



By Pendekar Scott McQuaid

A Harimau warrior is a person who does not stop to think then act, instead they react.

They take no pleasure in battle and are emotionally detached from their opponent. Most silat practitioners will not hold eye contact with their victim; instead they look just off center, gazing through their adversary. There are two reasons for this, the first is that seeing their opponents eyes filled with terror and fear may cloud their judgment and in showing mercy in their attack, they jeopardise their own life. The second reason is so they too do not wither in confidence. Their face shows little expression, as if their mind is far away in thought and not in the moment. The look their face adopts tells only truth and what will be.

As the battle commences the warrior's immediate stance invites on their nemesis, drawing them in to their end. There is little retreat, if any, during the fight, as soon as a victim's limbs are in range they are smashed and broken, cutting the opponent down. Once the victim is fallen the pesilat (silat player) will pin their prey to the ground, resembling the tiger's elements to then eat their catch. Only the Harimau warrior is human and therefore finishes the fight with a swift painless death move.

When the Minangkabau warriors go in to battle they carry very little in weaponry. Some warriors would grow their thumbnails long and sharpened the tips to aim at their opponents' eyes. Basic sticks and rough bladed knives were used. The most popular blade was the *keris* (wavy knife), it was said to have mystical powers as the blade was made of fallen meteorites. It is said that when the *keris* started to shake in its sheath this meant that its owner was in life threatening danger.

Down the brittle blade was a strait groove soaked in poison. When in battle the Silat soldier would drive the knife into a part of their adversary then snap the blade whilst it was still in the body causing internal and external damage.

Some describe the Harimau Silat attacks as “being caught in a whirlwind”. This relates to the multiple attacks that continue to confusing the opponent so they never have a linear target to counter. The very soul of a harimau soldier lies in their awareness to observe terrain, entrances, exits and items that can be used for weaponry. Leaves and sand can be hurled into the air for a moment of distraction, the silat warrior is not looking for their next move but for the finish.

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