



by Guru Scott McQuaid

During my travels across Indonesia studying and researching the art of silat, I have come across many myths and legends of the origins of pencak silat. These are merely folklore stories but entertaining nonetheless, and like any myth, there may be some truth to the tale. So I have decided to share these stories with those interested in silat and the martial arts.

The history of the Indonesian fighting style known as pencak silat is not easy to track back due to the lack of written documentation. As in tradition information was handed down from guru to guru orally. In particular, it is very complicated to determine the geographical origin of where pencak silat begun and who pioneered its spreading.

The earliest documentation comes from Sumatra and most experts and pendekars (masters) will note wild animals as the inspirational source in the creation of the various pencak silat techniques and styles that exist today.

During the time of silat's development the ferocity of wild animals threatened the life of prehistoric people as their natural enemy in the Indonesian archipelago. The humans studied the raw movements of these animals and utilized these moves into a structure of fighting that would have already contained the basics of kicking and punching. They copied the movements of natural predators such as tigers, eagles, snakes, crocodiles, scorpions and even monkeys. Gradually pencak silat systems were developed out of these observations such as the harimau (tiger) and garuda (eagle) silat styles. However nature's environment and surroundings played an essential role in the development of each pencak silat system.



