

# Silat Melayu

Vol. 1/2005

Alam Berkembang Menjadi Guru

14 Nov 2005

EDITORIAL

## Alive! It's Alive!

Condensing one's thoughts is hardly an easy task, as I find out everytime I sit down to write an article on anything, especially martial arts. Strangely, this is never the case when I involve myself in discussion forums dedicated to the subject or replying to emails from friends in other parts of the world.

I always seem to be able to find the answers and materials needed to clarify whatever needs to be clarified. After a lot of soul searching, I discovered that I love doing research for the most mundane Silat-related questions. This is why, every time an acquaintance asks one simple question by email, they are often assailed with pages and pages of facts, fiction and opinions, most of which they never asked for.

Although enjoyable, they took too much time and I often found myself repeating answers to different people. This is why the *Silat Melayu* ezine was born. This issue only has four articles written by yours truly, but hopefully, more new columns will be established and contributions will start pouring in.

Since there are currently very few subscribers to the ezine, you may still personally reply to this email to share your views and ideas. Suggest columns, research topics, questions, anything at all and I'll try to fit it in. Hope you enjoy this first issue and I pray it won't be the last.



**Mohd Nadzrin Wahab**  
nadzrin@gmail.com



Omar Hakim and Nadzrin at a Silat Cekak Hanafi tournament. Omar's describing the size of something he owns, I think.

The *Silat Melayu Ezine* is published weekly from Malaysia online by Tryden Communication. All contents within are © of Tryden Communication unless otherwise stated. No part of this electronic magazine may be reproduced in printed form for distribution and sale without this copyright notification and express permission. It may be legal in the eyes of the law but it's just downright rude.

# In The Beginning

By MOHD NADZRIN WAHAB

Officially known as the Federation of Malaysia, Malaysia has, for many reasons, become one of the rising giants of Asia, often appearing in the foreign section of media in other countries. Occupying approximately 127,315 sq. miles with a population of more than 20 million, this country straddles the South China Sea, with almost half of its land mass a part of the island of Borneo.

It is a constitutional monarchy, whereby the federated states remain locally ruled by a sultan but is administrated by the federal government. There are nine royal states, Perlis Indera Kayangan, Kedah Darul Aman, Perak Darul Rizuan, Selangor Darul Ehsan, Negeri Sembilan Darul Khusus, Johor Darul Takzim, Pahang Darul Makmur, Terengganu Darul Iman and Kelantan Darul Naim.

Pulau Pinang, Melaka, Sabah and Sarawak are each ruled by a Yang Dipertua. The federated states appoint a Yang Dipertuan Agong to rule over the whole of Malaysia in rotation among the states. The current Agong is the sultan of Perlis Sultan Syed Sirajuddin Jamalullail.

Beginning in the early 15<sup>th</sup> century as an emerging entreport, the Melaka Sultanate quickly spread its influence as to include Sumatera and Sulawesi. With the arrival of and subsequent conversion to Islam, Melaka saw increased trade with the Arabs and Chinese and it became a preferred port of call.

In 1511, due to Melaka's pivotal political and economical leverage, the Portuguese attacked and eventually took control of the port of Melaka, forcing the seat of government to change to Johor-Riau.

Several unsuccessful attempts to take the port city failed until the Dutch arrived in 1641 and captured it from the Portuguese. Attempts to wrest post Melaka from the Dutch

also failed.

However, even before the fall of port Melaka, vestiges of the sultanate had already spread by way of regents who were sent to rule in Perak and Pahang. By this time, Kedah had leased out and eventually sold Pulau Pinang in 1786 and Johor, Singapura (Singapore) in 1819 to the British. In a historical royal flush, Britain acquired Melaka from the Dutch in exchange for Bangkahulu (Bencoolen), a deal which the Dutch soon regretted.

From the three settlements, Britain formed the Straits Settlements and developed them as ports and trading centres, Pulau Pinang and Singapura being the more successful of the three. In 1874, Britain began forming treaties with the rulers of Perak, Selangor, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang as the Federated Malay States (1895) and Perlis, Kelantan, Terengganu and Kedah as the Unfederated Malay States (1909) which was then joined by Johor (1914).

Between 1941 and 1945, the Straits Settlements were dissolved during the Japanese Occupation which was subsequently replaced by the Malayan Union. This was eventually succeeded by the Federation of Malaya (1948) and self-government was achieved in 1955 despite threats from communist terrorist activities.

On the 31<sup>st</sup> of August 1957, the federation gained Independence from the British and became the Federation of Malaysia in 16 Sept 1963. However, Singapura seceded two years later, leaving Malaysia with one state less represented on the 14 stripes of the flag. Today, Malaysia is a proud member of international communities such as the United Nations, ASEAN, OIC and many more.

**Would you like to contribute an article on a your personal experiences in Malaysia. Reply with the subject: MALAYSIA.**

## MYTHS & MISCONCEPTIONS

# 'To Do Silat' Or Not 'To Do Silat?'

By MOHD NADZRIN WAHAB



The modern public has no knowledge of the equivalence of the word Gayong to Silat, and blissfully repeat the misnomer 'Silat Gayong'- Pix taken Silat Seni Pusaka Gayong website.

When the eminent hopologist, sensei Donn F. Draeger became interested in the martial arts of the Malay Archipelago, he began a trend that would snowball faster and faster past the turn of the century.

From being a virtual unknown, now the South East Asian combat arts have become a quirky member of Western martial arts circles, often spoken of in awe (from Draeger's claim that Silat is the world's deadliest martial art), derision and confusion.

Even among silat stylists, there often happen disagreements as to particular natures of silat. This is largely due to many of them taking their masters' words as gospel.

It is unfortunate that some adherents of silat misunderstand or misconceive what their teachers actually said and because of cultural filtering and noise, often misrepresent a particular art.

This is not aimed at any one group in particular, but to illustrate that it is not an isolated occurrence. Even amongst Malaysian born pesilat, there exists gross miscommunication between master and

student; student and public, even when they meet almost every day.

This column then, is an attempt to clarify and hopefully correct, with evidence and support, many of the misconceptions non-Malay or non-Asians have of Silat Melayu. Meaning, I can only purport to speak about the Malaysian aspects of these cultural concepts.

Firstly, of course, is the all time favourite, Bersilat. There is no such noun. It is a verb. Is this enough to convince the thousands of people out there? Maybe not.

Malaysia may seem homogenous to the outsider, but it is not as apparent to Malaysians. 'Malay culture' in Malaysia may mean Northern (Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang), Minang (Negeri Sembilan), Bugis (Johor, Selangor), Jawa (Johor, Selangor), East Coast (Kelantan, Terengganu), etc, etc.

There is no one definitive Malay culture, although they have similar characteristics. The Bugis and the Jawa are decidedly more confrontational whereas the Minang are considered the more diplomatic between the two.

Interestingly, these blanket descriptions also show up in their rituals, choice of weapons, fighting styles and social expressions. The Bugis are well known for brutal, hard and fast combat styles which persist in the forms of Silat Seni Gayong and Seni Silat Sendeng.

This is in contrast to the aesthetically pleasing Sumatran-sourced arts of Seni Gayung Fatani, Silat Pulut, Silat Jawi and others (disclaimer: definitely not a comparison between their efficacy!).

The word 'silat' is generally accepted to be in wide usage in the northern region of the Malay Archipelago which includes Aceh, Kedah and Patani while the East Coast of Malaysia utilize the term 'gayung' whereas other areas where the Jawa eventually settled, the word 'pencak' came into popular usage. In Johor, the term Buah Pukul is used to describe the Johorean strain of a Yunanese (Chinese) art called Lian.

[IMHO] It is unclear to me when the catch all term 'silat' began to be used to describe the Malaysian Malay Martial Arts (M3A). However, it seems that this gained momentum in the late 1950s and 1960s when most of our political leaders hailed from the North who often referred to the M3A in their vernacular.

[IMHO] Add this to the fact that all four of the founding members of the Malaysian National Silat Federation (PESAKA) hail primarily from the northern states of Pulau Pinang, Kedah and Perak and you're left with little choice regarding what to call your M3A in public.

(Silat Cekak – Kedah, Silat Seni Gayong – Perak, Silat Lincah – Pulau Pinang, Seni Gayung Fatani – Kedah)

Not all masters accepted this change totally and adopted the term only for identification purposes. For instance, Seni Gayung Fatani is often mistakenly called Silat Gayung Fatani and Silat Seni Gayong called Silat Gayong. To do so would create

redundancy (silat silat fatani). This is like the English phrase 'Rice Paddy Field' when 'padi' in Malay already means rice.

In the same manner, Kegayungan Aceh Helang Putih is often simply referred to as Silat Helang Putih. No one really bats an eyelid anymore about this distinction, especially among the unknowing youth.

Thus we come to the misnomer Bersilat itself. The prefix 'ber-' in Malay creates verbs from nouns. However, it is unique in that it refers to a state of being rather than an action.

When someone asks, 'Where did he go?' and the answer is 'Dia pergi bersilat' it means he went to practice silat, doing silat. In English, it is often translated as 'to do silat'.

The form that most people in the West think of is the gerund 'Silating', or 'Menyilatkan' (with accompanying prefix and suffix) which doesn't exist in popular usage because then the next phrase would have to describe who is being 'Silated' by the 'Silater'. It's just not done that way.

In any case, from Kedah to Sabah, to Sulawesi, it has now become a well-known term and is an accepted description of the M3A.

Although sensei Draeger's texts are deemed authoritative (to the extent O'ong Maryono had to apologise when we brought up the fact that he included the 'bersilat' mistake in his book when referencing Draeger), but I hope that this brief explanation will put an end to any more repetition of this matter.

So the next time a Malay man walks up to you and asks what martial art you practice, now you can avoid telling him that you do 'to do silat'.

**Do you have any misconceptions or corrections you wish to be heard about Silat? Reply with the subject line: MISCONCEPTION.**

**MIGHTIER THAN THE KERIS**

# Silat In Malaysian Print

By MOHD NADZRIN WAHAB

There is a definite dearth of Silat and Silat-related books on the market, be it locally or internationally. Many people are surprised to learn that Malaysia, the 'Mecca of Martial Arts' (quote from sifu Nigel Sutton in his SENI BELADIRI column 'Under The Palm Trees'), has less than ten books on Silat on the market, most of them either out of print or simply forgotten.

Fortunately, silat has a media to call its own in SENI BELADIRI, Malaysia's premier martial arts magazine that began its run in August 1997 and has to this day more than 90 issues under its belt.

Owned, operated and published by Azlan Ghanie, the magazine is bilingual in content with most of its articles in the Malay language. Azlan, who is also the founder and Primary Trustee of Silat Melayu Keris Lok 9 has interviewed several hundred masters in silat and non-silat styles, making him one of the most knowledgeable martial artist in Malaysia when it comes to arts other than his own.

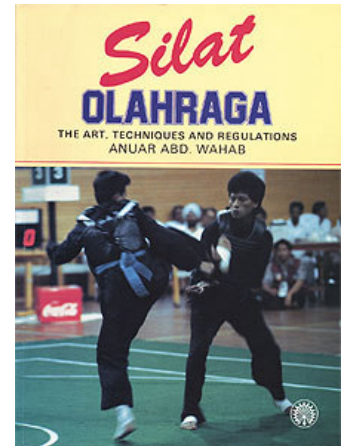
In 2001, a radical effort saw fruition when SILAT WARRIOR was published. The only all-English martial arts magazine in Malaysia, it was exported to the West but didn't take off. It ran for three issues.

In fact, this was not his first effort at publishing a martial arts magazine. In 1989, the first issue of PENDEKAR hit the stands with the final interview with the late, great Datuk Meor Rahman of Silat Seni Gayong fame to ever appear in the pages or any martial arts magazine.

Azlan conceived and edited the magazine before being taken ill a few years later. PENDEKAR ran until 1995 without Azlan at the helm.

During SENI BELADIRI's run, two other publishers tried to follow in its footsteps. Unfortunately, neither of them garnered the

kind of popularity among the local martial arts community the way SB did. The mystical martial art magazine TANGKAS saw print in 2002 but ran for a few issues before being put out of its misery.



Meantime, SENI SILAT WARISAN BANGSA (no relation to my website SILAT SENI WARISAN BANGSA hosting at <http://silat.8m.com>) put up a valiant fight, eventually making it past the ten issue mark, even though it was forced to publish bi-monthly instead of monthly.

There were also several attempts at one offs such as SILAT, MEGAT and TERAWIS, all by Megat Ainuddin Megat Mohd Nordin, the head of Silat Penjurit Kepetangan and GEMPITA, by Ustaz Azam Zulkifli of Silat Gayong Maarifat.

Bear in mind however, that the print run and circulations hardly touch anything Western World magazines such as BLACK BELT and COMBAT have achieved. With a reported 3.5 million pesilat within Malaysia, it is unfortunate that the circulations skim only about 0.1% and below of this potential. Therefore, where magazines barely dare to tread, would books survive extinction easily in Malaysia?

In my quest to build a library made up of silat-related books, it turns out that you just have to know where to look. My search took me to Dewan Bahasa Dan Pustaka, the national vanguard of language and literature.

[IMHO] It seems that their main objective is to publish as many books in Malay as possible and leave them to rot with no

marketing push behind them. Most silat books in Malaysia are published by this body.

From them I managed to glean gems like *TEKNIK DALAM SENI SILAT MELAYU* (Techniques In Malay Silat) by Anuar Wahab, *SENI SILAT MELAYU DENGAN TUMPUAN KEPADA SENI SILAT SEKEBUN* (Malay Silat With Special Attention Given To Seni Silat Sekeibun) by Tuan Ismail Tuan Soh and *SILAT OLAHRAGA* (in Malay and English versions) by Anuar Wahab.

Out of print are *SILAT TERLAK NATA* by Hamzah Ahmad and *KERIS DAN SENJATA-SENJATA PENDEK* (The Keris and Other Short Bladed Weapons) by Shahrom Yub, the docu-novel *PANGLIMA SALLEH SELEMPANG MERAH* (Panglima Salleh Of The Red Sash) by Zaharah Nawawi and the period novelisation retelling of Hang Tuah's legendary childhood, *SAKSILA LEKIR* by Dr Mohd Nasir Zainal Abidin.

Happily though, most of the books I mentioned above will soon be available in their English versions online. One of them, *Silat Olahraga* is already offered online at <http://silat.tv>. Check it out for yourself.

Recently, Malaysians were blessed with the publication of the first real book on Silat exercises in *SENAMAN SILAT JIWA SIHAT UNTUK SEMUA* (Silat Exercises And Self Health For All) by Megat Ainuddin Megat Mohd Nordin and Assoc Prof Nor Anita Megat Mohd Nordin. It is an interesting addition to anyone's silat library.

Other than these, there are several books self published by respective Silat perguruan for internal consumption. Most of them go out of print almost immediately due to the specific audience targeting.

Although similar in that sense, many of them serve different purposes; commemoration, official text book, promotion, etc. I have some of them, others, I have only had fleeting glimpses of.

Silat Cekak Malaysia has two books, a commemorative coffee table book, *SENI SILAT CEKAK MALAYSIA DALAM SUKU ABAD* (Quarter Century) and *BUDAYA*

*CEKAK*, a collection of 21 seminar papers on the art.

*Silat Cekak Hanafi* has one self-titled official text book while *Silat Kalam* provided detailed explanation into its philosophy and thinking in *WADAH KE ARAH WAJA DIRI SEJATI* (The Means Towards True Self Empowerment). Kegayungan Acheh Helang Putih also self published two books on practical self-defence, one of them simply titled *SILAT*.

I also know of one combat training manual published by *Silat Seni Pusaka Gayong* and a book by *Silat Seni Gayong Malaysia* but have yet to acquire either of them.

The Malaysian Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society also collected 12 pieces on the Malay weapons and published it under the title *THE KERIS AND OTHER MALAY WEAPONS* (not to be confused with the Shahrom Yub publication).

The last locally published book is a thin full coloured almost brochure-like *SENI DALAM SENJATA MELAYU* (The Aesthetics of Malay Weaponry) by Malaysian Handicrafts.

From Malaysia, we step out slightly next door to Indonesia where all of the above books stand in awe of the masterpiece that left the keyboard of O'ong Maryono, which is *PENCAK SILAT MERENTANG WAKTU* (it has an English translation titled *Pencak Silat In The Indonesian Archipelago*), 414 pages of pure intimacy with Indonesian pencak silat.

Finally, we have *THE KRIS: MYSTIC WEAPON OF THE MALAY WORLD* by Edward Frey. The book was published as part of an *Images of Asia* series by Oxford University Press in Singapore. These are the books I have come in contact with of which I have most. Within the next few issues of this ezine, I shall pick through the contents of those publications within my collection.

**I welcome copies/ scans of manuscripts or books to be translated and/ or reviewed in this column. Reply with the subject: REVIEW.**

# Silat Cekak Hanafi

By MOHD NADZRIN WAHAB



**S**ilat Cekak Hanafi is so named to honour one its greatest teachers, the late Ustaz Hanafi Haji Ahmad. It denotes that this Silat Cekak, as compared to others is the silat that was practiced and conveyed by Ustaz Hanafi be it in terms of pedagogy, concept, philosophy, principle, integrity, spirituality and example.

According to oral history, Silat Cekak originates from Kedah and was used by its governor-generals (panglima) to defend the land against foreign incursions during the reign of Sultan Ahmad Tajuddin (1854-1879).

A trustworthy source mentions that one of these generals, Panglima Ismail successfully defeated a general of Batak descent by the name of Tuah.

Panglima Ismail then taught Silat Cekak to Panglima Tok Rashid, who hailed from Sungai Daun in Kedah. However, to flee an outbreak of cholera, the general had to relocate his family to Keriaof the state of Perak. In Perak, Panglima Tok Rashid



entrusted Silat Cekak to his student from Batu Kurau, Yahya Said to teach this silat to a worthy Kedah native when the proper time came. Panglima Tok Rashid instructed him:

*“If any of my progeny from Kedah wish to learn, you are to return it to them”*

In 1965, as per the late Panglima Tok Rashid’s trust, Yahya Said conveyed and entrusted this silat to Ustaz Hanafi. After 40 years of being hidden away from the public eye, Silat Cekak was reclaimed by Ustaz Hanafi as his Kedah birthright from Yahya Said (who was the trustee).

Before then, no one had successfully completed their education in Silat Cekak. It was only when Ustaz Hanafi taught Silat Cekak publicly that students managed to complete their studies in the syllabus. This was done under the auspices of the Perkumpulan Sari Budaya Sri Kedah (The Glorious Kedah Cultural Essence Group).

Since its rebirth at the hands of Ustaz Hanafi, a new era had dawned for Silat Cekak. He introduced a new spirit and a new approach, all the while succeeding in raising the status of Silat Cekak as a movement that is respected by friend and foe; one that is continuously able to contribute positively to society.

Silat Cekak has succeeded in attracting thousands of members from all walks of life



including the intellectual and professional realms.

Now, the Malaysian Seni Silat Cekak Ustaz Hanafi Association (Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Ustaz Hanafi Malaysia) has 11 state chapters and organizes silat classes in most universities and higher learning institutions in Malaysia. The fourth child of Ustaz Hanafi, Md. Radzi Haji Hanafi is presently the Principal and President of the association.

Silat Cekak Hanafi is a truly Malay art of self-defence and is not a silat for play or sport (Silat Olahraga). Silat Cekak Hanafi has set methods with strike forms and complete locking techniques. The movement and system of this silat is based on the natural movements of the human being grounded in healthy thought, a calm soul and is clearly compatible with the principles of Islam.

Its studies place emphasis on self-defence to inculcate courage, not violence or violation. Only when absolutely necessary and for the sake of safety does Silat Cekak Hanafi attack first.

Silat Cekak Hanafi awaits attacks in a straight-backed high stance (the stance used in salat) and does not employ evasions to the left or right; but moves forward in a single intercepting movement. In reality, Silat Cekak Hanafi is a silat based on the study of movement (Silat Gerak).

Most surprising and curious of all is, when Silat Cekak Hanafi attacks, the opponent would find it difficult to evade, and if he were to parry the attack would lead to a devastating counterattack. This is due to the practitioner's ability to attack and trap in one move. (Cekak menyerang, Cekak menangkap). Practitioners are taught to defend against empty handed and weapons attacks with only their bare hands. The objective of

Silat Cekak Hanafi is to counter a weapons attack to disarm an opponent.

Silat Cekak Hanafi is taught to completion in a course package. Normally, the course package may be completed within 6 months. This duration may also be adapted to coincide with the semester schedule of public schools or higher learning institutions. After completion, the practitioners may increase their level of skill personally or by attending skill classes organized from time to time.

As a silat based on fine movements, it does not need to employ a great deal of strength or force to defeat an opponent.

The method of study is systematic, is not detrimental to the practitioner and allows the practitioners the ability to defend oneself even in quarters as narrow as a plank.

Not unlike other silat, Silat Cekak Hanafi also has its own official weapon which is the Lading; famous in the state of Kedah Darul Aman. This weapon is used by practitioners of Silat Cekak Hanafi to defend against all manner of empty handed or weapon attacks.

However, the Lading is only presented to those practitioners who have reached a certain level and whose loyalty to the association has been proven. Most of these recipients are those who have been actively involved in the movement for more than ten years.

The size and shape of the Lading depends on the user since each practitioner has a different proportion and body measurement.

**The above article was sourced and translated from material available at [www.cekakhanafi.com](http://www.cekakhanafi.com) All accompanying pictures are © Persatuan Seni Silat Cekak Ustaz Hanafi Malaysia.**

**Do you have a silat style you want to showcase? Reply with the subject line: STYLEWEEK.**

## IN HINDSIGHT

### Columns

A few columns have already been launched. *Malaysia Truly Asia* describes Malaysia as a country and its eclectic mix of cultures, political landscape, current issues, etc. *Myths & Misconceptions* deal with incorrect beliefs held by non-natives of Malaysia towards Silat and Malay culture. *Mightier Than The Keris* examines Silat in the media and presents published sources that are difficult to find outside of Malaysia. *Style Of The Week* focuses on a particular Malaysian silat school in brief.

### Re:Spone

Direct all your letters to the editor to re:sponse. This can include suggestions, questions or even rants. In the subject line, simply type RESPONSE.

### Article Requests

All you have to do is pose a question regarding Silat or Malay culture and I will prepare it in the form of an article. If the question is beyond my ability to research, it will be open to other readers of the Ezine to answer. So, what are you waiting for? Ask away!

### Article Submissions

I welcome all article submissions in MS Word format. Lengthy articles will be edited into several parts and published over successive issues of the ezine. Articles should preferably revolve around Silat and Malay culture. Pictures should be in JPG format and formatted at 100dpi. You may submit them by email with the subject line ARTICLE.

### Silat Links

For those of you interested in having your website links portrayed in every issue of the ezine, please send it to me with the subject line LINKS and a one sentence description of the site. When we have enough sites on the list, we may start up a review column as well.

### Foreshortening guide

The following terms sometimes appear in articles and help to identify the source of a particular statement. Hopefully, this will assist the reader in understanding the matter in discussion more objectively and impartially.

[IMHO] – Writer's personal opinion or conclusion and is not based on any concrete evidence that can be quoted.

[ORAL] – Denotes first hand (to the author) oral transmission.