

An Exploration of Masculinity, Martial Arts and Warrior Culture in The Middle East

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In this research paper I intend to explore the intersecting roles of constructed masculinity in the Middle East, and Islam. While addressing this, I hope to gain further understanding on issues such as: what roles have martial arts and combat sports and spectacles play in Arab culture, Middle Eastern and Islamic cultures. I should start by defining the Middle East for my context, I intend to examine the regions and cultures represented in the geographic area commonly known as the Middle East in our vernacular thanks to orientalist imaginative geographies. I am referring to the regions of Persian Gulf, Arab speaking countries and regions historically known as Mesopotamia, Persia, Babylon as well as Egypt. I will be examining roles of masculinity, identity, conflict, violence and the performance and spectacle of violence, I would also address the use of rites of passage and contrasting what were “traditional” warrior cultures vs the contemporary examples that we see today. In doing so I hope to answer why have historical warriors and warrior societies from ancient Middle Eastern cultures been ignored in the mainstream historical accounts. Why have Muslim and Arab contributions to the “ancient” world been ignored particularly in the realm of sport spectacle and martial arts and combat? Why have combat sports become such a popular influence in the contemporary Middle East and how is rites of passage and the formation of hegemonic masculine identity been appropriated and perpetuated in contemporary contexts? Finally I would also like to propose how the availability of warrior cultures and martial arts can be decolonizing tools to help provide agency and autonomy to oppressed peoples.

I also intend to examine the relationship and view that Islam may have have on sport and

spectacle specifically in relation to the spectacle or performance of combat or violence. I intend to further examine how combat sport and spectacle interrelate and can be used as a tool to examine and frame masculine identity in said cultures. I wish to pay particular attention to the long history of wrestling and grappling in the region, which dates back to the epic of Gilgamesh and how that tradition carries on today with deeply rooted cultures of folk wrestling and various other types of grappling. This is particularly true in the modern regions of Iran, Armenia, Turkey and Iraq. I will be addressing some more modern and complex issues such as, why have Arab elites become major players in the economic and popular rise of combat sports such as the UFC (Ultimate Fighting Championship) and Brazilian Jujitsu as well as Submission Wrestling.

It is my intention to gain deeper understanding of sport and spectacle as a modern cultural phenomena. While examining the idea of spectacle and sport as well as the ways in which violence and combat spectacles are ways of uniting social and political significance. Another major question that will be addressed is, what role has masculinity played? How has martial arts and combat culture interacted with conceptions of masculinity and identity in the region? I will contrast warrior-ship to the soldier identity and give examples of the use of rites of passage in both models, as well I intend to offer critique of military culture counter martial or warrior culture. I will be doing a comparative analysis of Israeli masculinity and identity to older Mesopotamian and Middle Eastern cultures. Furthermore, what role have warrior cultures played in the formation of Middle Eastern identities? I will be Examining Zionist Israeli masculinity through examination of Israeli rites of passage and perpetuation of hegemonic identities. I will also be examining new constructions of manhood in the contemporary cultures represented there.

I wish to also better understand the role of “the warrior poet”. My cultural explorations of warrior cultures and martial cultures will be broken down into regionally and culturally as well as

making historical comparison contrasted to contemporary examples. I will be starting with earliest possible depictions moving to present. Points of juxtaposition will be, Arab warriors and warrior identities historically, Jewish warrior and masculinity an examination of Biblical and contemporaneity masculinity identities in Judea. I will examine the roots of combat spectacle in ancient Egypt, where I will examine the history of sport combat and spectacle in ancient Egypt and attempt to link them to contemporary examples. Egypt is the only culture that gives us the oldest visual representations and written account of sport and more specifically combat sport for that matter. I hope that through this style of research we can use martial art and sport or the spectacle of as a way of accounting for cultural history growth and evolution's. I will also be looking into “traditional” martial arts of Egypt which include *Tahteeb* Stick Fighting.

I would like to address the topic of warrior culture in historical context as well. I find it interesting that so often when we refer to the “ancient world” the conversation and data is limited to Greek and Roman societies. I would like to address the lack of Middle Eastern contribution when it comes to examinations of the so-called ancient world. Here warrior societies such as the Persian ,along with the Hashashin, roots of these issues in the Mesopotamian, Assyrian and Babylonian histories and cultures. I would also like to attempt to counter possible orientalist created ideas of classical Middle Eastern masculinity by offering up examples of warrior-ship in these cultures. The existence of women warrior cultures in Persia,Egypt and Babylonian traditions will also be addressed. I will move on to examine the tradition of these sports and spectacles from earliest possible recorded or possible formations to current. An excellent example is the epic work Gilgamesh, representing the first published novel in written history and also serving as an example and tying to these themes of establishing a rooted martial and cultural tradition in this region. This hopefully will also show the omission of Mesopotamian (Middle Eastern) work and contributions to world history.

Other examples of art and cultures to be examined included, Turkish and Iranian *folk wrestling* will be extensively examined as have written oral and some existing examples of these ancient practices, examples of this include *Mithraism* (whose roots can be traced back 3,000 years),

The epic of Gilgamesh takes place nearly a thousand years before Homer, truly the worlds first novel epic that also happened to celebrate the ancient art of grappling. This performance space would be located in the cradle of civilization itself. The tale of this epic which had been preserved only in fragments, on clay tablets left by a great Sumerian culture. In the city of “Uruk of the Sheepfold”, a contest between the “divine” hero king Gilgamesh and the strong, wild and terrifying nemesis, the wildman, “Enkidu the fighter,” would be recorded. When these men engaged in the performance and spectacle of martial combat, they were also representing a clash between divinity and earthliness that would have specific relevance to the first peoples. Gilgamesh is the physically formidable king of the city of Uruk; described as “powerfully built-hero” and a “butting bull”, also referred to as “the pattern of strength”. At the beginning of this epic, Gilgamesh proves to be a less than honorable and pious king, his people are distraught. He is menacing, terrorizing people and claiming *prima nocte* rights with brides on their wedding night.¹

“On the sheepfold of Uruk he himself lifts his gaze/ like a wild bull rising up supreme, his head high./ The raising of his weapon has no equal;/ with the drum his citizens are raised./ He runs wild with the young lords of Uruk through the holy places... Gilgamesh does not allow the son to go with his father... Gilgamesh does not let the young woman go her mother/ the girl to the warrior, the bride to the young groom.”

Deciding to take action on humans behalf, the goddess Aruru hears of these injustices and steps in. She creates “*Enkidu the fighter*” by pinching clay and tossing it into the wilderness. Born of the wilderness he “*ranges endlessly over the hills*” with the animals and beasts. He draws many attributes that are reflected later in the biblical tale of Samson the Judge (or Samson and Delilah). Born from the will of

¹ Erik Blomquist | VICE Sports." VICE Sports RSS. Accessed June 01, 2016. https://sports.vice.com/en_us/contributor/erik-blomquist.

the gods, he is created by the Gods to defeat Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh it is told to be two thirds divine one third human. Counter to that Enkidu is two thirds human one third divine. Enkidu initially lives with the animals and prevents the young hunter from catching his game. A repetition of descriptions used by the young hunter denote the prowess of Enkidu and Gilgamesh. Things like “*power belongs to him*”, and “*Like a shooting star of the god Anu, he has awesome strength*”. Eventually, a temple priestess and some speculate also possibly a prostitute, teaches the wildman Enkidu the basics of civilization. At this point I would again hope to draw connections to the biblical tale of Samson. The point is after Enkidu is tamed he hears about the powerful King Gilgamesh terrorizing his people and decides to go to Uruk to challenge him. In Uruk, Enkidu blocks Gilgamesh as he attempts to enter the bed chamber of a new bride, challenging his sexual dominance. This is when the wrestling match between them ensues:

“Enkidu blocked the gate
with his foot,
not letting Gilgamesh in.
They wrestled with one another,
locked like bulls.
They shattered the doorpost,
and the wall shook.
Gilgamesh and Enkidu
wrestled with one another,
locked like bulls;
they shattered the doorpost
and the wall shook.”

During the melee and without a designated space to confine the match they destroy property on the sidelines. The match concludes with the following:

“Gilgamesh bent his knee
and with his foot planted on the ground
and with a turn
Enkidu was thrown.
Then immediately his fury died.”

This is reference to a wrestling move that is widely used today, a move that has existed since the arts inception and still works today known as a hip throw or hip toss. What follows in the wake of the destructive epic contest is that Gilgamesh is immediately has a moment of clarity and calms his fury.

The showdown may have technically been a street fight, but the men in this case chose to wrestle. They did not engage in strikes. Once the “match” was won the two considered the dispute resolved. Some scholars and researchers speculate that this is the civilized challenge for dominance that represents the original spirit of the sporting event.² Today rules for engagement in the performance and playing space exist but the question of dominance remains. “The ideal of sportsmanship in two combatants who are able to drop the fury they brought into the ring after the contest is decided.”³ The text goes on to detail the adventures of Gilgamesh and Enkidu making a name for themselves killing demons and offending deities while adventuring together. Eventually Enkidu dies in battle, causing Gilgamesh to fall into a deep and long depression. This confrontation with death scars Gilgamesh, he decides to engage in a quest for eternal life. The arrival of Enkidu, his death and their spectacular conflict as well as their subsequent friendship comes to define them both. In modern terms this is hardly unheard of we commonly see fighters become friends after training together or fighting. The concept become lifelong companions who share a deep and profound love and respect for one another after engaging in an epic contest or struggle together and bond within that context, I find important.

The traditional style of grappling in the Persian Empire was known as *Koshti*, there are several theories as to the etymology of the word, however the mainly accepted understanding has it coming from the Persian word that meant the fighting of two warriors who intend to grapple. The sport of *Koshti* was known as *Varzesh-e-bastani*. These Persian traditions are traceable back to antiquity, or Arsacid Parthian times (132 BCE – 226 CE). *Koshti* traditionally played an essential role in preparing Iranian warriors for the battlefield. One example cites two wrestlers, one Turkish one Iranian, from the Sassanid period (1010 CE) wrestling after they had broke all their man made weapons in combat. This culture and tradition is still alive and practiced today throughout the region. The relationship between

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the development of Sufi Islam and Varzesh-e Pahlavani is worth noting and exploring further, as these cultures blended and drew from each-other. Many Persian epics and manuscripts report the importance of wrestling in their culture. However in the 8th century Sufi Islam began its ideological expansion, Varzesh-E Pahlavani absorbed its philosophical and spiritual components and integrated the existing warrior culture to blend with the religion of Islam. Today in Iran the modern version of this traditional culture is known as Koshti in Persian – or *Koshti Pahlavani*. This folk wrestling is practiced in the Zurkaneh (training hall). It was a favorite pastime activity of the Iranian nobility to watch these wrestling matches. The respective champions were called *Pahlavanan*. A Pahlavan was expected to follow the chivalric code known as *Javanmardi*, the same code system that others of the warrior class would be expected to abide by (such as archers and swordsman). When not wrestling often times these men would work as body-guards or night watchmen.

The Sufi order of *Pahlevani* and the Turkish styles of wrestling called *Zoorkhanei* both which incorporate the ideas of performance and balance as essential to understandings of spirit. In their dealings with ideas surrounding external vs internal, the duality of nature and form made connection with this art form. In doing so and engaging in the conscious act of struggle the performance of this spectacle served to give the performer insight into questions that are bound to Sufi ideology, such as what is manifest? What role does place and space have, what is tangible or material? How does one derive meaning or content? The representation of the struggle is simultaneously internal (the kernel or seed, formless, unseen) and existing in no place. The warrior must erase form to achieve meaning. Here form is not only equal to the material world but the form and material body of the performer or participant. The act of the struggle connects form to meaning, or the natural spiritual world. The form may be seen to the observer as the primary however the act that lead to the performance of the material action is the truth or meaning of the act. The view that mans purpose is to seek the highest

knowledge, martial life and warrior identity supports this ideology. Spirit is hidden and work is needed to unlock it, much like the work of the warrior to achieve balance of body or form and mind (the connective tissue) and spirit or meaning. The need for contrast is why form exists (is necessary), to contrast / things become clear through their opposites. Good vs evil or intent and balance are all exemplified through the martial performance of space in this case, form is mans prison, representing the temporariness of forms, while seeking highest truths, the act of the struggle is a performance detailing mans ascension from animal form to higher levels of form through intent and sacrifice and habit. Form is temporary in Jung's terms, Sufism can be seen as an example of how a healthy, integrated psyche might function, and what a living mythology might look like. The ideals ingrained in warrior culture and martial arts are intrinsically linked here. Everything that exists is a part of and a manifestation of the Oneness of God.⁴ Humans are part of God. In the martial tradition the practitioner like the pious man is always consciously striving to improve oneself and evolve, the need for balance in highlight in both martial combat and Sufi ideology. To him the idea of a separate self is the result of ignorance. Ibn al-'Arabi was born in Spain, in AD 1165. At the age of twenty he was initiated into Sufism. From the 1190s he engaged in three decades of travels as a wandering scholar, poet and mystic, the source of his inspirations are cited to be an angel, which, in Jungian terms, is an archetypal inhabitant of the unconscious. Angels are the messengers or intermediaries between God (the spiritual) and the human (material) world. Angel's here serve as intermediaries and messengers, angels are the very permeability of the division between the two zones of the psyche. Unconscious content, which cannot be directly introduced by the conscious, is translated into terms the conscious can comprehend: language or form. Intermediaries between conscious and unconscious are necessary because, God is beyond the categories of human thought and beyond language and concept, He is unknowable, unutterable. As such the Sufi experience of God is referred to as knowledge of the heart. The Sufi calls

⁴ Chittick, William. "Ibn Arabi." Stanford University. 2008. Accessed June 01, 2016. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/ibn-arabi/>.

“knowledge” their own experience. Between me and the motive of my causing stands nothing and nobody.

A dervish is someone guiding a Sufi down a path, known for their extreme poverty and austerity. His focus is on the universal values of love and service, deserting the illusions of ego to reach God. In most Sufi orders, a dervish is known to practice dhikr through physical exertions or religious practices to attain the ecstatic trance to reach Allah. This process can easily be connected with the ritual engagement in martial practice and then with the performance of combat spectacle and conflict between warriors, or the pious. The common practice of Sama is another great connection, the planets revolve around the sun, the seeker's consciousness revolve around “the axis of all pervading divine light.” In a perfected Sama the Sufi's consciousness is flooded with divine ecstasy and joy begins to permeate from the Grand Consciousness. This practice can be achieved in the trance state that many martial artists feel as they engage in training and competition. In his work *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam* from 2011, Shahzad writes “I believe Awbahi's emphasis on physicality in he handshake is not an isolated instance but an aspect of the general high valorization of corporeal contact as a marker of social solidarity...” he goes on to say later that “the mutual apprehension of persons mediated through touch..(of hands)”⁵ This piecing together complex functions within narratives, and the the importance of context thus connecting, time, place, space, (past and present). These themes hold complex places in the social relations of the time at which they were produced. It is my belief that by gaining understanding in the role of masculinity in context, martial tradition or performance of space can essentially help provide understanding of cultural conditions that relate to the production of these ideas, identities and performances.

Sufi's believe that the passage of time not measured in years but instead through “...through

5 Bashir, Shahzad. *Sufi Bodies: Religion and Society in Medieval Islam*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. pg 3

human lifespans whose sequencing together brings one close to the Prophets body”.⁶ The touching of hands or bodies, can be seen in the Sufi tradition as a link to past and present as well as a connection with the Prophet. The connection of physical form to engage in a spectacle performance of conflict and space can also serve to link individual and collective identities. making a connection to the etymology of the word *tasawwuf* (Sufi) which reflects a meaning along the lines of “to make or making oneself a Sufi” and the process involved in the martial culture which can be seen as an ongoing process towards transforming both form (ones physical self) and mind(spiritual). One it not a Sufi or a warrior/martial artist, but ones identity as one is dictated through the ongoing process of commitment to that lifestyle or process of commitment to a constant awareness and process of personal growth. Shahzad also tells us that “Today, Sufism is often portrayed as a non-mainstream Islamic perspective that consists mainly of mystical philosophies and lyrical poetry evocating the pleasures and pains of human beings intimate relationships with the divine”.⁷ Some call Sufism “Islamic mysticism, a term that invokes psychology, individual enlightenment, and liberties from dogmatic and societal constraints...”.⁸ Often linking it to spiritual universal-ism, akin to Buddhism, and Hinduism. These art all have long and well researched connections to many martial cultures and traditions I think this relationship should be worth note. The role of martial tradition and Sufism, as well as masculinity and combat spectacle or performance helps provide immense elements for understanding the functions and historical evolution's of Islamic, Arab, Middle Eastern intellectual and social and cultural patterns. We can then ask what is the role of the person who has looking at something that is not constructed? How does it relate to the fight itself, the clash and connection of distance (space), matter and form?

Sufi Dervish were warrior orders called by the Calif. They were not only mystics but warriors when necessity demanded. Many martial traditions who relate to seekers and keepers of knowledge

6 Shahzad pg 6. / Sa'id Habashi

7 Shahzad pg 10

8 Shahzad pg 10

understand the necessity as ones with knowledge or power and the need to protect themselves, that knowledge or the communities they represent. There is good evidence, that their secret close-knit brotherhoods served as the role model of the European Knight Templar's. Sufi's have proved to be some of the the most skilled and fierce fighters in Muslim history and in Ottoman culture. One particular brand of Sufi's influential in Pakistan and Afghanistan in a tradition of secret societies. Information was passed down from person to person for generations. We can draw another connection to other martial or warrior cultures here that passes oral and martial tradition secretly for generations, this also protects the knowledge and information from colonization and ensures its long term survival. They were active in the Jihad to regain India from the Raj. Sufism influential in Chechnya: The terrorist attacks of Beslan and the Moscow theater siege had Sufi background. Sufi orders led the armies that conquered lands in Central and South Asia, and in Europe; through their piety and their mysticism, the brotherhoods then won the local elite over to Islam. They disguised Islam with local traditions and worship styles, including Christian saints and Hindu gods. Today, Sufi styles and practices dominate in the non-Arab Muslim world: in India and Pakistan, in Indonesia and Malaysia, Nigeria and Senegal, and in the Muslim countries of Central Asia, such as Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The Sufi Order was widespread in the Ottoman Empire (because the majority of Ottoman Janissaries were Shia-Sufis). The Janissaries were elite soldiers, a heavy armored infantry or Foot Knights of the Ottoman Empire. Ottoman Heavy Cavalry were Sipahis (Turkish Nobles) and Ghulams (mostly Persian). Janissaries had "cousins" in Iran (Persia) under the Safavid Dynasty (Persian-Turkic Cousins of the Ottomans).The Safavid counterpart of the Ottoman Janissaries were called the "Qizilbash. Christian children were brought into the corps through the devshirme system, in which young boys were taken from their Christian families in Greece, Serbia, Armenia, or Bulgaria , which were part of the Ottoman Empire. The word "Janissary" comes from the Turkish yeni çerier "new soldier." The child soldiers were converted to Islam, and trained in infantry techniques and tactics. By the end of the seventh century, Turkish migrants converted to Sunni Islam and became champions of Islamic orthodoxy. Beginning in the twelfth century, new waves of

Turkic migrants became attracted to militant Sufi orders, which gradually incorporated heterodox Shi'a beliefs. One Sufi order that appealed to Turks after they won against Christianity was the Safavi, based in northwest Iran. Safavid adherence to a Sufi version of Shi'a Islam had the support of the Turkic tribes called the mentioned Qizilbash literary the "Redheads" for the twelve red strips on their turbans symbolizing their adherence to twelve Shi'i Imams. Qizilbash tribes resided mostly in Asia Minor; northern Syria, and northern Iraq. Concern about the growing influence of the Safavi probably was one of the factors that prompted the Ottomans to permit unorthodox Bektasi Sufism to become the official order of the Janissary soldiers. The Sufi orders enhanced their political role again with Western imperialism. When Islam was under threat, their close-knit societies were devastatingly effective. Sufi orders led anti-colonial movements from Morocco to Indonesia and are the core of the stubborn Chechen guerrillas. Even Stalin's terror campaigns could not root out the Sufi brotherhoods. A similar story can be told in Kurdistan, Kashmir, Albania, Somalia, Kosovo, and elsewhere, where believers owed their survival and cohesion to the Sufi brotherhoods.

Ottoman-style oil wrestling This art form is also known as *yagla gures*, many historians of the culture believe its tradition began in Iran. The purpose of the oil is to force the competitors to learn to rely on patience, superior technique and balance rather than muscle (size/ strength). - "*Martial arts of the world: an encyclopedia of history and innovation vol.2*" - Edited by Thomas Green. Examples of this tradition still exists in Turkey. It is mainly referred to today as Turkish Oil Wrestling. The competitors wear distinctive leather pants known as "*Kibset*" the pants have leather strings on the waist and knees, these leather trousers provide the competitors with a potential grip when engaging in bouts that can last up to several hours. The string on the pants symbolize the moral ideals of the sport, "a morally immaculate and virtuous behavior is achieved through carefully knotting the trouser-cord".⁹

9 Frembgen, Jürgen Wasim. "Tying and Untying the Trouser-cord: Dimensions of Normativity, Morality, and Emotion in Pakistani Body Behaviour." *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 5, no. 1 (2004)

These events would be common at community festivities, tournaments, weddings etc... These events closely resembled the examples of jousting matches of similar mock combat tournaments that existed in Feudal Europe. Whereas generally the spectators were separate from the participants, there would be no weight classes, instead participants would divide into groups such as “champions” “Journeymen” and novices these would additionally be broken down by age groups. There would be a referee and “standard” wrestling prohibitions would apply such as no eye gouging, grasping of genitals and etc. Historically draws were not allowed and matches could last long hours often into the night, in such cases the match would resume the following morning. The competitors were men of the region who were community members not making a living competing in sport but rather from standard occupations. Each Ottoman community would have its own champion.¹⁰ Often a rich land owner or community association such as the local Mosque or Church would provide the regional champion with room and board, in exchange he would train the communities wrestlers/ warriors. These training halls usually were associated with the Mosque or Church, the Sufi order became very interlaced with this practice which warrants further examination. The connection between the place of training and the place in these casing being a religiously pure place such as the Mosque or Church, this aids in the acquisition of divine protection for the participants, their martial trials reflecting the order of the world both spiritually and psychically. The Turkish word for the “place” in which the participants engage in the act is called a *tekke*, reflecting the relationship between sacred spaces and the processes being engaged upon in them, the term is also the same word used to describe a Sufi lodge. We would see a competition begin with various prayers and invocations and individual meditations. Often times individual participants would adorn protective amulets. Outside of the larger tournaments that would be linked with community events such as weddings, festivals, fairs, harvests, funerals, you would have the more intimate less formal community matches that served to provide the participants valuable training experience as well as achieving status in the community. You could expect that a youth who did not

10 Green, Thomas A. *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001

participate in wrestling would not be well “respected” or to marry well.¹¹ Local tournament champions would be sent to participate in regional tournaments that would thus serve to train the regions warriors but also provide each community with a similar form of social prestige as the individual champions would gain. These regional tournaments would be spectacles and winners would often receive such rewards as ox, or rams these spoils would be shared with the local community that they represent via a feast upon their return. Green tells us in his work on the history of martial arts how important for the individual competitors was the opportunity to travel as this may have been the true reward, often men would never have the opportunity to travel the country or see much outside their immediate place. The ability to travel without their participation in these regional tournaments not existing.

Mock combat such as the art of grappling can provide the individual a variety of opportunities to gain prestige both from the social group and a sense of power and individual esteem, these competitions provides participants a way of demonstrating their skill and ability as well as the individuals “bravery”. Rich men, or representatives of more wealthy groups and communities would scout or send a scout to regional tournaments in hopes to find champions that they could recruit in exchange for room board and a small compensation to become their communities or their personal champion.

National level events were reserved for the elite who could afford such spectacles. Turkish Kirkpinar tournaments can be dated back to the 14th century. Tradition has a story regarding two brothers who were also Ottoman soldiers, named Ali and Salim engaging in an epic wrestling match that lasted day and night to see who was the best warrior, they ultimately both died of exhaustion. No winner was determined in the endeavor. This led to their pasha, the son of the first Ottoman Sultan, to

¹¹ Green, Thomas A. *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia*.

establish a grand tournament in their memory.¹² This tournament would become known as the *Kirkpinar*. This annual event has been held in Turkey since 1924. However the tradition of oil wrestling in the region has suffered since the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, in 1923 President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk for example viewed this tradition as one of many “Ottoman” practices that were barbaric and labeled them as examples of the non “modern” culture. Since then *Kirkpinar* has been a straight sporting contest. In addition in 1925 the Republic of Turkey abolished the Sufi orders that historically had provided the wrestlers and knowledge, thus leaving the keepers of this knowledge no place to train or congregate. With that, oil wrestling became essential secular.

The idea of champions at times representing wealthy groups or individuals is important to note because , we can see examples of social unrest of communal grievances being resolved by these spectacles. Ultimately if a champion is pious enough and technical enough despite the obscurity of the village or community he may come from he could have the power symbolically over thrown the dominative powers to be, but also to give agency to his people by giving them visibility and prestige. There are many stories of Christian wrestlers sparking sectarian violence by defeating local Ottoman garrisons champions as well as stories of Muslim wrestlers sparking sectarian violence by defeating Russian and other Imperial garrisons champions.¹³ Urbanization also left its mark on the culture, in the 1960s many rural landowners continued to sponsor regional and communal tournaments, however by the 1980s most landowners were living in the cities. Municipal governments thus became the chief patrons of the events. Additionally globalization has effected this cultures ability to grow organically and sustain, despite this however there have been many unaffiliated Turkish style oil wrestling organizations in Turkish communities in Europe.

12 Green, Thomas A. *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia*.

13 Green, Thomas A. *Martial Arts of the World: An Encyclopedia*.

Next I would address identity, masculinity and martial culture in Zionist Israeli culture, initially I would attempt to counter to orientalist narratives that make the claim that Israeli martial arts such as Krav Maga and KAPAP are the “only authentic” Martial Arts from the region. Next I would like to offer examples of how rites of passage have been produced for the Israeli citizen, the rite of passage into adulthood becomes the youths entrance into IDF service. This service is compulsory for both male and female. There has been much work and literature available on the construction of masculine identity within the the IDF, examination of which we can generally conclude that the IDF serves as a hegemonic and oppressive force. One that intentionally produces sexualized, masculine and violent images and identities. The idea of “Combat Culture” is essential to the modern formation of the Zionist identity. The IDF constructs and supports intensifying gender distinctions¹⁴, thus producing a uniformed highly manufactured guise of masculinity. One that is not only hyper aggressive and oppressive, but also sexualized and formally heterosexual. This constructed identity is based in “othering”, as they have created a culture that defines oneself on what they are not, which is “the Arab other” . While simultaneously effeminizing of the Arab male, Danny Kaplan tells us in his work *The Military as a Second Bar Mitzvah* that “...Zionist masculinity was reconstructed as a masculinity of body, realized through territorial settlement” . I would also add as well as, military might. He would go on to tell us later “...the image of the Jewish warrior has been reinforced as a state institution.” This institution is one of hegemonic Zionist domination and identities. It is interesting to note that even though women must serve, their enlistments are shorter and cannot serve in “combat” roles. Just a way of perpetuating gendered differences while assimilating the women into this oppressive structure of othering. In the United States we can make connections to the formulation of masculine identity and the importance of combat roles as being the arch type of military organization. they define the meaning of military service both on a collective as well as a personal level.¹⁵ We can say the IDF serves as ongoing

14 Ghaṣṣūb, Mayy, and Emma Sinclair-Webb. *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*. London: Saqi, 2000. - Israeli- 1997

15 Ghaṣṣūb, Mayy, and Emma Sinclair-Webb. *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*. London: Saqi, 2000. Pg 129

initiation rite, one that is based on sacred symbols and targeted for the individual. Israel is able to activate a young male and transmit and indoctrinate him into the values of Israeli society. Traditionally in warrior societies around the world, rites of passage typically involve the dramatic enactment of trials on a public stage. A display of courage when faced with pain and humiliation or humbling before their respective community. Soldiers go through a similar process of proving their personal endurance and mental as well as physical strength, this is done both to self and superiors, as well as the community or other soldiers in this case. The IDF and military service as far as from a cultural perspective can be seen as a prolonged initiation rite. The passage into becoming an adult, this could be said for both in Israel and the United States. Some of the factors that play into these foundations and constructs are presented to us by Kaplan, who would tell us that:

“The first component is the perception of military service as a developmental and major stage for identity crystallization and self discovery. It helps to shape the skills of personal and social attributes that will allow him to be successful in the given society. It helps to shape the belonging of the individual into the society, they have committed themselves to defending the ideals of the society. Also serves to create another post military service other or outsider, the common citizen that has no real understanding of the complexities of the adult world”.

Kaplan would go on later to state “Yet as an organized, collective and normative rite of passage, the military defines not only a new stage in the life cycle, nor the new position in society but also a new role as a man”. We must also recognize a component of the genderedness, where the apparatus projects the hegemonic masculinities of given society. “Conceptualizing masculinity in terms of an initiation rite underscores the universal notion that hegemonic masculinity is not given, but an ideal that needs to be accomplished.”¹⁶. This is why we often see those individuals who formulate identity in such notions to constantly feel the need to assert and prove ones masculinity. Military culture can do this and does. When countering this to a martial culture and they use of rites of passage often times traditionally done so in a way that was healthier to the communities involved. The acts and rites are cooperative in nature

Also check: Kaplan, Danny, and Amir Rosenmann. "Unit Social Cohesion in the Israeli Military as a Case Study of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"." *Political Psychology* 33, no. 4 (2012)

not produced and exploitative. Ideals that are often associated with warrior cultures are concepts of self mastery, mastery of situations (present space) and ultimately warrior-ship. We must actively counter warrior-ship from soldier-ship.

Dehumanization, the enemy being depersonalized and objectified, these are now “norms” part of the spectacle of combat sport, spectacle of war and violence the idea that “this man is my enemy” is very much counter to martial traditions where the participants are engaging in acts of sportsmanship because they are helping each-other become better. Communally evolving and growing the sense of comradery... the soldier also feels a similar comradery as well but only towards his fellow killers . A critical difference I see is the soldier owning the almost machine mentality that is unyielding and unquestioning, I would counter that to the warrior identity who is constantly engaging in the spiritual and physical evolution's of self, the importance of balance and as such the questioning of ones identity to separate any elements that hinder ultimate growth. Much like performance of military warrior action, the martial artist focuses on the deeper meaning as he has attempted to become complete. We can juxtapose the the hypothetical pride one might feel upon winning a competition and to how (IDF) military competition is framed, inter unit competition works that the individuals feel a sense of pride when they achieve their mission “killing” = winning. The warrior however could be said feels accomplished in engaging in the performance of self growth.

The Jewish tradition of circumcision is a very visible example of a widely practiced and generally unquestioned symbolic act of gender differentiation.¹⁷ When dealing with ideas of thinking about spiritual purity, cultural creations, cultural birth, growth, rituals and rites of passage should be examined to help give us an accurate depiction of where the foundations of a social acceptance for a

¹⁷ Ghaşşüb, Mayy, and Emma Sinclair-Webb – re: Bilu, Yoram pg 38

oppressive and “othering” culture stem.¹⁸ “Like all Jewish rituals of childhood, it (circumcision) constitutes a moment of male exclusiveness in which the infant is appropriated from his mother and temporarily situated in an all-male environment.”¹⁹ In this instance circumcision effectively separating the child from his mother and bonding him with the father. Interestingly like many modern Jewish rites of passage this male dominated experience traditionally had women playing an integral role in the process.²⁰ This practice is one that supports gender differentiation as a means to “...permanent, circumcision may be viewed as an embodied means to pass down memory of social identity outside cognition and text”.²¹ This type of “rite of passage” is in stark contrast to more tribal rites that occur later in life and that require the participant to willingly engage in this trans-formative spectacle and ritual. It should also be noted that while often these rites would be done in a male dominated setting the “othering” of the feminine does not exist in the context as it does here with the Jewish act of circumcision. Most rites of passage especially in the Judaeo christian tradition relate to ideals and values that shape male vocation: purity and knowledge.²² These rites often representing righteousness wholeness and blessing. As well in the Judaeo Christian narrative we should see a connection between the acceptance of colonial and oppressive actions by the society and anything viewed as excessive being impure – the foreskin of the infant in this case, relating to the Jewish concept of foreskin having female connotations. Removing the “unmanly” excess serves to remove the feminine residue from the body (note that both in indigenous rites of passage and Jewish rites this idea does exist and we should not presume to depict the Jewish culture as the only one who engages in this view). We also should take some time to frame this in the context of the individuals spiritual rectifications by engaging in the rite. In these sacred places we can see the connection to ancient and traditional warrior societies sacred places being a space where body and mind merging together in a sacred space in which the physical

18 Bilu, Yoram "From Milah (Circumcision) to Milah (Word): Male Identity and Rituals of Childhood in the Jewish Ultraorthodox Community." *Ethos* 31, no. 2 (2003): 172-203

19 Rubin 1995 Pg 17

20 Hoffman 1996-190-207.

21 Litt 1997. pg 22

22 Bilu, Yoram

form can engage in a trans-formative process (physical, mental and spiritual often times). We should also examine how the idea of rewarding for purity, as purity is connected w sacredness and a relationship with Allah, or God. This is a direct connection with other sacred places however in the places I intend to explain, this is a consensual agreement to engage in the painful and ardent process opposed to it being forcefully inflicted upon the un-consenting child. (note relationships to this and the tolerance of the domination and degradation of the Palestinian body). In the tradition these acts representing the sacred trilogy, mental, physical,spiritual attument, growth and perfection or balance. Balance being the connective state with ones higher self or relationship with God/ Allah. I would also like to bring attention to the idea of purity being a prerequisite for victory, both as a nation and as an individual, this also applies to many warrior cultures. The idea that having been a purer warrior will grant you victory. These practices of mutilation of form tie to anthropomorphic and linguistic symbolism, here the body being the physical representation. In both the religious context and in warrior culture the idea that purification rituals serve as the precondition for learning. One who has completed the process is “clean” and ready to accept knowledge.

What about where these practices take place how can they be compared to the sacred spaces of warrior-ship where conflict and cultural ideas converge? We must examine modern rituals whose functions are to serve as “psycho-cultural device(s) to realign the elements of male identity associated with memory,gender differentiation, purity and knowledge...”.²³ In doing this we must counterering western rites of passage as they seemingly serve Israeli colonial masculine ideals of rites of passage that essentially serve to separate and “mutilate, modifying the personality of the individual in a manner visible to all”. It should be clear how this being often times the Jewish child's first memory can facilitate a future accepting the mutilation and violence perpetuated by a settler colonial state that oppresses the bodies of millions of non-consenting individuals.

Visibility being a key concept when thinking about autonomy or agency and countering oppressive force. When thinking in terms of conflict and construction of male identity in Judaeo culture as well as the perpetuation of sexual differentiation in this society.²⁴ On this thread we should also address the idea of “ideal masculinity”. In Israel, a place where the ideals of masculinity and gender differentiation are “generated by the army as a primary institutional site of hegemonic masculinity” due to mandatory service this makes this an inescapable element of social and cultural influence.²⁵ Here we see the connection and a reaffirmation of this idea of remaking the male (body) or the person. Living in a society where military masculinity is promoted and viewed as superior to regular citizens, who are not even differentiated as male or female but occupy an almost non-gendered childlike position.²⁶ Let us view this norm comparatively : military society vs warrior society, in the military dominated society the apparatus views the “infantile” civilians with contempt. Again the infant is non-consenting and subjected to the violence will of the “overseers”.²⁷

Palestinians “ possess few, if any , political rights, nor do they possess or have access to technologies of domination. Their powerlessness is all the more pronounced given their occupation by a major military power. “- “the Palestinians wield stones” - need for empty hand techniques and the suffocation of martial training and warrior societies to Palestinians is a colonial action to keep a power discrepancy and perpetuate a power binary that supports an oppressive Israeli settler colonial military apparatus.²⁸ In doing so we can conclude that Israel is attempting to normalize its power operations. Israeli acceptance and common use of beatings is a well documented and visible example. This is

24 Bilu, Yoram pg 54-60

25 Emma Sinclair-Webb. *Imagined Masculinities: Male Identity and Culture in the Modern Middle East*. London: Saqi, 2000. pg 69

26 Webb pg 71.

27 Emma Sinclair-Webb pg 86

28 Peteet, Julie. *Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian Intifada: A Cultural Politics of Violence*.

important in the frame of this research as I propose that the ability to have agency over your own space is critical in the anti oppression moment. This is especially true when dealing with an oppressed population that has deliberately been reduced to a state of radical technological deficit (and ultimately the availability to technology that could counter oppressive and dominating forces). Here martial arts (empty hand self defense – provides the individual with an amount of agency both by providing them the knowledge to overcome personal domination but also agency in the form of self actualization and the ability to counter force with technical knowledge). Here we could cite Israeli prime minister Rabin's policy of “might, power, and beatings” to quell uprisings.

One issue we can examine is the idea of mobility. Mobility of young men in Israeli occupied Palestine is severely limited due to a range of issues but the one I intend to focus on primarily is the fear of violence. Here again martial knowledge could be useful in providing young Palestinians with a certain amount freedom and empowerment, stemming from a sense of agency and power, one asserting their agency over their own individual space, this can extend beyond intimate personal space but also conceptually to include place(the place of which the individuals connects and draws identity from). This is sense of power and freedom can be essential in countering the mechanisms of settler colonialism. Beating serves to instill fear and dehumanize and humiliate the occupied and oppressed people of Palestine. The IDF soldiers are also heavily trained with some of the most “advanced” hand to hand and martial arts techniques available today. “The Israeli” martial art of Krav Maga, a style that is boasted by practitioners as the most brutal and effective system of unarmed combat is ultimately an appropriation of various of martial traditions. These traditions have been woven together in typical western colonizer fashion to suit the purpose of the appropriator, while often simultaneously using some the indigenous peoples own tools against them to continue their domination, oppression.

Krav Maga is a self-defense system developed for the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) that consists of a

wide combination of techniques sourced from Aikido, Judo, Boxing and Wrestling, along with realistic fight training²⁹. It is difficult to examine the role and true philosophies behind the style as most practitioners are staunch Zionists and writing on the style is limited. Krav Maga is known for its focus on real-world situations and its extremely efficient and brutal counter attacks. It was derived from reality based or street fighting type skills that were developed by Hungarian-Israeli martial artist Imi Lichtenfeld, who was able to integrate his training in boxing and wrestling as a means of defending the himself and community members in the Jewish quarter against fascist and antisemitic groups in Bratislava Czechoslovakia during the mid-to-late 1930s³⁰. In 1935, Lichtenfeld visited Palestine with a team of Jewish wrestlers to participate in the Maccabi games but could not participate because of a broken rib that resulted from his training while on route. This led to the fundamental Krav Maga precept, 'do not get hurt' while training. Lichtenfeld returned to to face increasing anti-Semitic violence at home. He then decided organize a group of young Jews to protect his community. On the streets he refined experience and devised the crucial understanding of the differences between sport fighting and street fighting. He developed his fundamental self-defense principle: 'use natural movements and reactions' for defense, combined with an immediate and decisive counterattack. From this evolved the refined theory of 'simultaneous defense and attack' while 'never occupying two hands in the same defensive movement.' In 1940, Lichtenfeld fled the Nazi occupation, heading for Palestine. Upon his his arrival Haganah's leaders immediately found use for Lichtenfeld's fighting prowess. In 1944 He began training fighters in his areas of expertise: physical fitness, swimming, wrestling, use of the knife, and defenses against knife attacks. During this period, Imi trained several elite units such as Palmach and including the Pal-yam, as well as groups of police officers. In 1948, after the formation of the State of Israel the IDF was formed, Imi became Chief Instructor for Physical Fitness and Krav Maga at the IDF School of Combat Fitness. He served in the IDF for about 20 years, during which time he

29 Kahn, David. *Krav Maga: An Essential Guide to the Renowned Method--for Fitness and Self-defense*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004.

30 * See also: Byers, Ann, and Ben Daniel. *Krav Maga and Self-defense: The Fighting Techniques of the Israeli Defense Forces*. New York: Rosen Central, 2013.

developed and refined his unique method for self-defense and hand-to-hand combat. After he finished his active duty, Imi began adapting and modifying Krav Maga to civilian needs. It has also developed closely related variations which have been adopted by law enforcement and intelligence organizations, such as Mossad and Shin Bet. IDF special operations as well as other highly trained units utilize Krav Maga. There are several organizations teaching variations of Krav Maga internationally today and it is a wide spread western fitness craze as well as being marketed as a “highly efficient self defense system”.

The typical story of cultural appropriation however in this case tools that would have been used to community defense and empowerment now becomes a tool of oppression by the colonial oppressor to commit violence against the populace. “For Israelis, the beatings were an encoded medium intended to convey a message regarding the consequences of opposition”.³¹ When dealing with the issue of violence against individual bodies, we may find a solution to counter this by giving the individual power over their own place and space this concept cannot be underestimated. “The walking embodiment of power, the Israeli soldier, totes the modern technology of violence...”.³² The portrayal as Palestinian as lawless and socially primitive terrorists aids the Zionist colonial agenda in the perpetration of the suppression of martial knowledge to Palestinian's easily framing concern for “teaching terrorist to fight” as potentially dangerous to the welfare of the Israeli citizenry.

“Masculinity is neither natural nor given. Like femininity, it is a social construction.. Gilmore notes that a critical threshold is passed by various forms of tests and ordeals...reading of the anthropological literature on masculinity in the Arab world and its conflation with the deed that this conflation conforms to Gilmore's criterion of being something almost generic ... a ubiquity rather than a universality. Arab masculinity is acquired, verified and played out in the “brave” deed, in risk taking, and in expressions of fearlessness and assertiveness. It is attained by constant vigilance and a willingness to defend honor...kin and community from external aggression...since elaborate, well -defined rites of passage to mark transitions from boyhood to adolescence to manhood are difficult to discern, a loose set of rites marking the route to manhood must be accompanied by per-formative deeds.” -Webb 107.

31 Peteet, Julie pg 105

32 Emma Sinclair-Webb

The problem for the Palestinian male lies in the fact that the Israeli occupation has limited and diminished those realms of practice that would normally “allow” for the Palestinian man to engage, or display and affirm their own individual masculinity. By preventing the Palestinian man from engaging in autonomous actions combined with the frequent and often highly visible acts of violence perpetrated against the Palestinian male figure (fathers, older brothers, grandfathers...) the children of Palestine thus are being sent the message and are deeply aware of the fact that their fathers don't have the ability to protect them let alone protect themselves or their families or spaces. How has the modern image of masculinity been influenced by modern military service and manhood? How does this contrast the role of the warrior? Webb offers us this insight: “since the position of all military institutions is connected to issues of power internally in relation to the other armies and other nations and also locally in relation to social groups, other institutions and focuses of power that form the particular nation which they are a part, their social meaning- not to speak of impact – varies widely in different places and at different times.”³³

I would like to examine the role of military organizations vs warrior societies as “repositories” of hegemonic and often heterosexual masculinity. It would seem that the intent is “creating ideal masculinity”, how is that defined? Military organizations attempting to create “honorable warrior” (discipline,integrity,honor) image... do they succeed? We see the rhetoric from many in or around the military apparatus that “the civilian world is disorderly” and thus dysfunctional or infantile. The image of the soldier serves to contrast this image. Thus offering the military as the solution to this disorder. Here masculinity is equated to the ideas of the soldier and ultimately the ideals of that military apparatus, simultaneously perpetuating the rhetoric that the soldier is superior to the normal citizens. The non gendered individuals not consenting to this hegemonic narrative are limited to a childlike

position in society. One has a “greater sense of responsibility and self -sacrifice and an ability to repress instinctive and “disorderly” (dis-functional – I counter) in oneself. “Since an officer has be “trained” and remade, he has the right to identify himself unproblematically with the collective-body whose mission is to guide the ... nation”.³⁴

We must ask why does this have to be the military apparatus this is not a bad concept if we can gain individual and communal beliefs. Also worth examination is the breaking process involved in military “indoctrination” . How does this occur ... how is this flawed how can it be better? Can we also juxtapose this to a warrior society. The modern military culture hence imposing a hierarchical structure that reinforces dominant conceptions that also translate to socioeconomic standings. Traditionally most warrior societies we see a more fluid and equal social ebb and flow. In recognizing the modern militarist perpetuation of their predefined and dominative man, we must ask who then has the power to challenge the military apparatus when it is engaging in such an oppressive manner? Who has the power to counter the hegemonic heroic male image? Who can help men and women transcend rites of passage and grow – develop, the system that limits rites of passage and blurs them into legal and military gender and identities politics that require the individual to align with blurred materialized and oppressive imagries to progress through the social rites of passage in our current context, these are done intentionally to perpetuate a system where the individual never is fully equipped for “adulthood” and remains indefinitely in a child-like state. Unless of course they choose to align themselves with the oppressive dominant force and contractually accept the rite of passage that is linked with military – hegemonic masculine ideologies, that will ultimately only promote the individual to a place superiority over the childlike citizenry. Thus propagating the system. We can see there is in place a system of nationalist and oppressive culture that is perpetuated by different arms of the dominant authority where

34 Emma Sinclair-Webb 69-70

induced consent into the authoritarian and hegemonic nationalism is continually perpetuated.

Next I will examine the traditions of Islam and Martial Arts/Sport/Spectacle and Masculinity, here particularly I would like to examine outside influences on the modern formation of these Martial arts and concepts of masculinity. The story of Mohammad wrestling match with the Sheik, is an example of how we can see this cultural presence and influence and how we may use it to help further understand formations of identity and roles these themes play in the corresponding culture. Major points of interest here would include Sufi views on Martial arts, Masculinity, Sport and Spectacle, countering this or juxtaposing to Sunni/ Wahhabi style views particularly in Saudi Arabia, U.A.E, Dubai and Jordan. People such as Zaid Mirza of Jordan will be examined (including his relationship with King Abdullah, and his organization Desert Force which is an MMA organization based in Jordan. The MBC group and their role in creating a violent “masculine” culture, their owner Waleed Al Ibrahim, it would also seem that the recent active role that groups with alleged Wahabbi connections such as “The Flash Entertainment” group (based in Saudi Arabia) who are minority owners looking to acquire a more dominant role in the worlds Mixed Martial art promotion industry. Flash entertainment representing the largest non US and largest not family related investor to the UFC owning 10% of the organization.

Recently Zaid Mirza gave MMAmania.com an interview regarding his mixed martial arts promotion, Desert Force, addressing the goals for expansion from the Middle East all the way to the so-called "Fight Capital of the World," Las Vegas, Nevada. Mirza is Desert Force owner and promoter as well as a BJJ black belt. Zaid Mirza - “I have been in Martial Arts since I was 8 years old. Started it out with Karate, Tae Kwon Do, Judo, Muay-Thai... Till at the age of 14 when I was introduced to Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu an art. I got my black belt under World Champion Cassio Werneck. Who is originally from Jordan. We are thankful because we have the support of His Majesty King Abdallah II

who is a big fan of MMA and Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu. Within the next three years though, our plan is to invade Vegas. After all Nevada is a desert!” His promotions launch on MBC was MBC Action's most successful program launch and had a record of 25 Million viewers. Mirza represents that “our audience is Pan Arab and MBC reaches Africa, Asia, Europe and North America as well.” The promotion has strong connections to the Saudi based MBC Action. Placing and emphasis on targeting male youth in the Middle East. He stated in his interview with MMAmania “Our Facebook page has 84% male followers...”. MBC is one of the leading TV networks in the Arab World. Mirza recruits fighters who are all from the region, claiming some do reside abroad but are of Arab descent, such as North Africans in France or Palestinians or Lebanese in North or South America. The first Arab MMA Fighter champion is Hashem Arkhagha and he is from Jordan. Other big names are Ibrahim Elsawi, Gabriel Tayeh, Bechir Majri, Sami Antar, Haidar Rashid, Mohammad Fakhreddine and Mahmoud Salama among others. Mirza hopes states his goals are:

“MMA has brought back to life many athletes that have given up hope in amateur combat sports where the only hope is the Olympics, Desert Force gives the chance for these fighters to expand their skills and try and make a living out of their passion. In terms of Desert Force Business, I believe you guys have only seen the tip of the Iceberg for now, you have only seen us in Jordan... wait til we hit Egypt, Saudi or Morocco... The Arab world has 320 million people...”

Abu Dhabi Combat Club (ADCC) was founded by Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed al Nayhan, he is the younger brother of U.A.E's president, it should be noted the formerly mentioned Flash Entertainment who owns part of the UFC is also owned by Sheikh Tahnoon. While completing advanced studies in the United States of America, Sheik Tahnoon watched the first UFC fight and became a fan of MMA. The club was created out of an idle facility and world class trainers imported to bring the “best” of this culture to Abu Dhabi. The Abu Dhabi Combat Club located in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates(U.A.E.) is a martial arts club designed to promote martial arts in the U.A.E. The Abu Dhabi Combat Club is one of the top facilities for learning and training in mixed martial arts

(MMA) in the Arab world. Its founder created the submission grappling style of martial arts and it hosted the first Abu Dhabi Combat Club Submission Fighting Championship in 1998. Many who have competed in the popular ADCC Submission Grappling Championship have gone on to have successful careers in MMA. Although the facility itself is used mainly by athletes and practitioners who reside in Abu Dhabi, many top level grapplers, fighters and BJJ specialists have been honored guests and had spent time training or teaching in the club. The Abu Dhabi Combat Club does not have its own fighters; it serves more as a platform where fighters can participate in training camps and take advantage of the large number of BJJ Black Belts who currently reside in Abu Dhabi. The facility where the ADCC was originally located is not owned by the UAE Wrestling, Judo and Kickboxing Federation. However, the reputation of the ADCC is still strong and the facility is being visited by top fighters occasionally. The first five Championships held under the patronage of H.H. Sheikh Tahnoon Bin Zayed Al Nahayan were hosted in that same facility in Abu Dhabi Equestrian Club compound. From 1998 until the 2002 the events were held annually in Abu Dhabi. Ever since 2002 the event ADCC Submission Fighting Championship (it was renamed due to copy rights of the world Grappling) is held once every two years and every event is hosted in countries where the sport is well developed such as the US, Brazil and Japan.

What is Brazilian jiu-jitsu? Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu or BJJ is a martial art and as well as a combat sport when engaged in competition. It is also a highly effective self defense system that focuses on grappling, with a heavy emphasis on ground fighting and the use of technique and leverage to defeat larger stronger opponents. Brazilian jiu-jitsu was formed from Mitsuyo Maeda. Brazilian jiu-jitsu eventually came to be its own art through the experiments, practices, and adaptation of Judo through Carlos and Helio Gracie. (who passed their knowledge on to their extended family) as well as other instructors who were students of Maeda. BJJ promotes the concept that a smaller, weaker person can successfully defend against a bigger, stronger, heavier assailant by using proper technique, leverage,

and most notably, taking the fight to the ground, and then applying joint locks and choke holds to defeat the opponent.³⁵ BJJ training can be used for sport grappling tournaments and Mixed Martial arts (MMA) competition or self-defense. Sparring (usually called *rolling*) and live drilling play a major role in training, and a premium is placed on performance, especially in competition, in relation to progress and ascension through its ranking system. Brazilian jiu-jitsu: it is not only a martial art, but it is also a sport.

Another big name in MMA promotion is Chechnya's president Akhmadovich Kadyrov (not just president but, MMA fighter himself and Combat Sports fan). Kadyrov was a founder of WFC a fight promotion and one of the biggest in Russia he also runs and sponsors the Chechen fight team ACD. Kadyrov himself is a former Chechen rebel. He is the son of former Chechen President Akhmad Kadyrov, who was assassinated in May 2004. In 2007, Kadyrov became president, shortly after he had turned 30, which is the minimum age for the post. At that time he was heavily engaged in a violent power struggle with Chechen government warlords for overall military authority of the country. He has come under heavy criticism from the international press and Russia, due to alleged human rights violations and accusations of corruption as well as theft of public funds and protection of criminals of Chechen origin. Ramzan Kadyrov founded the Akhmat Fight Club and in honor of his annual freestyle wrestling international tournament: The Ramzan Kadyrov & Adlan Varayev Cup. Kadyrov considers himself a Sufi (Sunni Islam). His father was an Imam and former Mufti. Kadyrov is an avid combat sport fan, he enjoys boxing and has met Mike Tyson (also a Muslim), he fought in Chechen war of Independence, was personal body guard and driver for his father who was the mufti of Chechnya. His father had launched a Jihad into Russia, and then was later assassinated. When he became acting prime minister he began implementing elements of Sharia law. Some of these

³⁵ Ribeiro, Saulo, and Kevin Howell. *Jiu-jitsu University*. California: Victory Belt Pub., 2008.

policies included one that would force women to cover. Kadyrov accused the CIA of framing Dzhokhar Tsarnaev on 18 March 2015, after he was handed a death sentence for the Boston Marathon Bombing and said that they could not have conducted the bombing without CIA's knowledge. Kadyrov during an interview in October 2015 suggested that Putin should send Chechen special forces to Syria claiming they will wipe out ISIL in weeks. On February 8, 2016, he claimed that Chechen special forces had infiltrated ISIL cells. He held a meeting with Saudi prince deputy Ahmed al-Khatib earlier this year relating to Saudi Arabia investing in projects in Chechnya. He declared that relations between Russia and Saudi Arabia were at an "all-time high". With heavy Saudi Investment in the UFC brand and other combat sports as well as his own investment in fight clubs, combat sport promotions could we see a major move here? Some people claim the UFC's primary share holders of the UFC are trying to sell their shares and right now Saudi investor owner of FLASH media is the largest minority share holder. Could there be a possibility of a Arab, Middle Eastern dominated promotion and production of the Mixed Martial arts spectacle in the near future?

What about example of contemporary Middle Eastern martial artists? I offer the story and example of a Kurdish woman(martial artist) who is the captain of the Iraqi national Tae-Kwon-Do team. Her name is Zena Azadeen Jabbari she has aspirations of Olympic competition. She explains in an interview with Fightland (vice) the idea of the sacred space of the training hall and transcends gender, nationality and religion. In 2003 she was a member of the national team went on to win nationals, she would go on to become captain of the Iraqi nation team. She is a fighter and a coach and enjoys passing the knowledge of the art to others. Having competed in national and Olympic level events she serves as an excellent example to women who may feel out of place in what's perceived a male dominated culture. Two years ago the female competitors in an act of solidarity on the Iraqi national team withdrew from competition because Kurdish competitors were being treated "differently"

she states her goals in continuing Taekwondo are “to be able to defend my personality, outside, inside or anywhere people fight me”. Her Instructor Hussein Abdulrahman is the founder of Hawler Taekwondo school of Erbil, “I have been a Kurdish martial artist for a long time” He was a member of Iranian national team but because he was a refugee he did not have Iranian citizenship, so he could not participate in the Olympic games. Hussein said in an interview “ Here the only important thing is that there are no difference between male and female artists, we all train together. There is no gender gap, here humanity over all prejudice. This is what I know and have learned from the sport.” He says they don't differentiate between male and female, that they work to build an inclusive environment that welcomes Muslims and Christians or anyone, Sunni Shiite etc. He says that the art is the symbol of life not difference, we see Hussein speaking to a common warrior identity model, basing identity through connective tissue and same-ness opposed to “othering” or difference. My next example I offer is that of Samy – Al Jamal, “In the middle east I think that people are warriors, by nature... they are born into conflicts, they often live their hole lives in conflicts, I think that martial arts for them is something that suits them perfectly.”³⁶ Samy is a Palestinian born martial artist. his parents and him were refugees and moved to Brazil – he is the founder of The Source MMA in Jordan. He is a 4th degree black belt in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu, a black belt in Judo and a black belt in Karate (Shotokan). He states “I needed to learn to defend myself in the streets of Rio..Rio is not an easy place for one to grow up, at the time is was very violent.” He began training at 5 years old, he stated he felt the need to provide access to true Jiu-jitsu to the people of Jordan. “overall its a way of life and its important for the Jordanian people to be exposed to that” - Speaking to the martial way or code of martial arts “the way”. He speaks about the large amount of female competition and individuals who train is surprisingly high even higher than his school in Brazil, his current student is a European and Asian grappling champion and the first Arab woman to ever win these events. Ramzi Nabulsi is a fighter and scholar or I offer “warrior”, from

Australia. He cites his motives for moving to Jordan from Australia were to “provide an environment

36 "Fightland Worldwide: The Rise of MMA in Jordan | Video Blog | FIGHTLAND." Fightland. Accessed June 02, 2016. <http://fightland.vice.com/video-blog/fightland-worldwide-the-rise-of-mma-in-jordan>.

for my children and my family and self so that we could spiritually grow as people.” he would go on to say that “ you win when you can move your opponent you wanna do so without the use of muscle, feeling and finding your center.” Ramzi states his goals in martial experience are quite different than to just engage in violence, instead he counters that “I am interested very much in seeking the supremacy of fighting, in terms of the art form itself, I am looking for the excellence in fighting...to me it comes down to an idea of justice and so on, an importance in being able to stop evil or violence with your own hands”. Ramzi says martial arts very much connects to his religion as it is a tool to do what is good and stop what is bad. He studies Brazilian Jiu-jitsu, Kung Fu and Tai-Chi.

I would now like to offer a definition of warrior or warrior-ship, by an unknown author that I find useful when choosing how I would care to define the term, one that does not link soldier-ship or gender but is one of content:

“A person who beyond all obstacles still manages to be successful. A warrior will often face obstacles in life, but will persevere in the end. The warrior's ability to transcend adversity defines them. Socially, a Warrior will often be down to earth, functioning entirely off of what they perceive as logic. While this can lead to arrogance and stubbornness, a Warrior has a soft internally, and can be befriended with ease by anyone willing to reach it. Often intelligent, strong, determined, and skillful, a Warrior, despite whatever problems they may have, is perfect. In their own way, each Warrior is perfect.”

Author Carlos Castaneda said, "Nobody is born a warrior, in exactly the same way that nobody is born an average man. We make ourselves into one or the other." Trying to think about the art of warrior-ship. The *art* of warfare, how the warrior class can give us insight or reflect the society it comes from. *Furusiyya*, this idea not only includes concepts of warrior-ship, hunting, chivalry but also horsemanship, sport and spiritual practice. Some of these combinations of culture warrior-ship and sport include the examples of grappling and chess. Any endeavors that can display the participant's ability to combine logic, strategy and skill concentration and reflection, not least of all is the idea of moral quality. Furusiyya was a class reserved for the male elite. Furusiyya is the historical Arabic

terminology for the knightly martial culture that existed in Middle Ages, throughout the Crusades and Mamluk periods. This society was especially concerned with the martial arts and horsemanship practices of what would be known as “The Golden Age of Islam”. In general the term *Furusiyya* referred to an “Arabic” knight or “horsemen”. The mounted warriors would be well versed in archery, charging with a lance as well as hand to hand combat, swordsmanship and horsemanship. The implied social obligations or codes of this warrior society carries with it an ethos that resembles other equivalents such as the notion of chivalry in the European feudal system or the Samurai Code referring to the social codes that Japan's warrior class subscribed to. Often times in Crusade period literature *Furusiyya* refers to the “Saracen” knight's code of conduct. These knights included a wide range of individuals however that comprised various groups of warriors such as professional warriors such as Ghulams and Mamluks. These men would be trained in armed combat with weapons such as the *Saif* (sword), spear, lance, javelin, club, as well as would be skilled in the art of archery. They would also be trained in the *tabarzin* (axe) hence why Mamluk body-guards or elite were known as *tabardariyya*. The important thing to note is that these men would have trained extensively in unarmed combat which would include forms of striking and wrestling, these men martial skills were to be honed first on foot without arms and would progressively add in weapons and eventually perfect these skills while mounted on horse-back.³⁷

What role does combat sports play in this construction of masculine identity and what does the study of sport give us? Does it offer individuals a counter masculine image to identify with? We can possibly gain insight into both society and individuals nature, the transmission of culture and the nature of conflict and what role it has in society. What are its purposes, participation and cultural significance particularly in regards to ancient combat sport masculinity and martial society? Poliakoff tells us in his work: *Combat Sports in the Ancient world*, “combat sports in particular, with their elements of

³⁷Ayalon, David. *The Mamlūk Military Society*. London: Variorum Reprints, 1979.

violence and “savagery”, offer an unusually revealing perspective of different societies”. We thus see a need to make separation between play and recreation from sport. This is because sport cannot exist without an opponent and a constructed systems for measuring success vs failure of the competitors and performances. These engagements are examples of performances of space where the individual serving as the physical medium (performer). Who are they performances for then? Wrestling, Boxing, mock combat, stick fighting – Poliakoff goes on to tell us that “competitiveness is universally human” and that prior to the Greeks it seems that competitiveness and winning did not have the emphasis that we see today. Historically often times it seems that the match itself was enough, a means to grow and share bonding experiences with community members while offering individual challenges and opportunity for personal growth. Many historians of Greek and “ancient world” combat sports agree that “combat sports expanded as popular and social beneficial outlets for self-assertiveness”.³⁸ - “these games represent(ed) displacement of certain (aggressive) or military impulses, not actual training for them” . Participation in these events was inclusive open to all citizens despite socio-economic other standing. So when did the idea and imagery of combat sport become a “noble” concept. When did wrestling and combat victory become a metaphor for leadership and virtue?

What role does violent images projected to male youth and the creation of masculine identity play? Violence has often have been described as an expression of resistance (often to local and political conditions³⁹. One can argue that engaging in martial arts is an active performance of resistance. The problem is that there is a lack of an examination of the violent acts themselves or of the styles of movement used, body decoration, and symbolic arts that are done prior to or during engagement of the act itself. Again the performance of violence to be examined, as well as the effects

38 Poliakoff, Michael. *Combat Sports in the Ancient World: Competition, Violence, and Culture*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987.

39 Radford, Jill. "Policing Male Violence — Policing Women." *Women, Violence and Social Control*, 1987, 30-45.

of colonization can this be done while examining the role of violence on the construction of local / individual identities? It has been my intent with this examination to contribute to the discussion of construction of masculinities in post colonial Middle East. The idea of mass- mediated images that perpetuate and provide availability for the construction of individual identity, as well as the use of images and perpetuation of myth and fantasy in the construction of these identities. Imaginative processes are essential to this, so how do we approach the idea of masculinity or manhood? These are complex, diverse and dynamic ranges of individuals some dominant others not. The role that combat spectacle plays some might say is that ideal of masculine performance in a public cultural sphere. The training of the male body being a never-ending activity. There is no pity for those who slack, so the competitor reaps so he sows. In this performance repetition confirms and reconfirms the identities of the participants. The warriors body becomes the ultimate site of social manifestation of existence. Martial arts, according to Zarilli (in his work with Foucault in 88), is considered a “technology of the body” where the individual human through the practice of the martial art gains and develops knowledge about themselves. Foucault goes on to tell us “They permit individuals to effect by their own means or with help of other a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and ways of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality”.⁴⁰ What models do these individuals draw upon for their image of masculinity? Further examination of traditional styles vs imported should be conducted. We should also examine where the violence or the combat spectacle take place. What visual representations of spiritual symbolism are present? These are formalized ritualized combat spectacles taking place in public spheres . Fighting styles and martial cultures are like any cultures and living and continually evolving it is orientalist to suggest that “traditional” styles cannot change – cultures must remain living in order to survive and not become stale. Punishment in warrior culture for violations of etiquette is othering (exclusion) or harm to the community. The confused individual takes the image of

40 Foucault 1988

the soldier and mistakes it for the warrior as the dominant narrative intentionally blurs the lines between the two and they can share some similar qualities. A warrior can be a soldier but a soldier does not make you a warrior. The soldier signifies physical (national) strength and power, the warrior signifies humility, work and growth. These roles representing the three typical images or models of manhood that are perpetuated the physical (through force or strength), the financial through wealth and finance dominates (affiliation into western mold of commodifying) and finally spiritual more closely associated with the traditional warrior's role (which also can and often does elements of the other two identities). Traditionally and contemporarily we find examples of the participants' community members feeling a connection with the fighter, warrior. The family and neighbors often feel protected by physical presence of these individuals who are their sons, brothers and comrades. Thus their ability to protect themselves and community grants them an elevated position in the society, they are important because they are strong and admired.

In the modern times, both the military warrior and the Combat Sport participant are examples of the commodification of the warrior, this limits their agency. The warrior in these situations can be purchased for their services like a commodity, this empowers the western material view and makes these “strong men” / big men back into that child-like slot of marginalization as they are now in the service of the man with the money. The participants of martial endeavors are exercising an agency that is experienced in their immediate space or environment. The radius of this power is limited by imaginative geographies imposed both by the individual and the dominant mechanisms of control. Physical strength for practitioners of martial culture is gained from the technologies of self practice and care of the body and spirit, this includes the physical preparation for fights and “sparring” mock combat or mock competition within the community is also an important element. The rules are what's important, rules differentiate this from combat – a fight, the rules make it a game or spectacle of skill or

technique over strength. The use of spiritual and mystic totems and amulets, power objects...filled with spiritual power. What role does the trans-cultural idea of abstinence from sex play in this, the purification process involves no sexual contact, many fighters believe their essence comes from their semen and wont engage in ejaculation while training for major competition or engaging in, again relationship to rites of passage and cleansing. The ability to control ones own space, health, mobility, they are able to confront any physical danger, in the modern context to engage in these acts, of kicking jumping is to enter into the world of fantasy and myth of “having control over one's environment”.⁴¹ We are told that masculinity is “the result of the interplay of societal imperatives and strategies of survival under compulsory systems”.⁴² We can see the rise of modern combat sports appeal in the Middle East as a “re-connection” with traditional cultures and modernity. In the act of combat spectacle, ideas of spacialality and imagery are omnipresent⁴³. In a society searching for a powerful image to form ones identity around, the modern fighter has served to provide those seeking a role similar to the traditional warrior identity. These events are televised globally and enhance the scope of these images and constructions. The modern mixed martial arts fighter – for many the epitome of masculinity, serves as a dual way for the consumer of the image to engage in the consumption of modernity, social identity and the individual struggle and conflict of power come clashing together in a televised spectacle and performance for all to consume. Modern depictions of warriors are constantly being thrust upon the global media through the imagery of television, movies and now Mixed Martial arts, with them images that support hyper “masculine” and dominative egos are supported and re produced, this could be argued is intentional as the role of the traditional warrior is replaced by the modern solider,warrior consumer.

41- (Zarilli 1995: 206)

42- Ferguson 1999- 99

43 See: Derek Gregory – The Colonial Present

Contemporary examinations of the spectacle of combat sports leaves us with the impression that according to serious commentary that “the sport has dissolved into a spectacle”.⁴⁴ How has modern combat sport deviated from traditional role in societies, and how has the spectacle of these sports changed? Many journalists and historians of the traditions of combat sport and commentators on contemporary Mixed Martial Arts as well as Catch Wrestling, has not developed in the direction that its originators and pioneers creators may have envisioned as a “a safer” alternative to boxing. Instead it has become according to Eddie Goldman who is considered an expert in the realm of research commentating and reporting on combat sport and spectacle, Eddie hosts a podcast and reports articles for the ADCC. Eddie tells us in regards to the spectacle of MMA that is has become “a Frankenstein” sport” that is “just as dangerous, worse financially overall for the fighters, with a much more regressive culture surrounding it than boxing.” One of violence, masaginy and exploitation.⁴⁵Eddie and others look at the era of 2000-2006 as “a turning point in mixed martial arts in America” promtions began branching out outside Zuffa dominant control Eddie. He states referring to that time in regards to the high aspirations many had for the sports...“we had hopes for MMA on a lot of levels...could be safer,less corrupt”. The problem is that the materialist commercial UFC instead engaged in building spectacles and promoting “star power” opposed to real competition. Eddie provides amazing insight and explains how the broadcasters have directly been contributing to the downfall as many are uneducated on the sport, and propagandists. Many are ex – fighters becoming “journalist” commentators. How the blending these two things to the consumer is vague and becoming less and less visible (definable). They are creating a product , for mass consumption. He would say in an interview “This is NOT Ultimate Fighting”, referring to the poor competition and what was once a performance of combat is not a highly produced spectacle “sport”. One must see the relationship to the high level of production is counter to the nature of the true fight or performance of combat. The UFC, impliments

44 Bob Carson

45 "NO HOLDS BARRED.": Eddie Goldman Accessed June 02, 2016. <http://nhbnews.blogspot.com/>.

rules that evolved to cater to specific styles that create the best spectacles, fighters are paid on their ability to appease fans and perform spectacle, not merit, (“how legit are these champions”). In this spectacle we see watering down of legitimate techniques, more and more the fighters becoming “athletes”. Meaning they are stronger faster however lacking in martial knowledge such as how to stand up, throw technical attacks, most importantly behave with honor. This athlete “fighter” is more of a brawler, lacking in the technical aspects of martial knowledge because ultimately a brawl is more entertaining, and marketable. The goal of these commentators is not to educate the fans but to push the identity and legitimacy to the consumers of the spectacle fighters, “their goal ... is not to educate the fans...their not educating people, the promoters have encouraged this brawling”⁴⁶ Eddie would go on to state that “some people call it the professional tough man style, which is uglier, more vulgar... and more dangerous”⁴⁷. Supposedly MMA was supposed to be safer because there would be less striking. Now we see a fan base who boos for grappling, counter to Japan who had educated fans or the Middle East where the consumers for the most part are knowledgeable in martial arts and respect technique counter the standard American consumer, drunk and wanting a blend of serialization and vulgar violent spectacle. These casual consumers who ultimately just want the release of sexualized violence become bored with grappling because they don't understand it and it doesn't satisfy the need for “release” - via tension/release, especially in this highly sexualized spectacle: “The promoters have encouraged that type of thing(the brawling), and so its created a much uglier vulgar style”⁴⁸ Grappling has been regulated to a place in the rules that support wrestling and brawling, that ignore technical contributions or aspects that encompass the fight, so if the fight goes to a decision the brawler wins, even if the technical fighter has been more effective. In reference to these bias rules that support a short brutal violent spectacle Eddie offers that “they(promoters) designed this modern incarnation of mma”⁴⁹. There are cases where Dana White (CEO of Zuffa, the UFC) has said “even if you loose and stay standing we

46 Eddie Goldman

47 Eddie Goldman

48 Eddie Goldman

49 Eddie Goldman

will give you more fights” Regarding a sport that not too long ago was regarded by many as a “what once was an intellectual sport is now a meat head sport” , once an international sport, cultures that engaged to discuss the technique and witness the martial arts, now its truly American, it has appropriated and raped the culture of the sport, art. MMA has now become, “a white alternative to boxing”.⁵⁰ Problems arising from control over the fighters as well come into question and their ability to earn a living, or the ability to really make a living outside of anything that's not controlled by the UFC, that's to the detriment of them”.⁵¹ The system they operate and operate within are individuals well adjusted to a sick system or accountable for the perpetuation of the corrupt system, the consumers of these images and the “things appeal to them, want to go to the bar and watch trash talk and violence because they are angry.”⁵², their hatred is for “the other”. Combat Sports derive from human labor, shaving years off their life so they can make money often times coming from oppressed factions of society and underclass need the money to give themselves or family up-ward mobility to rise out of these situations and conditions, often times supporting children and families, and receiving very little compensation, “The art has been taken out of mixed martial arts”⁵³

I would also offer this except from another interview with Eddie Goldman speaking to the place martial arts has in the fight against oppressive forces, here he cites Malcolm X:

“If you're interested in freedom, you need some judo...you need some karate, you need any of these things that would help you fight for freedom” - March 29 - 1964 Autobahn ballroom NY. Martial arts being indispensable in fighting for agency.⁵⁴ Malcolm pointed out the necessity of training martial arts, in relation to tenants of Islam and for agency, and referring to “The fruit of Islam” connecting to the purpose of martial arts training.

50 Eddie Goldman

51 Bob Carson

52 Bob Carson

53 Eddie Goldman

54 X, Malcolm, and Alex Haley. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*. New York: Ballantine Books, 1992.

“People think that this (training of martial arts) is just military drill... which it is part ... but only one part... We are dealing with the responsibilities of men learning to be men... of roles and responsibilities of husbands and fathers. What to expect of women... The rights of women, which are not to be abrogated by the husband. The importance of the father male image in the household. Why honesty and chastity are vital in a person home, community and civilization... The importance of bathing and being clean... how to interact in a functional society.” - Malcolm X

I think it is important that he is differentiating military training from martial arts, military type training is part (the martial) however the most critical part of these engagements was the self improvement community improvement – Malcolm mention of karate and judo hinted at the need for a “Balance” of striking and grappling in what was needed for self defense and martial arts (and life) a persons imbalance is the same as a weight. - “why is your fruit of Islam training in martial arts”. Martial arts and self defense are fine until brown men want to learn it, something to be used for self defense and gaining of individual agency not violence. We can look at the tradition of African American combat sport athletes and their connections to the nation of Islam such as Mohammed Ali, Mike Tyson and others.

The people who re-write history cover the truths of these cultures up, found it nessecary to withhold the African and Middle Eastern contributions to martial arts. They also misrespent the nature of these systems for they exist as systems that taught community values and personal values. Appropriating the martial arts for commodification and exploitation of people and consumers of the image. We must ask ourselves what images does modern MMA portray? Combat sports in our day is being presented as a way to hurt people, not defend oneself, or protect ones community, not to promote the art or martial values, instead, intolerance, massageny ,homo-trans-phobia, and xenophobia. “this is not the legacy of the martial arts, this is a disgusting culture of the profiteers... that run the combat sports (spectacle) and exploit the fighters”⁵⁵

The Sport of wrestling which is and has been on the Olympic chopping block (also in schools). This is

reflective of the inability to promote a healthy culture in American Wrestling. Goldman discusses this and explains that a lot of wrestling people went to MMA and never returned “left people with limited skill sets and narrow cultural views left running the sport.”⁵⁶ Wrestling is seeking to be restored for 2020 Olympics, Rich Bender meeting with leaders on the subject in NY was asked about Wushu “Something I ate last night...” Rich Bender is the director of USA wrestling, it should be noted that Wushu is the official martial art of China.

“wrestling has not been promoting positive values, it is now aligned with that same UFC, that is promoting all those negative values” - values that many in wrestling claimed they opposed fundamentally, learn from the legacy of Malcolm X, apply them to martial arts and combat sports, apply them in promoting positive values, particularly today with all these negative values that are being promoted in MMA, wrestling and boxing” - “if you're interested in freedom, you need martial arts, all the things that help you fight for freedom”

A possible reason for the prevalence of dance in modern middle eastern martial arts in the history of colonization, dance was a thriving culture and art form in the middle east and colonizers viewed this as a “non-masculine” act, traditionally in the region there was little difference in the choreography and style of dance from males – female. The repression of male choreograph/ dance and its acceptance seems fitting that it would hide itself in the martial tradition, first of all martial arts are physical protectors of cultural knowledge and tradition, second the two arts are deeply intertwined and had connections prior to full on immersion of dance, is also a performance of space – used often prior to martial competitors to ward off bad spirits to invoke community ties and assert dominance over space through artistic expression. - “noone actually knows where martial arts started” -Ahati Kilindi. The oldest recorded examples of martial arts and fighting sciences come from Africa and the Middle East– ancient and contemporary African fighting sciences, Beni Hassan in Egypt for example offers depictions of martial arts systems – before Europe or the Greeks. Many of these traditional styles of fighting sciences/ martial arts are still practiced today in Africa and Middle East, Algeria, Egypt, Middle East, Why do we not “see” African, Arab, Middle Easter Martial Arts? “Your hole being was

56 "No Holds Barred: Eddie Goldman and Bob Carson." www.global-mma.com. Accessed June 02, 2016.

absorbed in those things, that brought about martial skills...” - “...in Africa you still have unbroken lines of warrior societies”⁵⁷, Genuine warrior cultures around the world that still “exist as they did 500 years ago, Senegalese LAAMB wrestling for example is one of the most popular sports around the world and is virtually unknown in US.”⁵⁸

The trend as warrior cultures are assimilated and “move into modernity, material society” they deconstruct the martial knowledge to make it more “civilized”, this process involves separating it and make it a “sport” that is seemingly acceptable by the imposing society. The importance of the martial art is awareness of self, place space and your connection to others and this things. In the martial process one is intentionally creating patterns of thought through intent. These patterns of thought come together to form habit, this is often done without intent reflecting thought or concepts, countering this with consciously engaging in activities that will alter our state of being (thought and form) through produced habits that are founded in intent and mindfulness and awareness, viability, the temporariness of the performance – act – image is simultaneously lasting as it is an active engagement in a connection to past and present and the image is left to the future. These images are encoded with thoughts, habits, and guidelines, it is an unconfined image that is not limited by boundaries only by the individuals state of being but as is essentially free. How do these concepts and idea of the merging of form in an active performance of conflict and struggle that symbolizes and is, what form does resistance take in that case? Can we make a case that the performance of martial arts is a representation or performance of resistance? These representations of the performance of dance (the deadly dance) and the balance that is inherent in the world, some might view are created by god or the balance of god. They may offer a connection and a state of being with god. They also offer the practitioners and members of the community healthy examples of tension and release in a public sphere in an acceptable way (deemed

57 Ahati Kilindi

58 Eddie Goldman

by the culture or community), the act is a replicating and mobile image. It is an act of taking control over the present, and reality. They are representative of the conscious force of the group. Training body mind and self, then engaging in the acts in a performance are examples of networks and knowledge and the representation of that physically, transferring of that being represented through spectacle of conflict growth and combat, and directly relate to the optics of protest and resistance. “the more we examine an image the more it stays with us”, martial performance example of simulacrum. We can ask then what is authentic? Combat Sport (spectacles) or martial culture? As I wrote this I thought often of the biblical tale of Cain and Able (first sacrifice to god in the bible) the idea if you love someone you must sacrifice for them.

To me martial arts represent the transferring knowledge to others through physical medium. When watching these spectacle I ask myself what is unseen in the spectacle of martial performance or the spectacle of combat sport? Going back to the story of Cain, Cain wanted to sacrifice but did not want to give up what was dear to do the real work, he did what was easy and wanted to appear to give sacrifice offering us an example of authentic vs constructed image and the ideals of self deception. Martial arts are expressions of self through the body , through the active engagement of re-mapping the body. They can make one (individual) visible ,and spectacles, relates to repatriation. Whose outside ? Whats unseen, martial art as a form of anagnorisis, the martial way and the tenants of Islam seemingly connected here and martial performance being a material (or formal) act of poetry. Martial tradition can also make unknowns known, can pass knowledge to future generations it can shape the view of the present and thus can direct the course of collective future, it is an act of performing history. I ask how does the martial culture reflect true meaning of jihad, in regards to self – sacrifice and spiritual dimensions. Darwish tells us that poems are a performance, performance is a form of synthesis, present having no costume, the competition has no costume the winner is the winner. These acts combine beginning and end, they represent natural states as such these spectacles are

dealing with the performance of space, “the lack of security in your place or space relates to where you fit in in the world...”socially,physical etc. What can be said for the piece of mind that martial knowledge can provide the individual and community...the order within the chaos of the battle or conflict? Martial arts can allow for the individual to transcend barriers, restrictions and distance by countering distance in a physical and intimate act, linked and bound together in the struggle.

How do we address a system that produces oppression? Martial knowledge I propose offers the answer. In what Debord calls “the society of the spectacle” that is “dictated and mediated by images” , it offers images that promote a collective sense of empowerment. Countering weak Arab myth, the warrior identities occupies a space before crisis or conflict, the death of ego – or material state. The warrior kills through training and awareness any parts of the self that inhibit growth. The warrior and performance of martial art represents the ability to remove threats from community, a steward, the warrior is what allows for peace and prosperity, constantly training growing, evolving, being prepared for all possible outcomes. The individual can take control of death or mortality, ego however is not the warrior. Committing oneself through the initiation involving some form of humiliation to kill ego ,humility, this gives the the individual power to transcend ego. As does loss, humiliation spurs growth and life another representation of the cycle of perfection. This image being offered is raw and unyielding and the construction is limited as is the space and performance, “The occupying authority continuously displays the potential for and the actuality of violence to stem opposition and to imprint upon the subject population its lack of autonomy.”⁵⁹ , beatings being part of the apparatus of domination in Palestine,

“For the Israelis, the beatings were an encoded medium intended to convey a message regarding the consequences of opposition. Tasussig draws our attention to torture and terror as “ritualized art forms” far from being spontaneous, sui generie, and an abandonment of what are often called the values of civilization... have a deep history deriving power and meaning from those very values ”⁶⁰

59 Peteet Imagined Masculinities 104

60 Peteet 105

“Unbowed males signified an assertive resistance to the colonial project and a Zionist self-identity.”.

The formal embodiment of power is the Israeli soldier in this example, masculinity is a social construct, “Arab masculinity is acquired, verified and played out in the brave deed, risk taking, and in expressions of fearlessness and assertiveness.”, - asserted through the constant vigilance and willingness to defend honor, community, and family from external aggression, to protect... counter to previous times no rites of passage from boyhood to adolescences to manhood are blurred (intentionally) and difficult to discern, in the Palestinian context their ability to engage in these actions and thus “affirming” their masculinity is limited by lack of autonomy.⁶¹

“frequent witness to their fathers beatings by soldiers and settlers children are acutely aware of their fathers inability to protect themselves and their children...manliness is also closely inter-wined with virility and paternity, and with paternity's attendant sacrifices. Denying ones own needs while providing for others is such a significance. Resistance to occupation and the consequences of such resistance constitute a category of sacrifice with long-term implications for the autonomy and security of the community and larger national collective”.

I offer the example of some Bedouin notions of masculinity linking with concepts of “control”, control being the lack of fear anyone or anything and to manifest these fears exhibit control over that individual. This relates to the ability to resist the control of others, standing against modes of control.

Finally what role does the viewer play? the watcher of these spectacles engages in community by connecting with the plight and feats of the competitors and draw personal connection to these forms and competitions, the action provides a narrative linking past present and future, also producing knowledge. What symbol does the beaten and bruised body exemplify? The defeated equated to subordination and struggle or powerlessness.

Making connections to the ides of rites of passage and the linking of physical form I wish to

briefly address the concept of “marks of war”, or marks of struggle and resistance. We see the connection of Palestinian men the connection to jail and state torture coming back with marks of war essentially engaging in a rite of passage and have become men or community leaders, through their plight have projected their struggle and their body bears the mark of their opposition and struggle, this should be countered by marital traditions, the marks of war symbolize resistant or masculine subjectivity and agency and becomes a rite of passage. Webb tells us that “... identified three characteristic stages: separation, marginality, and aggression.”⁶² ... detachment from group (physical) followed by the liminal stage or the state of marginality, “this is where the novice exists outside of social time, space and the categories of the life cycle” the celebratory and communal re-integration or final stage of inclusion, “the beating empowers the self and informs an agency of resistance.” - Feldman tells us that “..agency is not given but achieved on the basis of practices that alter the subject.”⁶³ :

“As rites of passage, beatings and imprisonment are procedures that are not controlled or overseen by the family or kin group. It is an individual experience within a collective of young men. Thus a critical rite of passage into adulthood, with its corresponding privileges of power/authority/respect, is now accomplished earlier and is initially out of the bounds of the kin group...underscores the powerlessness of the kin group to protect its youth.”

Joyce Carol Oats, offers a great quote in her book, On Boxing “to suggest that men might love and respect one another directly, without the ritual of combat, is to misread man’s greatest passion- for war, not peace. Love, if there is to be love, comes second.”

62 Van Gennep (1909-61)

63 Feldman 1991

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Ethno-cultural thinking underlies much traditional historical analysis. This factor is particularly clear in the Middle East where the idea of an Arab nation, and the trans-national political force of Islam combine to create a potent regional political realm. Arab nationalism and Islam weaken the identity of the local states, legitimize an unusually high degree of security inter-penetration and stimulate a marked propensity to establish regional organizations (the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Arab Cooperation Council, and the Maghreb Group). He has published translations and articles on Japanese Buddhist and warrior culture including *An Encyclopedia of Japanese Martial Arts* (Kodansha, 2012). Product details. Finally the last part of the book, reflects upon Marishi's significance in the Japanese arts and here David A. Hall provides a brilliant psychological analysis that tries to demystify and explain how the rituals aimed to cultivate certain mental states in the warriors who practiced them, and how there psycho-physical states improved the soldiers efficacy in a combat situation. Indeed the emphasis was to cultivate states of selflessness (muga), invisibility and coolness in battle (fudoshin) and intuition and awareness (kan and ken).