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Orientalism and Combat Sports by James Pollard

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Orientalism is a worldwide known phenomenon presented by Edward Said that argued how the east is projected in the west and how the west has a tendency to eroticize it. That cannot be completely denied as throughout historical documents and in literature Asia has been presented as a land of a different culture where everything is different and magical.

In the west by giving this sort of an image eastern goods have been sold and helped made the western business man profits. But what people fail to understand is how the east is presented in a condescended manner and how it creates an image globally where the east is categorized as something lower than the west.

Combat sport is an interesting example of how the image of east and its name is used to sell sports. All across the U.S.A we can see posters of Muay thai classes in which an 'Asian' man is presented in such a manner that he is supposed to attract the learners by the fact that he is Asian. The posters claim to teach the learners muay tahi techniques and give them muay thai training. The problem that lies with it is that the image through which it is sold still remains condescending. It tries to portray how the east has suffered and has come to the west to find refuge.

Now, these muay thai classes though might actually give muay thai training and actually do make the student an expert in this 'exotic' combating technique but simultaneously embeds a condescending image of the east and how it can be bought. Now the fighter who learns this rather new way of combat might be of any race and class but the message definitely gets across of how the east should be looked down upon.

Learning about muay thai techniques is not anything wrong but the projection of this sport does become problematic. The sport continues to be eroticized and presented in a manner that east is the field of the west from where anything can be bought and brought in their land. Muay thai nobody considers to be presented in an academic fashion where it can be taught from respectable and experienced teachers from the east. But rather this Thai sport gets treated as a commodity which can be taught by any Asian man because he is Asian and looks different and exotic.

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