



By Pendekar Scott McQuaid

A Guru is someone of wisdom, a person who has mastered their trade through trial and error. With the realisation of ones own potential and the self confidence in their ability, they begin to build a better world.

I started my journey into the mysterious art of the Harimau, Pencak silat ten years ago, the path has not been easy. With the intense training, Indonesian philosophy and understanding of the harimau (tiger) ethics, (hormat adat) I am only now starting to understand my art. This came to light when I visited my Guru Besar Richard Crabbe de- Bordes in Ghana, Africa. I departed London Heathrow on the 15th October 2003 and arrived in Accra International later that evening.

As I sat on the plane I reminisced the first meeting with the Guru. I was eighteen years old studying with my Pendekar (teacher) Paul Bennett, one of Guru's core students. We trained in South End, Essex, I had been training in the Harimau Minangkabau system for two years, hearing tales and quotes of the Guru through my pendekar. The Guru visited our class fashionably late from his London home to see the progress of future messengers of this mysterious art. As he entered the room a deadly stillness cast over the students as though a mature tiger had walked into a realm of cubs. His eyes stared strait through to your soul and his voice was deep and commanding. He moved and spoke as though he was stalking. Since that time I would only see Guru at seminars in Harrogate and gatherings in the London classes twice a year. Upon attending a seminar in Harrogate, Guru and I met by chance on the train and we talked a lot about silat and where it had taken us both. He mentioned that he had a lot of free time in Ghana at present and invited me out to train with him. Obviously I accepted and soon after I found myself walking through arrivals in Accra International.

A big muscular black man shouted my name across the bustling crowds. A man who I had never seen before approached me and immediately relived me of my backpack. The man's

name was Itay. He was Guru's body guard. He escorted me over to a minivan where Guru's driver greeted me as though he knew me. The city of Accra like so many developing world capitals, is a mixture of poverty with a bizarre twist of the extreme rich thrown in. I began to wonder how the Guru had ended up in such surroundings. After all this is a man who has lived in France, Holland, England and America, with connections in high risk security around the world. Obviously, working as a security aide for the previous President of Ghana explains what originally brought him here.



Maha Guru Richard Crabbe de-Bordes

We entered the vicinity of Osu where I was then escorted through the Platinum Plaza Health and Fitness Center, Guru's gym. At the back, in a dark plain room I came face to face with Guru Besar Richard Crabbe de-Bordes. He sat behind a desk with a laptop playing salsa music. The walls were covered with silat related material, from personal letters from Dan Inosanto and Cass Magda to certificates from L.A.P.D, Navy Seals and other special forces units. The biggest picture on the wall was of his teacher, my grandmaster, Maha Guru Adityo Mataram Hanafi. Guru's movements were slow but with authority. For the rest of that evening we spoke about silat until he suddenly announced we were to leave.

The drive to his house took forty five minutes and Guru drove Itay and me in his 4x4 truck up to the high mountains with his stereo booming out the American based radio station. As we pulled up in front of the house, two security guards opened the gates, the two iron gates and twelve foot concrete walls were covered in barbwire with high-tech infra-red beams crossing the entrance. Five dogs barked at us from the back of the house and Guru looked at me meaningfully and said "Hey Scott, I take my security very seriously. You want to get in my house then you have to work very hard," then he smiled. The house was very impressive in its structure, all designed by the Guru, with Italian tiles throughout and a mixture of decoration and furnishings from the various countries he has lived in.

The very next day Guru's driver took me sight seeing around the local markets and I was to meet with the Guru later that evening at the gym for training. After haggling with the locals for some African art I returned to the gym where Itay informed me to begin training with him and Guru will join us shortly after a business meeting. It was around seven o'clock in the evening and the sun was not seen but the heat was still intense. We trained on a concrete stage. Fortunately for me my Pendekar had always taught me to train on versatile terrain, from woodlands to sand to carpets to stone, so the ground was not foreign to me. A Pesilat (silat player) must be able to fight in any environment. I began teaching Itay constantly aware of the very warm ground beneath my bare feet, the sun's rays had been heating the floor all day. Within twenty minutes of Kudas (stances) I was sweating as though I had been training for two hours.

We started to attract a small audience as people decided to sit outside and view this unusual sight. After an hour the Guru appeared at the corner of my eye during a drill. The businessmen who surrounded him were dwarfed by his six foot five stature. After a few minutes Guru walked onto the training grounds and class was in session. When Guru spoke it was slow and with intent. He addressed the entire gym as if he was at a seminar. Everybody listened and sometimes he would break into "Gah", the capital dialect of Ghana, although I couldn't understand the dialect the message was clear.

Our training schedule covered Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and sometimes a Saturday but you had to be ready to train at a moment's notice. Guru would begin talking about silat and becoming so impassioned and involved within the conversation you would find yourself physically training. On one particular weekend, Guru and I were driving to the beach when, from across the street, a commotion was heard that resembled a political protest of sorts. However, this was far from it. Guru turned to me and said "you should see this, it's part of your journey in silat". He drove over to the other side of the road, Guru told me that the locals had caught a thief and were punishing him. As we came close, driving along beside the activity, I could see a man

being cut across his bare back with machetes. The blood leaked from his wounds as he staggered around amongst his captives. Guru told me, “he is trying to get to a police station because if he does not he will be hacked to death”. This was a life lesson for me. Beast is already within man. Guru turned to me and said “this is my reality”.

The next couple of weeks Guru and I worked upon closing the distance in combat, which is about commitment. To walk through your fears, coming within range of your opponents attacks. The close distance is where the fight begins and finishes, it will either be you or him. Everything Guru spoke about had analogies related to war and his teachings were all about helping your survival. To stay alive sometimes means you must walk into death's path. Mental teachings made up ninety percent of my lessons with Guru. The practical was only a motion to carry out the true understanding of this art. The element of a tiger, the philosophy and practice behind a warrior, is the attitude you must adopt towards life. I know over a hundred ways to take a man's life but not one to give it back. Being a true warrior is about preserving life and making it more fruitful.

One morning I was awoken by a conversation between Guru and a young boy. The story behind the visit was that the boy's mother in the village nearby was very sick and couldn't afford medicine so Guru gave him the funds. It was only then I realised why Guru had chosen to live in a country that struggles everyday. He is serving the people. Like the translation for Samurai, 'to serve', he has chosen to station himself here to build and make a difference.

Ghana is still very much a country surrounded by war. However this is where Guru feels at home. He will play on these fields and win. He has the lineage and background to operate here as an inspirational leader, in order to generate compassion, one must go through the training of equanimity. With genuine compassion you view others as more important than yourself.

From the dense jungles of Sumatra to the concrete jungles of London, Guru Besar Richard Crabbe de-Bordes, Pendekar Suchi has adapted his Harimau Pencak Silat and is preserving the very heart of a true Minangkabau warrior.

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