



By Guru Scott McQuaid

'We walk in the footsteps of giants'.

A Guru is one who is regarded as having great knowledge, wisdom and authority in a certain area. They use this gift to guide others. A guru has the power and wisdom to dissolve spiritual ignorance in a disciple. The title comes with dedication but it is a heavy weight to bare, for with knowledge comes responsibility.

For the past twenty years I have been studying in the Indonesian fighting art known as *silek harimau*

or better known in the western world as

harimau

(tiger)

pencak silat

. This Minangkabau tribal combat system dates back 400 years, inspired by the Sumatran tiger and developed from Sumatra's rain forest terrain.

My journey is not for the faint hearted, with countless injuries, strenuous training regimes on both body and mind. In truth it is a path less traveled. I studied in various martial styles under many respected instructors before finding my calling in harimau silat. From the humble beginnings in Southend Essex to the jungles of Sumatra, this art has given me adventure, guidance, discipline and direction making me the husband, teacher and warrior I am today.

I began my training in harimau silat studying under the exceptional Pendekar Paul Bennett in my hometown of Southend but I was soon invited to train in London under the head instructor Maha Guru Richard Crabbe de-Bordes. The classes were run in a military fashion, Guru

de-Bordes was like a general drilling his students with punishing leg burning stances.

His intense eyes looked into your very soul, all egos were smashed instantly, we were broken down and rebuilt as disciplined soldiers. His deep slow voice would resonate off the classroom walls. There was little explanation to why he did what he did, but it always worked, any man that fell behind was left behind. He was the very essence of war, anything you threw at him would return to your body in pain. We as students became accustom to broken noses, fractured ribs, sprained hands, bruising and blood shed. He often walked around the class kicking us all in the mid-section while we practiced our breathing exercises.



During one session he kicked one muscular guy in the stomach that caused him to double over and fall to the ground. He then walked over to me and proceeded to repeatedly round house kick me to the stomach in front of all the other students. I was seventeen years old and very small in statue and frame but I did not fall. Guru looked to the big man on the floor holding his stomach and said. "The body is easy to break, but the mind is what gives you the will to fight."

After practicing harimau silat for four years I decided to spend a year traveling through South East Asia with my focus on Indonesia. The path through the heart of silat country presented me with various challenges stripping me of my western materialistic habits and showing me the true meaning of what it is to be a *pesilat* (silat player).

As I reached the tribal provinces of the Minangkabau I became disappointed to see how little of the art still lived. This rare fighting system, like its inspiration the Sumatran tiger, is almost extinct so finding instructors and information was a task.

Then I stumbled across a man that said he knew of somebody who could assist me in helping me learn more about harimau silat. We drove outside the village into the rice paddy fields far from any civilization. I was guided through the muddy jungle until we came to a small hut with an old Indonesian man sitting outside smoking a pipe.

He said "So you want to learn harimau silat, then you must travel to London and find Guru Richard De-Bordes". Shortly after I returned to the UK and continued my training with Pendekar Bennett before having extensive training in Ghana with Guru de-Bordes.

In 2001 and I found myself in Los Angeles standing in a large studio surrounded by martial arts history. Bruce Lee's beaten up wooden man stood in one corner, a rack of traditional weapons from various martial styles dominated the back wall, and the surrounding walls were covered in memorabilia pictures of Brandon Lee, Chuck Norris, Jean Claude Van Damme and many other Hollywood action celebrities.

One man featured in every picture. Some describe him as the bible of martial arts, others as a genuine grandmaster, but to me he is Guro Dan.

Guro Dan Inosanto is a modern legend within the martial arts community, his wealth of knowledge within the combative arts is second to none. He is a world authority in Jeet Kune Do concepts and Filipino fighting arts.

He is respected by all martial artists for his own merits and his humble nature, my opportunity to

train under him came from the recognition and respect earned previously by my teacher Guru de-Bordes. "You're Richard's student?" Guro Dan said, "he's a real fighter, very strong legs."



Guro Dan spoke calmly and slowly with a very serious expression. He would often break down every aspect of the technique he was working upon, he never got sidelined or distracted in his lesson.

"Technique is useless without the basics," he said during my kali silat class. He maintained that one drill practiced perfectly has more worth than a thousand techniques taught.

I continue this theory today, always returning to the core basics of my silat keeping the art alive and effective. Like most Philippine stick fighting styles, Guro Dan's kali works on a rhythm but his teachings are unique in getting the job done with as few moves as possible, oppose to endless stick waving distractions before striking.

I remember Guro Dan teaching in short bursts much like the art's application in battle. He would show a drill with many variations as well as possible counters. It seemed endless, by the end of each session I may learned five techniques but with ten or more variations.

I trained with Guro Dan for just over two months and although I do not expect him to remember me due to the many students that have passed through his doors I will always value my short time with him. My silat would not be what it is today without the knowledge he shared with me.

The year was 2009 and I had struggled to find the entrance to this gym amongst the shops and restaurants in Kulua Lumpur's busy city. I moved to Malaysia to further my silat knowledge in blade warfare and there was only one man I trusted to teach me. As I walked up the stair case I heard the unmistakable sound of punch bags being pounded followed by a voice shouting instructions.

As I entered the gym, a friendly face emerged behind a focus pad, he immediately approached me. "Welcome, come in, will get started in a minute," said Guru Jak.

Maha Guru Jak Othman was born into a family of Malaysian silat warriors, his destiny to follow in the silat path was determined by his elders. Guru Jak trains in *harimau berantai* (chained tiger) *silat* which is primarily a weapons based system, focusing on the blade.

I am honored he is my weapons guru. Once again my teacher Guru de-Bordes helped with my introduction to Guru Jak. The two had become close friends in London in the early eighties when both were making a name for themselves introducing the west to pencak silat. Shortly after both my teachers would befriend Guro Dan Inosanto while promoting their different silat styles.

