



By Pendekar Scott McQuaid

The urban battleground is a place of death, a road to survival or extinction.

In the dense jungles of Indonesia, the Pencak Silat warriors of the seventh century protected their land, family and way of life with this deadly fighting art. The Minangkabau warriors of west Sumatra were the most feared and therefore respected. The harimau (tiger) pentjak silat was the preferred style for this tribe it was developed from the environment the terrain; climate and surroundings, knowing your land could be the difference between living and dieing in battle.

Once pencak silat reached the shores of the Western world the shape of the art had to be adapted once more to its new geographical environment. The silat warrior no longer walked in the thick undergrowth of woodland, now they walked in the concrete jungle, the grounding is solid, the landscape obstructed by vehicles and high-rise buildings, their enemy's are less obvious and they attack for many different reasons.

In the introduction of pencak silat to the West, the traditions, rituals, *durus* and *kembangan* have remained prominent but the essential element that remains is the mental and physical brutality of war within the art. The modern foot soldiers of the harimau silat in today's society are constantly preparing for the unexpected, for a battle that may or may not ever come we have to consider our foundation and purpose of the fight before actually engaging into warfare.

In the teachings of the harimau system the appearance can be flamboyant and hypnotic in its dance like movements, but in reality the art is less attractive and the utilization is much smaller and simplistic in its actions, the motive is to finish the opponent before the fight begins.

The harimau art originally came from marsh land where the terrain was unstable, attacks from the floor were far more effective, although the terrain in the west is mainly stone the application of the style remains just as effective and catches the opponent off guard.

From an orthodox upright stance the silat warrior will take the unexpected route using their speed and flexibility to drop into a low attack exploiting the enemy's unprepared-ness and catching them unaware.

In a small space we can capitalize on its restriction, making use of the enclosed walls to pin or throw the opponent into and using the hard floor to ram their head against, the man made structures have become weapons and allies in this millennium.

There is little open ground in urban combat there will always be a wall, fence, window, chair, vehicle or road to which we can use to our advantage, the silat warrior like the tiger the art derives from is an opportunist, our strength stems from obliging the opponent to prepare against an attack oppose to the weakness of defending against an attack.

Martial artists practice with many traditional weapons such as the sword, sai, nunchuka and spear but in truth these weapons are not carried upon us daily or made available to us during the unexpected confrontation we may incur on the street.

Although some individuals may carry a small blade the general public will be unarmed, the improvised weapons upon our persons can be a pen, a rolled up newspaper or a bunch of keys. But weapons are also located in our surroundings, a glass or stool in a bar, a stick or lamp-post on the street. A silat warrior will be aware of their exits and constantly surveying their battle ground for uneven surface, another attacker or an item to make use of, we will move if there is gain but remain still if there is none.

The opponent's stern defensive posture is visible, but the silat warriors relaxed openness stance with slow motion movement is formless. We are concentrated the enemy is divided. We stir our opponent to move towards us, whilst nurturing our own strength waiting for them, as we preserve our stamina. By the opponent reinforcing their centerline, they weaken their rear, leaving their flanks accessible to attack, when the enemy advances they strike emptiness for the silat warrior is already moving twisting and turning their victim like a wild tornado before

rendering the opponent helpless somewhere between the ground and their hard shins. We are the battle, the fight and the end.

In the modern battlefield our enemy's have no uniform to identify them, there are no clans or countries flags to represent their legion and the purpose is of less or no meaning but the ethics of war remain the same, we fight to stay alive. In order to do this we must study the combat ground and look to its routes. Even the most exceptional fighters will fall if they have not considered their surroundings.

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