



By Pendekar Suchi Richard Crabbe-de-Bordes & Pesilat Scott McQuaid

The Greeks named Venus the God of War and so we shall name ours...

The art of combat is said to have originated from Egypt, early hieroglyphics document this theory but it was the Greeks that developed and shaped the system of combat, calling it *Pankration* (game of all powers). The martial arts spawned across Asia from China, Japan, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia with exceptions from Brazil and Russia. But there was one continent that was over looked... Africa.

The great African warrior's come in many forms, in clans, tribes, states and kingdoms, from the Zulus of South Africa, to the Bakongos of the Congo and Dorgons of Mali, all these tribes and many more govern and protect Africa. Along the Gold Coast of Ghana the clans known as the Ga-Damgbe inhabit the Accra plains the modern Ga's reside in what used to be fishing communities. Today these settlements are neighbourhoods of the traditional capital, Accra.

It is Ghana's heart where great fighters rise, in hard knock areas like Bukom where the neighbourhood slang "*Akotoku*", meaning hand-to-hand combat is commonly practised. The town has produced world champion *pugilists* (boxers) such as Atukwee Klotey, Azumah Nelson and Ike Quartey.

It is in this fight town that the renown, Pencak Silat stylist Pendekar Suchi Richard Crabbe-de-Bordes originates. After three decades of practising and studying in the Indonesian Minangkabau *harimau* (tiger) pencak silat system, he now opens a new chapter in his combative journey; this comes in the forgotten art of Abotri ke Tahuumo.

McQ: *Selamat* (welcome) Pendekar Suchi.

PS: Selamat Scott

McQ: The martial arts world has always recognised you as one of the foremost pencak silat practitioners, so what brings you to the art of Abotri ke Tahuumo.

PS: I hail from Royalty and warrior clans. The practice of Abotri ke Tahuumo is prerequisite, as part of our *Ku Ke Sum* (culture & tradition) for would be leaders and warriors alike. So therefore Abotri ke Tahuumo has always guided my journey in martial arts, it's influenced my harimau pencak silat. After 40-years of studying, practising and living *Tahuumo* (science of warfare), I think it's time to showcase the Ga-Damgbe contribution to world martial arts, sciences and pugilism.

McQ: You were recently named Asafoate I think that's the pronunciation...

PS: Yeah, that's correct.

McQ: That's chief warrior of the Ga-Damgbe tribe?

PS: Yeah, my stool name is Asafoatse Nii Kofi Dzata Mawurenfi I.

McQ: This name implies a tiger, for the past 30-years you have been known around the martial arts circuit as *'Manchan Hitan'* (The Black Tiger) through your silat and now you find yourself linked with the tiger once again...is this coincidence?

PS: It's no coincidence Scott, the voice of my ancestors have always echoed as a vibratory energy and guided my every step in life including this journey in martial science.

McQ: So what's the background to this African fighting system?

PS: The Ga-Damgbe people and state is part of the present day Republic of Ghana, it has history that predates Christianity. The Ga's are warriors of great tenacity and during their settlement they fought with and for other tribes and at times, they acted as mercenaries. Actually it's on record that the Ga's were never defeated in any known battle and were never made slaves of. They were referred to as the lions and tigers of the West African coast.

McQ: Regarding the actual combative structure of the art, what's the design and make-up?

PS: Abotri ke Tahuumo is based on life and death. The elements of the struggle being the lion and tiger is segmented into various studies, such as fist fighting, ground grappling, multiple low level kicks, projectile weapon combat and aerial feet attacks which resembles Capoeira.

McQ: To quote your teachings bestowed upon me, *'if it's not real, it won't work,'* how effective is Abotri ke Tahuumo?

PS: That's right Scott, I'd have to say the aforementioned segmented system, pound for pound will rival any martial arts style today.

McQ: Most martial arts seen today were born from religion, the military and generally battle, can this fighting style be called a martial art?

PS: What you got to remember is that Africans do have martial arts and sciences, these strategic warfare systems which acts as a warriors right of passage helped the reigns of great empires like Mali, Songhai, Ghana, Egypt, Nubia and Kush for centuries. The foundation of the art was always present it's just tracing back and deciphering the kwasifo nomo (expressive

armed & unarmed combat).

McQ: So where are the schools based to learn this style?

PS: Realistically, one has to travel to the source in Accra, Ghana, we have various classes and courses, but you can also find affiliated schools worldwide on the Foundation of Combat Science website.

McQ: Guru, thank you for sharing this introduction into this lost art, I'm sure you have helped to promote this system and educate the martial arts community on this subject.

PS: Thank you, Scott, for this interview.

McQ: As always it's been a vital journey for me to study under you.

PS: Keep studying, my friend, we are the warriors of tomorrow.

I have studied in harimau pencak silat under Pendekar Suchi de-Bordes for over a decade and I know of no other man I can call a true warrior.

It may interest readers to know in my earlier years of silat I travelled from London, over a thousand miles to West Sumatra, Indonesia. I had made this journey to help further understand and enhance my pencak silat training. After tracking down a former *pesilat* (silat player) in a remote village, I asked for guidance and tuition, he told me this "you must travel to England and find Richard de-Bordes".

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For classes in Abotri ke Tahuumo, please visit www.de-bordesfoundationworld.com . For information & classes in harimau pencak silat, visit www.blacktrianglesilat.com

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