



by Guru Scott McQuaid

The history of combat is generally forged in fire as martial art styles developed out of the need to protect oneself against an enemy, with the particular style of combat formed in accordance to its situation, location, and its principal result. Over time, a martial art system is refined, drawing influences from other fighting styles, belief structures and its founder's individual focus points.

The Indonesian art of '*Silat*' is arguably the best example of showing a combative system rising through the need and necessity for protection against invaders while encompassing the Indonesian environment, local heritage and culture. There are actively over 150 styles of silat today spread across Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. One such silat fighting art that is rarely known outside of its native country of Indonesia is the style '*Tarung Derajat*', a hybrid martial art that originates in West Java from its creator, Haji Achmad Dradjat.



'*Tarung Derajat*' was created by Guru Haji Achmad Dradjat. His story begins when he was born during an attack by the Indonesian Islamic State rebels. His parents participated as activists for the independence of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia who post-independence became members of the Special Police which was one of the operational targets of the gang attack. This event inspired his parents to give their son the name Dradjat which means a

blessing that brings goodness to human life.

He grew up on the tough Indonesian streets of Bandung in the 1960s. Many of the youngsters fought amongst themselves and although he wasn't ever the one to start the fight, these situations required him to engage in order to survive.

This led Haji Achmad Dradjat to hone his combat skills and become a proficient street-fighter. With each encounter, he learned something new, and before he knew it himself, he begun to create his own way of fighting. He discovered that there are 4 basic movements to a fight: punching, kicking, blocking/dodging, and grappling.

So, he began perfecting the most effective striking and kicking moves, with a focus on grappling and sweeping techniques - a modern version being today's MMA (mixed martial arts). He noted the main principles of the style to be strength, speed, accuracy, courage and tenacity.

In 1968, when he was only 18 years old, his friends and other youngsters came to him and asked him to teach them. The group continued to grow and by 1972 he had created a shelter gym called AA BOXER.

Eventually, Guru Haji Achmad Dradjat named his art '*Tarung Derajat*'. The word '*tarung*' means '*fight*' and the word '*derajat*' means '*pride*', so concisely, '*Tarung Derajat*' means '*fighting for pride*'.

A practitioner of this style is called a '*Petarung*' and all follow the art's motto, '*Aku Ramah Bukan Berarti Takut, Aku Tunduk Bukan Berarti Takluk*', which translates to

*'I am friendly but it does not mean I am afraid, I am reserved but it does not mean I surrender'*

*'BOX!'*

is the greeting among the members of the brotherhood of Tarung Derajat.

During the 1990s, Tarung Derajat was refined as a sport and by 1998 this combative art was officially recognised as a national sport, participating in various competitions around the country, including The Southeast Asian Games (SEA Games). This sport version of the art thrived throughout Indonesia, particularly in West Sumatra, where it experienced a glorious period and the team always grabbed the gold medal in every national championship since it started back in 1998. Tarung Derajat is a not only a national sport of the country, but its combat techniques are also practised by the Indonesian Armed Forces and the Indonesian Police Mobile Brigade.

At age seventy-one Guru Haji Achmad Dradjat still remains active in promoting the art of Tarung Derajat, giving talks and often attending competitions and martial art events.

Mixed martial arts continue to create off-shoot systems and such derivative combat styles as Tarung Derajat eventually find their place, with battle tested techniques and development over time. This opens the door for students that perhaps did not take to one style but then find an understanding with another.

Try to learn something about everything and everything about something.



*Published exclusively for Black Triangle Silat 2022.*