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The region of South East Asia is renown for their blade and stick fighting systems, despite all martial art styles being practiced today from an unarmed hand-to-hand approach almost all combative arts were developed with a weapon in hand first before adapting to the unarmed last line of defense.

The most basic and first weapon adopted to the preferred style was the stick.

The first documented martial art known as Pankration came from Greece around 648 BC. This style had a stick fighting system called Lathi. The Oriental styles from Japan created Jojutsu also referred to as Jodo, while China's Gung Fu style Wu Chu Chuan has a stick form known as the dog stick as well as numerous spear fighting forms. Africa's Zulu tribes created the long staff style that beats their enemies from afar and recently the stick fighting style from Ireland resurfaced called Shillelagh whereby the Irish fighters used blackthorn sticks as weapons.

The Indonesian fighting art known as pencak silat also utilized the stick in combat, making use of various lengths. Tongkat is the name that is referred to in silat's stick fighting systems. Tongkat literally means 'walking stick' and the walking stick style was generally practiced by Grandmasters in silat, because only with years of experience and training could the practitioner be skilled and wise enough to be able to defend themselves with a blunt instrument against an attacker with a *golok* (machete) or *pisau* (knife).

The traditional tongkat walking stick style consists of parrying and counter-strikes with loose locks using the curved handle grip upon their assailant's attacking knife hand. The tongkat fighter will also use the curved handle to hook around their opponent's ankle to sweep them off their feet or around their neck to choke.

The walking stick's length is used from a distance, out of reach from your enemies' shorter arms, which allows you to hit your opponent from afar using the full swing of the stick's length and generating a greater power than close quarter strikes. The practitioner can close in to their enemy at a mid-distance, locking and trapping the opponent's weapon hand while still being effective with powerful strikes.

There are various Indonesian silat systems that adopt a *tongkat kecil* (or short stick) form such as Harimau Berantai, Seterlak, Cimande, Serak and Silek Harimau.



The tongkat kecil combat style is said to have influenced Kali silat, the martial art style that is indigenous to the the Philippines. The Filipino eskrimadors (stick fighters) are perhaps the most famous short stick fighters in the martial arts community. Their fast, hard flaying stick movements make them formidable opponents.

During the 5th and 6th centuries in Indonesia, an empire was formed due to the migration of the Buddhist tribes of India to Sumatra and Java. This empire came to be known as Srivijaya.

It is believed that the origins of Kali developed some time in the 13th century, from Indonesia's Srivijaya warriors who fled Java escaping the Majapahit kingdom. These warriors settled on the island of Cebu in the Philippines. The Majapahit empire spread across South East Asia eclipsing the previous empire and this is when the Indonesian fighting arts (nowadays recognized under the name of pencak silat) began to influence other combat systems in Asia. The Majapahit empire included areas that are known today as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Cambodia, Brunei, and the Philippines. From the Majapahit era came the Southern Asian martial arts culture.

Almost all of South East Asia incorporated a stick form into their fighting style which would have originated from the Majapahit tongkat system, known today as Tongkat Silat. The Filipino eskrimadors are famous for using double escrima sticks but eventually some of these stick fighters resorted back to the original single stick style, calling it the Balintawak style back in 1952.

This form of arnis fighting is perhaps the closest system to the original tongkat kecil art. Although the Filipino creator of the single stick Balintawak style may have thought they were developing a new system or branch of Kali, in theory they were actually revisiting the original art of stick fighting brought to the Philippines by the Srivijaya warriors. Admittedly, though, the Filipino arnis styles have become much more advanced.

