



By Pendekar Scott McQuaid

'There are over a million ways to take a live, but not one to give it back.'

The martial arts came from the east where legends, myths and traditions are born, as the years passed the arts continued to evolve changing the shape but not the form, with its growth it brought ethics, religion, science, politics, glory and money.

As with any shift of time the changes made good and bad within the fighting arts, the yin and yang balance that rules over all the elements.

Most of today's fighting arts are either sports all performances, very few arts actually translate to the actual meaning of the words martial arts, 'arts concerned with waging war'.

However one such rare art managed to escape the western world and remain in the shadows.

The Indonesian fighting art Pencak Silat remained underground and only re-surfaced recently into the mainstream of martial arts society. There are over 200 distinct styles of silat from Indonesia. One the most feared and therefore respected is the harimau (tiger) system from the Minangkabau people of west Sumatra. Whilst other styles were concerned with awarding trophies, grades and keeping up class numbers the harimau silat practitioner's started to spread their art under extreme brutal classes, building modern day warriors in the west.

Many came but few were chosen, the teacher's need not root out the weak and incompatible as the art selected its soldiers through the intense training regime and constant mental battle with ones self.

The class numbers were low but solid, they magnify the small and increase the few, however along the way soldiers fell behind through injury, life's trials and old schooling methods. Like the sumatran tiger the art derives from, the *pesilats* (silat players) were becoming fast extinct... until now.

Amongst the paper tigers, the endless titles, semi-contact contests and black belt weekend instructor courses there are those few arts that have evolved with evolution keeping traditional methods whilst aiding its origins with change.

There is a fine line between a martial artist and a fighter, in bygone years the two existed as one but time separated them through category. All martial arts were designed for combat the survival instinct is the first and most natural reaction the human responds to. Reason, control and logic were the attributes that later aided the fighting systems upon reflection. As the preferred art moves down the chain of events, people sculptured their arts through necessity, for the terrain, practical use, to their ego and financial gain.

All living things grow in a circular motion and life moves in a cycle, it is only natural for us to return to the beginning. The harimau silat players that once roamed the marsh lands of Sumatra are now being born into the urban jungle. Marketing and glory no longer blind students, they are training once more to become something more than a colored belt upon a uniform.

As countries develop new ideas and influences are introduced to the people, in Asia they are becoming more accustomed to adapting their old martial art systems into a sport where they can compete, travel and earn money. There are those that remain true to their preferred art but even they can be persuaded into signing an instructor's certificate for the right amount of money, which is not much money when converted to the foreigner in question.

The west has certainly embraced the East's import of martial arts with numerous magazines, books, shops, movies, cartoons and video games. We have also adopted their cultures, religion's, health regimes and food, now there is a change happening.

The people are no longer buying into the fast track way to earning an award or victory, they can see their own flaws and want to know within themselves that they can physically defend themselves in time of danger and feel mentally confident enough to do so.

As the Eastern fighting arts were once restructured with endless paperwork on insurance covers, administration fees and the fighting mind set to win, some arts today in the west have begun stripping the impurity's and returning to basics. The harimau pencak silat ethics have always remained the same and although adapted at times for its chosen environment its appearance has been unshakable.

Make no mistake the art of war is about fighting and securing your life over your opponent, there will be no padded floor to break our fall, we will not be wearing strong and flexible equipped uniforms and there will be no introduction for warm ups on the battleground.

It will simply just happen, death never gives a year's warning.

The visionary Nostradamus was once asked what kind of advanced weapons will be used in the three great wars he predicted, he only respond to what weapons would be used in the last great war, 'sticks and stones'.

This article was published in [Combat magazine](#) , 2006.