life". This plant grows in India on Mount Arawali and in Hindu tradition is capable of curing everything and even bringing back to life. In the Ramayana the herb is used by the mythical Hanuman to save the life of prode Lakshmana, brother of Rama. Lakshmana

was seriously wounded by the son of Ravana, Indrajit, and Hanuman, sent to look for herbs on the Himalayas but unable to distinguish them, lifted up the whole of Mount Meru (where the Sanjeevani could surely be found) and he brought it to the battleground in order to save his friend.



The technique

Striking with the elbow the sternum (like other vital points of the body) with a precision equal to that of a tattooist who jabs with his ink soaked

needle, can be a lethal technique. Similarly, the ability to identify and strike at will the most sensitive points of the body of an opponent renders a fighter dangerous to anyone he fights. The flower garland tattoo is for the selected few due to the painfulness of the procedure. The triangular area between the collar bone and the solar plexus is extremely sensitive and a tattoo made in the old way is quite a test of endurance. As a confirmation of this, the target illustrated by the Look Mai Sawk Phuang Malai is a vital point corresponding to Chakra number 4, Anahata according to the Chakra theory and to Sen number 3, Summana according to the Sib Sen theory, which is the basis of Nuad Paen Thai Boran or traditional Thai massage. The Sen are “pathways” through which Lom Pran or life force (literally the wind of life) runs. Sib Sen means the 10 Sen, so many are in fact the major pathways studied with a therapeutic aim in mind. Obviously the pressure points that can be found along these pathways can be used to act upon energy flows, aiming to healing but also to causing damage. In the case of Puang Malai, the potential effects of an attack to the area between the sternum and the plexus can prove to be fatal.



The vital points

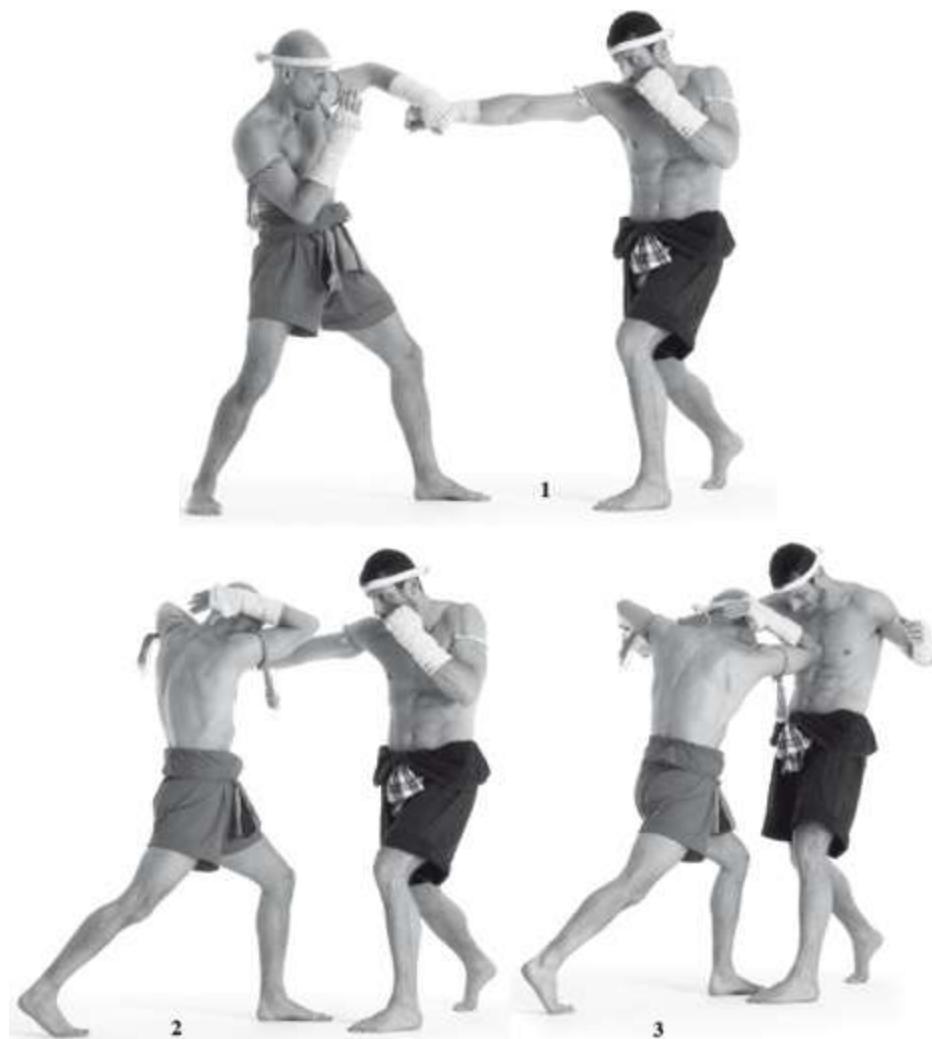
As well as external damage to the sternum or to the xiphoid process, the correct use of **Sawk Phuang Malai**, in a worst-case scenario, can cause serious injuries that are passed on to the internal organs with fatal effects. The xiphoid process (processus xiphoideus) is also known as the xiphisternum or metasternum. This small cartilaginous extension of the sternum is not mobile and a violent pressure in this area can cause it to break resulting in a perforation or laceration of the diaphragm. In other examples a strong blow from the elbow can cause a sternal fracture. This is a fracture of the flat bone situated at the centre of the chest, the first effect is that it can interfere with breathing, making it painful, but the primary significance is that it can indicate the presence of serious internal lesions associated with the heart and the lungs. If a person is hit with sufficient force to cause the sternum to fracture, injury to the myocar-dium (heart rupture) and bruising and/or rupture of the lungs, are probable. Sternum fractures can also be accompanied with breaks to the ribs and are sufficient to cause bronchial tears (bronchioles rupture). These can seriously impede breathing. Due to the associated injuries, the rate of mortality for people with a fractured sternum is high, about 25-45%.

Martial applications

The defensive principle of this Look Mai (similarly to the preceding Hong Peek Hak) consists in opening the adversary's guard during a very dangerous close combat situation. This technique is an extension of the Mae Mai Paksa Waeg Rang that is the mother of all "intrusion into the opponent's nest" techniques; it involves literally getting to the heart of the enemy (in other words his vital points). Sawk Phuang Malai demonstrates how to avoid a blow at close quarters and how to target a sensitive area of the enemy's body. Defending oneself by penetrating into the guard of the person who is attacking with head punches and counterattacking in a definitive way with elbow blows (thereby respecting the theory of the cycle of natural weapons) is the subtle message that is conveyed to us by this traditional technique.

Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2, 3)



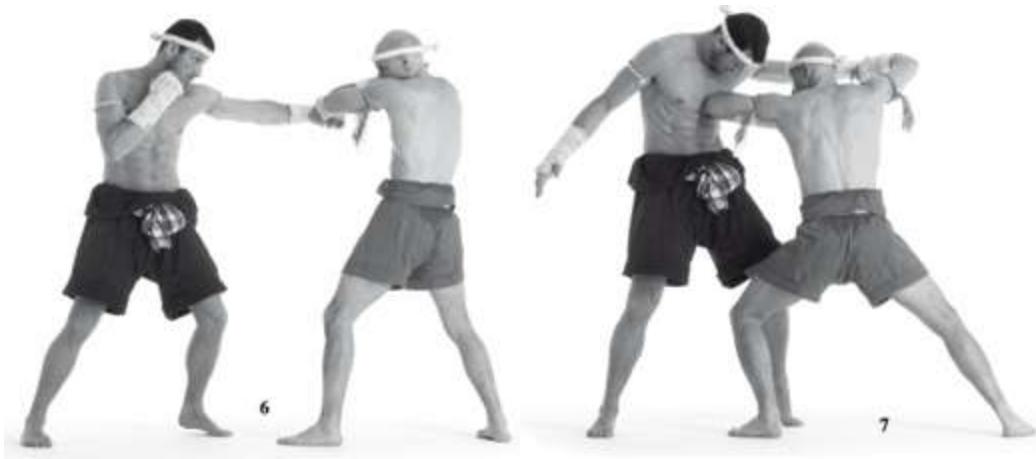
Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 4, 5)



Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 6, 7)



Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 8, 9)



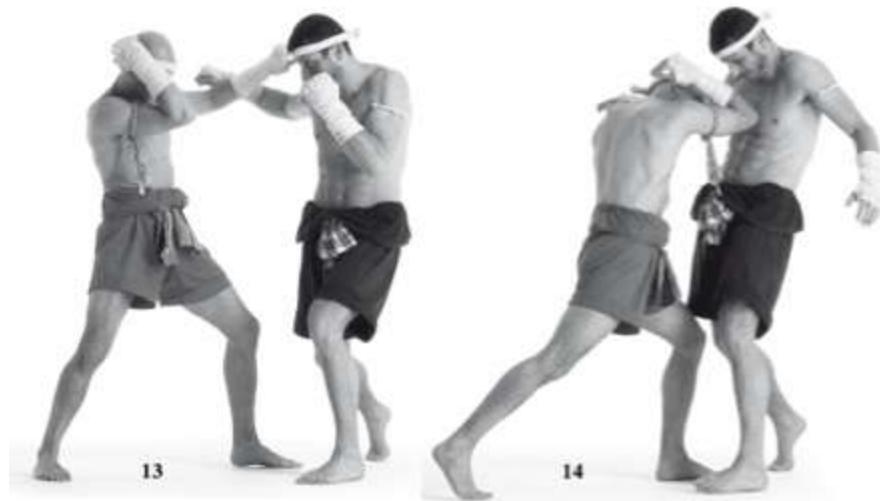
Vs lead hook

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 10, 11, 12)



Vs rear hook

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 13, 14)





Chapter 4.15 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 14 THAEN KWAD LAAN

Translation: The monk sweeps low (the floor)

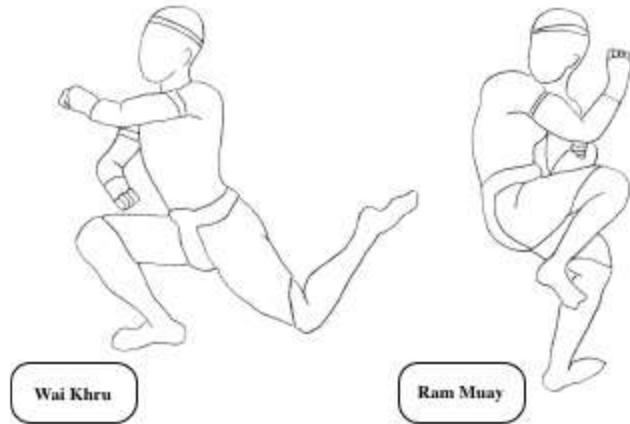


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The origin



An everyday task in the life of a Buddhist monk is the source of this combat technique. The daily activities of Buddhist monks in Thailand are known by all, in fact many Thai males during adolescence become ordained in order to earn “merits” for themselves and their families. This period of service can vary but generally lasts for several months and can eventually be repeated several times during their lifetime. Amongst the various elements that have influenced the evolution of Buddhism in Thailand, the most obvious is without doubt the Theravada Buddhist School, imported from Sri Lanka. However, apart from formal Buddhist precepts, even astrology, numerology and talismans against evil forces play an important role in the Buddhism that is practised in Thailand. These are the elements that have been to a large degree integrated into the world of Muay and can still be seen during the fundamental practice of Wai Khru (paying homage to the Master) that every Nak Muay follows as a ritual before combat. The Wai Khru is performed whilst kneeling and precedes the second phase of the ritual called Ram Muay (combat dance) that is comprised of a series of movements that are carried out while “walking” in the area in which the fight will take place. In particular, the homage to the Master comprises a fundamental first phase called Saam Krab or “three bows” in which the Thai Boxer touches his forehead to the ground three times, whilst kneeling. In Buddhist terms these three gestures represent an homage to Buddha, to Sangha (the order of Buddhist monks) and to Dharma (Buddha’s teachings). Three are also the pillars of Buddhism; morality, meditation and wisdom, that every practitioner should cultivate in order to achieve Nirvana, the last stage of the cycle of reincarnations.



Even from a practical point of view, the performance of **Wai Khru** and **Ram Muay** are of great importance: breathing in a controlled way and reciting a series of magical spells that work as a mantra, the fighter enters into an ideal psychological state through which he can start the fight with a clear mind. All this happens thanks to his acquisition of the capacity of stress management. Any athlete in such a way can obtain a psychophysical state capable of dealing with a stressful event.

Thanks to specific body postures all the muscles undergo a series of stretches; thus the athlete also prepares the body for the rigours of combat. Many of these positions are derived from an ancient form of gymnastics introduced into the Kingdom of Siam from India. Nowadays, this is often called Thai Yoga and is extremely useful for the harmonious development of inner energy, thanks to a refined alignment of those body parts which ease the flow of Lom Pran.



In ancient times, when fights were conducted on the bare ground and not on an even surface like today, the Nak Muay carried out a kind of check-up of this ground, finding out beforehand the roughness of it and eventual natural obstacles in order to be prepared before the start of the fight, while slowly moving around the combat area. Moreover, the execution of the steps of Yang Saam Khum carried out during this phase increase noteablly both the

physical and mental grounding of the athlete.

Often a particularly inspired execution of this ritual manages to scare the enemy to the point of discouraging him whilst rendering the performer particularly secure of himself and determined to win.

The technique

The gesture of sweeping the floor is simulated by the action of our leg which sweeps away the legs of the opponent causing him to fall down. As the monks sweep the floors likewise we elegantly clear the combat area of our enemies using this traditional technique. Damaging the foundations of a house in order to demolish it with little effort; this is the strategy on which is based this Look Mai, one of the most popular, thanks to its efficiency which has been demonstrated over and over again in combat. The secret to correctly carry out the kicking action, by itself relatively simple, is based on very sophisticated footwork strategies (angular steps) and on perfect timing. The best system to develop such qualities (timing and sense of distance) is through controlled combat or Len Chern (that is to say playing the game of attacks) commonly known as sparring.

The vital points

The Achilles tendon, also known as calcaneal tendon, is a tendon on the back part of the leg. It links the plantar, gastrocnemius (calf) and soleus muscles to the calcaneus (heel bone). This tendon is the thickest and strongest that exists in the human body. Contraction of the calf muscles lifts the heel thanks to the Achilles tendon; this action is the one on which walking, running and jumping is based. Breaking of this tendon usually occurs due to a rapid and unexpected flexion of the plantar muscle or back flexion of the same muscle. There is also the possibility that the tendon can be broken due to a sudden and violent trauma directed to the tendon itself. This possibility is the case studied in the Look Mai **Thaen Kwad Laan**, in which our instep or shin strongly strikes the adversary's Achille's tendon in order to knock him down, or, if possible to permanently damage his ability to walk.



Martial applications

As already illustrated with relation to Look Mai number 10, low kicks employed during a sporting bout differ from the more military tradition of Tae Laan. In the first place the kick shown in Thaen Kwad Laan is mainly carried out whilst the adversary is kicking: in so doing, the technique responds to the criteria of defense and counterattack occurring at the same time, reducing to zero the risk of undergoing a hard knee block from the opponent. Secondly, the kick can be aimed at the Achille's tendon which is a very sensitive area of the leg, with the possible consequences mentioned above. Third: apart from the structural damage, if the technique is properly carried out, an additional benefit can be added which is that of the hard fall of the opponent, putting him in a position where he can more easily be terminated by any techniques involving either a kick or a knee blow. Once again Look Mai demonstrate to be sophisticated techniques of the highest level, their efficiency remaining undeniable centuries after their conception.

Vs roundhouse kick to the head

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1)



Vs roundhouse kick to the head

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 2)



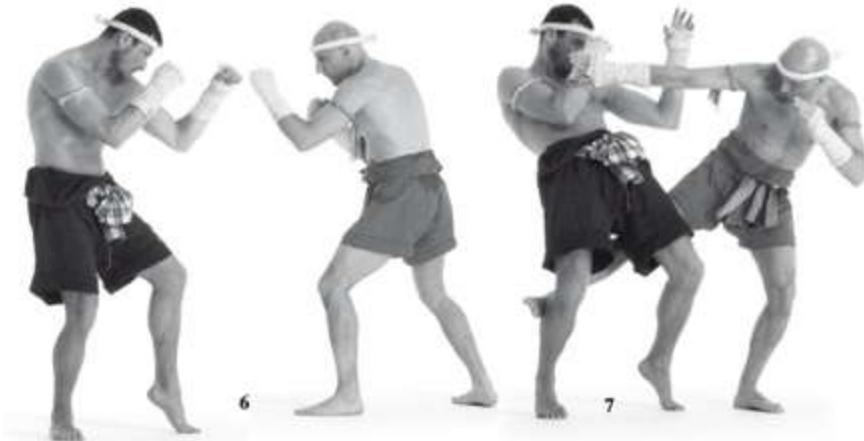
In attack , opponent in guard position

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 3, 4, 5)



In attack , opponent in guard position

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 6, 7)



Vs roundhouse kick alto

SOLUTION 1 WITH HAND ON THE GROUND (FIG. 8)



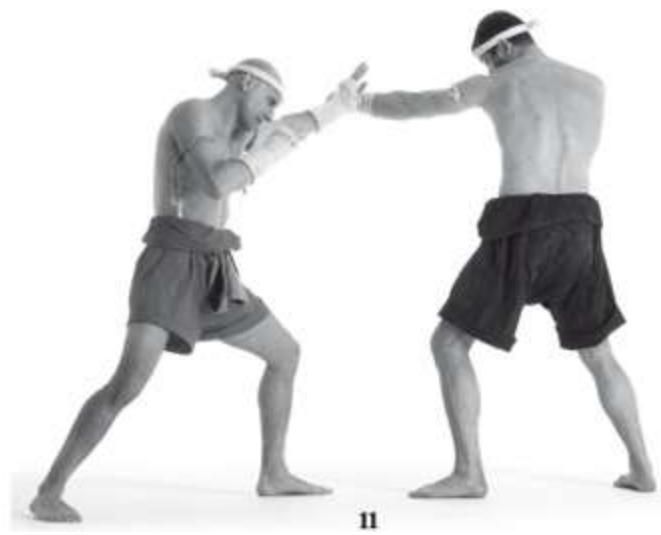
Vs middle roundhouse kick

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 9)



Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 10, 11, 12)







Chapter 4.16 - Look Mai techniques

LOOK MAI N. 15: FAN LOOK BUAB

Translation: Slicing the “Look Buab”



ຝານລູກບວບ

The origin

An everyday action is the origin of this Look Mai, which teaches how to wound the face of an adversary, instilling fear and at the same time destroying his aggressive aspirations. The Look Buab is a vegetable similar to a courgette widely used in Thai cuisine. Slicing this vegetable (performing a rapid action in order to produce a clean cut) recalls indisputably the movement which we must carry out in order to cut the face of the enemy using a natural weapon instead of a kitchen knife. The natural weapons that more than any other are similar as for effectiveness to a blade are the elbows.

The technique



The elbows are deadly blades that are always readily available to the Nak Muay. There are nine main trajectories which can be used against an opponent: diagonally upwards from the inside to the outside and vice versa; diagonally downwards from the inside to the outside and vice versa; vertically upwards and downwards; horizontally in-wards and outwards and straight forward. There are 5 main principles of elbow striking: Wiang Lai (cutting); Ti Lom (chopping); Soey Khum (uprising); Pratè (piercing) and Glab Lang (spinning). Moreover, elbow techniques can be carried out at various levels (low, medium and high); elbow attacks can also be executed whilst jumping, by striking in the take off phase, whilst “flying” towards the opponent or during the landing phase.

The elbow blow is perhaps the one of the weapons most feared by all Martial Artists and Fight Sport professionals. Many consider this technique too dangerous to be used in the ring during sporting bouts and deem that it should only be used in self-defense situations. Elbow blows are in fact a Muay Thai “hallmark”, Thai Boxers have always learned to use the elbows whilst fighting and thanks to a regular training learn to effectively defend themselves from such undoubtedly ferocious attacks.

If correctly used the elbow is a kind of razor thanks to its “pointed tip” which takes shape when the forearm is bent tightly against the arm. This razor is particularly apt to carrying out attacks that quite easily inflict deep cuts to the skin of the head or the face. Whilst for many these effects are the most shocking, in reality the elbows of a Muay Thai expert are capable of carrying out many other actions both in phases of attack and defense.

Elbow blows are in fact practised in order to cut as already mentioned, but also to perforate the most sensitive bony areas (such as the temples or the sternum), to break (attacking joints or the ribs), to damage muscles (of the arms or the legs) or even to attack the internal organs (kidneys or liver are just two classic examples).

Even in phases of defense, elbows in conjunction with forearms are capable of building a solid protective shield around a Muay expert. Such protection is exceptionally resistant and difficult to get past; with specific training in the traditional forms of Mae Mai and Look Mai, a practitioner learns to block with his elbows all kinds of attacks, be it by fists, knees or legs and many kinds of grappling holds to the neck, the limbs or the body.

Before being able to apply these techniques it is important to clearly learn how to identify elbow blows according to the path of the blow, the use for which it is employed and the distance between the person carrying out the action and his target.

Traditionally in the ancient orthodox styles of Muay, elbow techniques are subdivided into the 5 following categories (n.b. many of the techniques belonging to the 5 typologies can be carried out whilst jumping):

- Sok Wiang Lai: in this category of elbow blows, the efficiency of the techniques is obtained by a rapid and explosive Swing or cut. The energy is channelled into the shoulder, rapidly transmitted to the arm to strike a blow by the tip of the elbow. The effect of this type of technique, when correctly carried out, causes deep lacerations of the adversary's face. A typical technique of this category is Sok Dti, or hitting elbow and Fan Look Buab is the Look Mai in which it is applied.
- Sok Pratè: these blows instead, tend to penetrate the target with a movement of the whole body. The arm is positioned to form together with the forearm a precise typology of angles and all the body mass is violently projected towards the target. The best example to represent elbow strikes of this category is that of the medieval knight who positions his lance towards the adversary and then throws all his weight and that of his steed against the enemy. The most common technique of this group is the Sok Pung, or spear elbow (the latter employed in the Look Mai Sawk Phuang Malai).
- Sok Ti Lom: elbow techniques employed for striking downward blows

are usually listed in this group. In many situations the most efficient way to attack the adversary by the elbows consists in downward blows, increasing the power of the blow with a sudden bending of the knees (although not easy to do). In some cases it may be necessary to use part of the adversary's body as support in order to make a jump, gaining height in order to rain down an even more impressive blow. The basic example that better describes elbow blows of this kind is the Sok Sahb, or chopping elbow blow (as seen in the Look Mai Hong Peek Hak).

- Sok Soey Kum: when the distance is particularly close and the adversary is ready to grapple us, the most expert fighters tend to keep their guard high, to lightly flex their knees and to strike upwards with the elbow using a fast, tight, slicing movement. Blows of this kind belong to the category under analysis. It is very difficult to develop power with these upward blows and it is therefore essential to learn to use the whole body, starting the movement from the legs, going through a strong push by the hips and a quick contraction of the back muscles, finally flexing the shoulder muscles only as the last link in the kinetic chain of the blow. A typical example of this type is Sok Gnad, or uppercut elbow (representing one of the possibilities offered by the applications of the Look Mai Erawan Soei Nga).

- Sok Glab Lang: the last category of elbow blows has been studied to allow the executor to strike an opponent who is attacking from behind or to launch a forward blow using the rotation of the body. In both cases the rapid rotation of the hips and the intervention of the powerful back muscles make such blow one of the most devastating weapons of the Muay Thai fighters's arsenal. The trajectories and the angles of these blows may vary according to the position of the executor in comparison to his opponent and also according to the chosen target, the distance that separates the two fighters and the actions that precede the actual striking (such as feints and draws). The most noted example of these elbow strikes is the Sok Glab, or spinning back elbow and its classic application is the Look Mai Hiran Muan Paen Din.

When training elbow strikes, the first step consists in performing such techniques during every Dtoi Lom or shadow boxing session; that kind of work out proves to be ideal to perfect the execution of single blows in movement. In the past times in Thailand, elbow blows performed in river water were a fundamental exercice included in the boxers' training regime to harmoniously develop all the muscles of the body and arms that would be used in the execution of the various elbow strikes.

The second step is training with the master, who wearing a pair of Pao (Thai pads or focus gloves) directs the student to the executions of attacks against a moving target. Attacks, defensive actions and counterattacks must be developed in a harmonious and seamless manner and for this reason the trainer should try to develop in the students a perfect timing, together with a sense of distance in order to "close in" on the adversary, grabbing him and striking him in the most effective way.

An essential complement to this stage of training is practising blows using a heavy bag. This is necessary to further condition those parts of the body that are already resistant of their own accord and to increase the force of blows above all at close range. Traditionally the elbows were conditioned by repeatedly striking a coconut until it broke, using the point of the elbow as an awl.

Finally, the controlled application of elbow strikes should always be done with extreme caution during thai grappling training. For the more dangerous techniques, training should be done in pairs following Mae Mai strategies; in this latter type of training (that is also a long established Muay Boran competition form) it is possible to refine many of the actions that are rarely

carried out in combat including special defense moves, thus rapidly increasing the technical knowledge of every Siamese Art practitioner who really wants a complete martial profile.

The vital points



The Look Mai **Fan Look Buab** teaches us to use our elbows not as clubs or hammers (which is still a very effective use of these natural weapons) but as sharpened blades. Blades are usually used to “slice” and the elbows can be

used in the same way against the body of an enemy. The favoured target of these slicing blows delivered by the elbows is the adversary's head and especially the skin of his face. Wounds to the skin can be incisions (also called incised wounds) that are usually caused by a sharpened object such as a knife or a razor. They can also be lacerations that are irregular and caused by blunt trauma. Penetration wounds can also occur; these are caused by the entrance and exit of a sharpened object. All these wounds, if procured in the so called T-zone (between the eyebrows and the chin, including the eyes, nose and mouth) cause significant loss of blood with serious physical consequences (weakness, pain, respiratory difficulty, visual impairment) but most of all psychological consequences; the will to fight, once someone's face has been smeared with his own blood that runs into the eyes and enters the nose and mouth, drastically diminishes even in the toughest and most aggressive opponent.

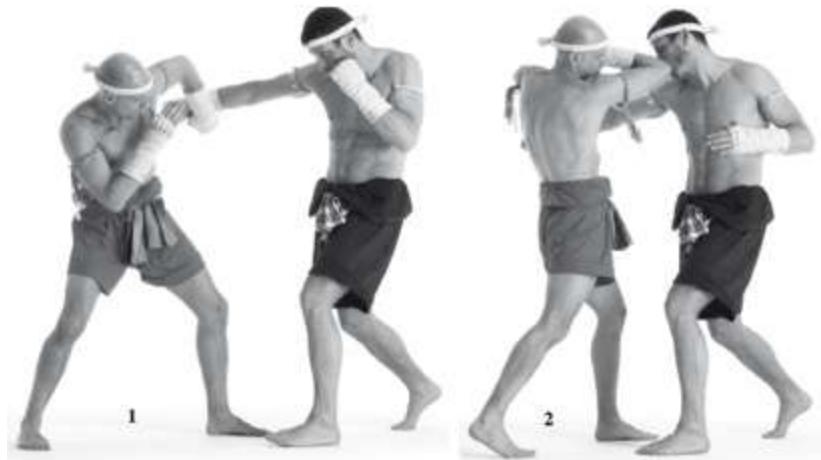
Martial applications

Once again, the fighting principle of breaking through the guard of an opponent who is attacking by his punches is herewith used as it was in the Look Mai 12 and 13. Even here as in the other two, a rearguard attack (according to the cycle of natural weapons) takes place with elbows against fists. Even in this case the adversary who attacks from a very close distance, or one who attempts to grab us by the neck, places us in situations of extreme danger and needs to be treated with drastic measures. In this case the penetration of the adversary's guard is finalised by attacking the face to cut or wound the skin's surface and not the joints, the bones or the internal organs. The consequences may be serious as we have already pointed out and are

more than enough to permanently halt the attack.

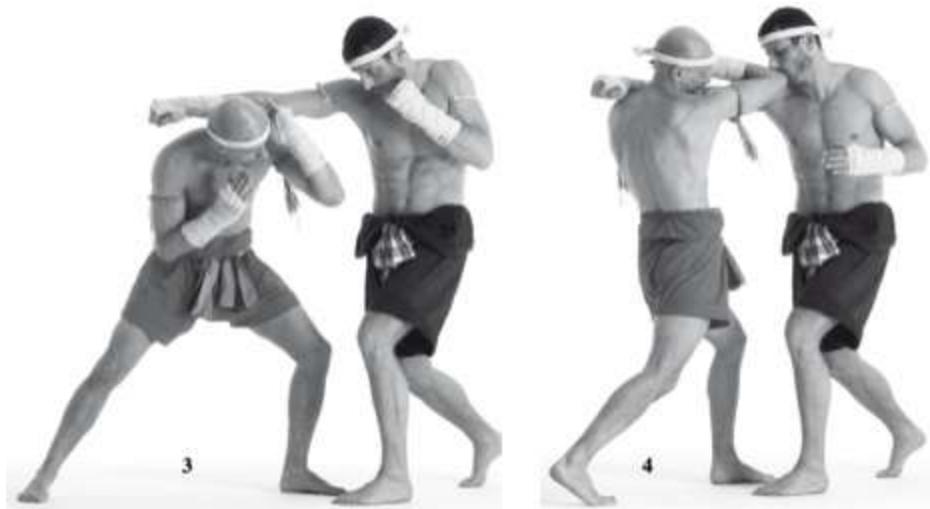
Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 1, 2)



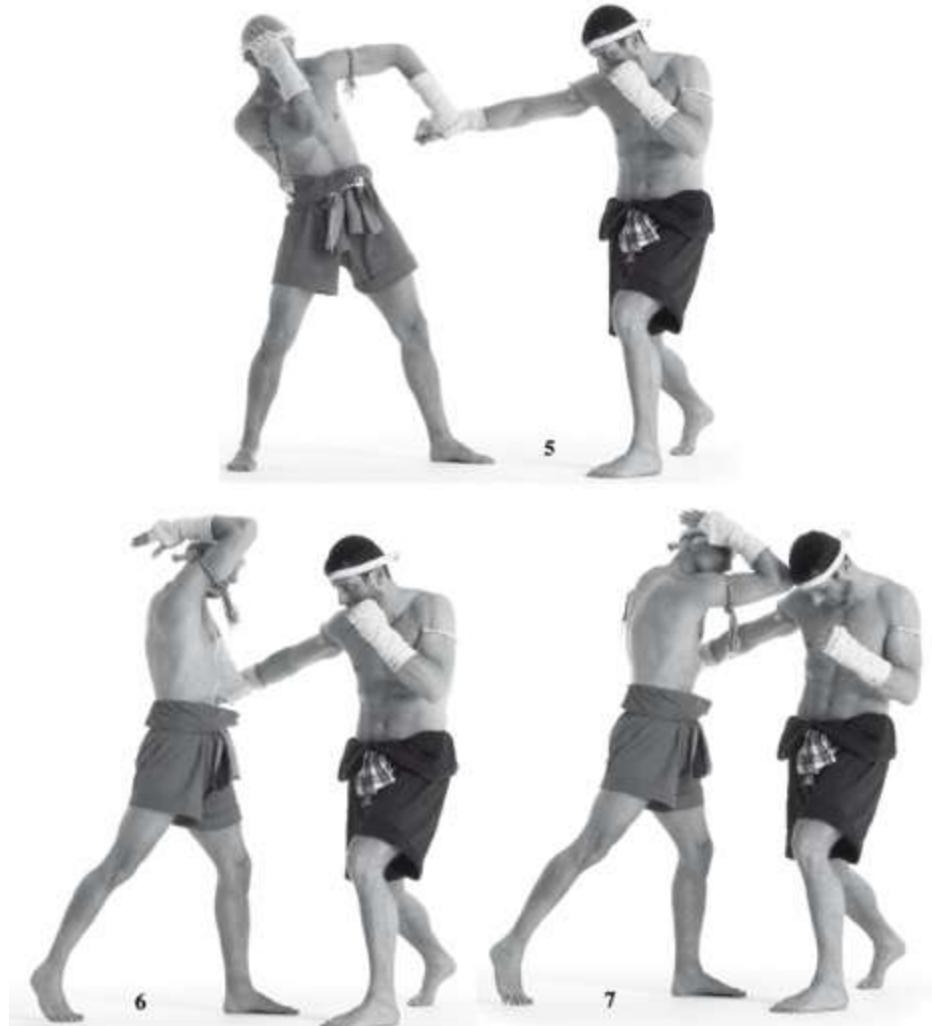
Vs rear straight punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 3, 4)



Vs rear straight punch

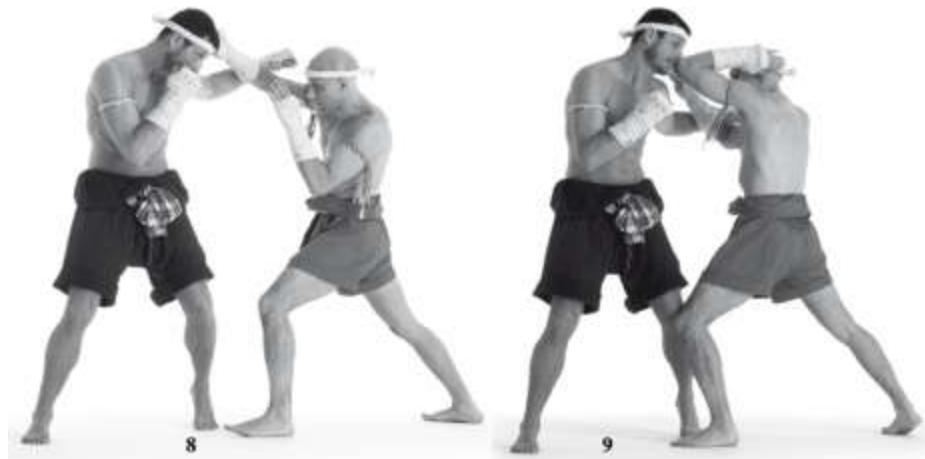
SOLUTION 3 (FIG. 5, 6, 7)



Vs lead hook

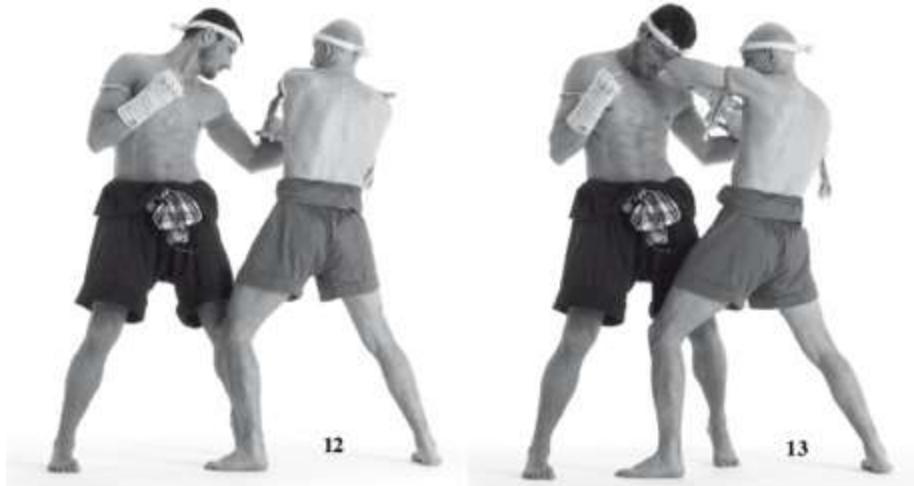
SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 8, 9)

Vs lead hook



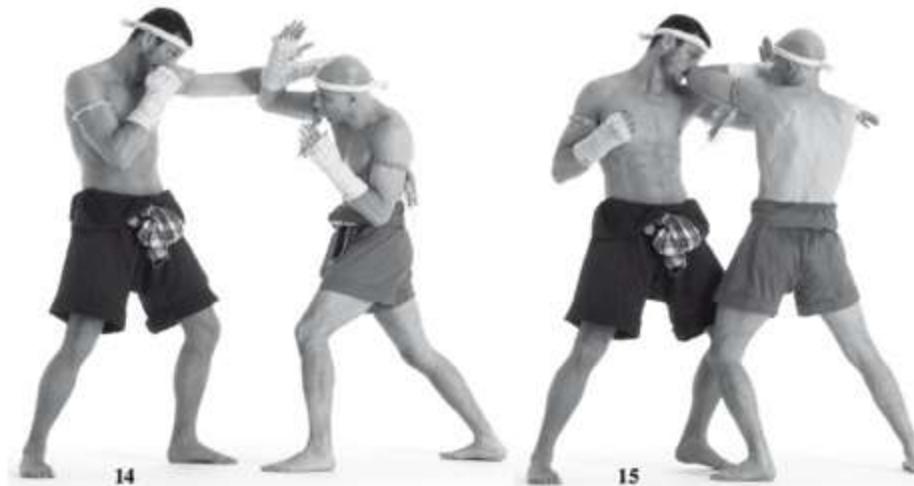
SOLUTION 2
(FIG. 10, 11, 12, 13)





Vs straight lead punch

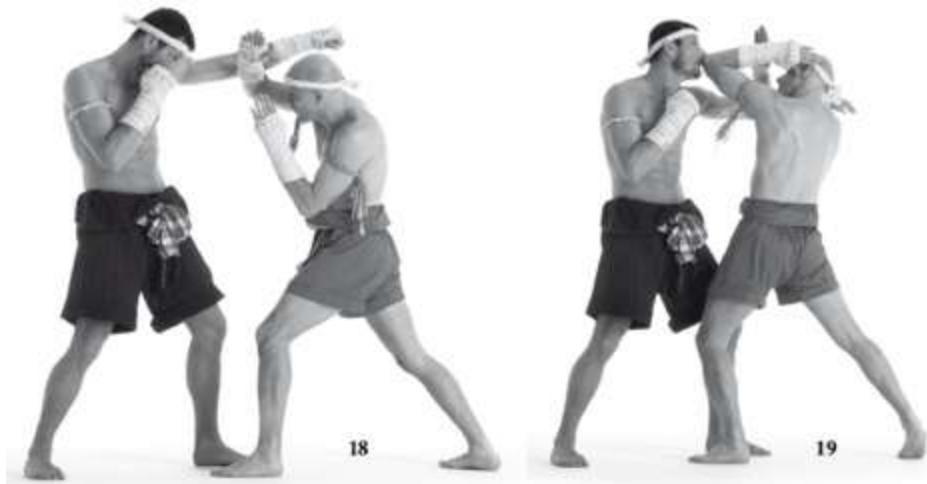
SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 14, 15, 16, 17)





Vs straight lead punch

SOLUTION 2 (FIG. 18, 19, 20, 21)





Vs roundhouse kick to the body

SOLUTION 1 (FIG. 22, 23)



Conclusion

“I have studied Muay Thai since the age of 10, today I am 70 and I still have a lot to learn. If someone says he knows everything and has nothing left to learn, I believe that person will never reach the heart of Muay”.

Grand Master Ketr Sriyabhaya (1902-1978)

The author: Dr. Marco De Cesaris



The recent history of the author (who has been practising, studying, teaching and spreading the knowledge of Muay Thai since 1978) corresponds to the birth and development in the world of the International Muay Boran

Academy (IMBA), founded by him in 1993 as a means to disseminate Traditional Muay Thai. After years of practising Thai Boxing, thanks to the urging of his Master, Chinawooth Sirisompan, the author undertook his path in the study and reconstruction of Thai Martial Arts, something that had not been done for decades neither in Muay Thai's mother land nor abroad. After years of hard work, the publication of seven books, many technical videos and over 300 articles, which have appeared in international specialized magazines, the result has been that the IMBA has spread across three continents. Thus, the name and the sophisticated techniques of Muay Boran are returned to their former glory. In 2000 the author developed a unique type of Full Contact knock down competition called modern Muay Kard Chiek that is actually in use amongst IMBA members. In recognition of this colossal work, Marco De Cesaris was awarded the highest technical grade in this discipline (distinguished by the Gold Mongkon and the title of Bramajarn or Grand Master of Muay Thai) by the Association of Muay Thai Masters (Khru Muay Association) and the Institute of Thai Martial Arts (AITMA) both international organisations based in Thailand. The study and practise of Traditional Muay Thai Forms (Ram Muay) has become in recent years his strong point and in 2007 he won the title of World Single Forms Champion during the international competition held at the National Stadium in Bangkok.

In 2009 Grand Master Yodthong Senanan decided to insert the author into his bloodline and to seal this pact he gave him the nom de guerre of Sityodhtong and his own personal mantra, written by hand as a permanent sign of his admission in Master Yodthong's family of Muay.

www.muaythai.it

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